

EMBODIED ENCOUNTERS:

The Self and Suburbia in Contemporary Photography

Natalie Payne

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

Johannesburg, 2018.

ABSTRACT

The primary motivation of my research is to provide a theoretical framework for the production of my body of work *Encountering Windrift*, a series of autobiographical photographs focused on the domestic sphere of suburbia, familial relationships and the experience of mortality. In order to do so, I deploy a notion of embodiment. The idea of embodiment in art making has stimulated much discourse in recent years, questioning notions of subjectivity in relation to practice and reception. Applied specifically to certain modes of autobiographical photography, the theory of embodiment that I propose is based upon what I define as an ‘embodied encounter’ between the photographer and the photographed subject. In the photographs I analyse, the embodied encounter is engendered through the portrayal of everyday trauma such as failure, conflict, loss and grief. The embodied encounter is heightened by the apparent intimacy between photographer and subject, which I argue remains embodied in the resultant photograph. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ‘the chiasm’ and Jill Bennett’s notion of ‘affective transaction’ serve to support my conception of the photograph as an embodied encounter in that both imply an intertwining of self and other. While the viewer may never be able to access another person’s subjective experience directly, I contend that certain formal and conceptual approaches to autobiographical photography may enable the viewer’s understanding of the photographer’s personal experience of space and history.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Fine Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____ day of _____,

For my mother, Cynthia

1939–2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors Jo Ractliffe and Jessica Webster, who have helped make my body of work *Encountering Windrift* and this dissertation possible. Jo Ractliffe's visual acuity and percipient observation proved invaluable. She noticed the 'family photographs' lurking at the bottom of a pile of pictures, and gave me the confidence to make such personal work public. Jo Ractliffe and Jessica Webster's academic engagement, as well as Jessica's rigorous attention to the written aspect of my work, has been inestimable. Thanks also to Ann-Marie Tully whose insightful editing helped fine tune this dissertation.

I would like to extend my appreciation to all my special friends who supported me throughout, especially Erica de Greef, who urged me to undertake a master's degree, and Michelle Loukidis, who, along with Jo Ractliffe, guided me through the photo editing.

Most importantly, my deepest gratitude to Anthony Tischhauser for his continuous encouragement, support and patience, as well as to Nigel, Cynthia and Tracy Payne, without whom these photographs would not have been made.

CONTENTS

List of Figures	i
List of Appendices	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Intertwinings – Theory and Photographic Practice	11
1.1: Embodiment	11
<i>1.1.1: The Chiasm – The Intertwining</i>	13
<i>1.1.2: Affect</i>	15
1.2: Shifting Perspectives – Modernism, Postmodernism and Photography	20
<i>1.2.1: Modernism</i>	20
<i>1.2.2: Postmodernism</i>	24
1.3: Embodiment and Affect in Photography After Postmodernism	27
Chapter 2: Wielding the Camera in Suburbia and the Home	33
2.1: The Participating Witness	34
2.2: Ideal Companions – The Camera and Suburbia	45
Chapter 3: All the World's a Stage	56
Conclusion	85
References	90
Appendix 1: <i>Encountering Windrift</i> (2012 –2017)	100
Appendix 2: <i>Encountering Windrift</i> – Exhibition installation photographs	124

LIST OF FIGURES		Page: in text	Page: Appendix
Figure 1:	Natalie Payne, <i>4 July 2015 I</i> , 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper. 31 x 31 cm.	1	100
Figure 2:	Natalie Payne, <i>Detail of the lounge door</i> , 2015. Colour digital photograph.	2	
Figure 3:	Nigel Payne, <i>Cynthia</i> , circa 1962. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.	4	
Figure 4:	Natalie Payne, <i>Diary entries, December 2012</i> , 2014. Black & white digital photograph.	4	
Figure 5:	Nigel Payne, <i>Erf 3299, 13 Montagu Way, Pinelands</i> , 1965. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.	5	
Figure 6:	Nigel Payne, <i>'Windrift', 13 Montagu Way, Pinelands</i> , 1967. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.	5	
Figure 7:	Ernest Cole, <i>House of Bondage</i> , 1967. Gelatin silver print. Ernest Cole Family Trust / Courtesy the Hasselblad Foundation.	22	
Figure 8:	Robert Frank, <i>Ranch Market, Hollywood</i> , from <i>The Americans</i> , 1955-1956; printed 1977. Gelatin silver print. 20.8 cm x 31.75 cm. Collection SFMOMA.	22	
Figure 9:	William Eggleston, <i>Untitled (Memphis)</i> , 1970, Colour photograph, Dye-transfer. 16 x 20 inches. ©Eggleston Artistic Trust. Courtesy Cheim & Read, New York.	23	
Figure 10:	Cindy Sherman, <i>Untitled film still #10</i> , 1978. Gelatin silver print. 18.6 x 24 cm. MOMA. Acquired through the generosity of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder.	27	
Figure 11:	Nan Goldin, <i>Jimmy Paulette and Tabboo! In the bathroom</i> , NYC, 1991. Cibachrome print. 50.5 x 61 cm. Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Fund for Photography.	30	
Figure 12:	Thomas Struth, <i>Museo Del Prado 8-3, Madrid</i> 2005. C-print mounted on UV plexiglass. 140 x 176 cm.	31	
Figure 13:	Natalie Payne, <i>Hannah, Claremont</i> , 2013. Pigment print on cotton paper. 42 x 42 cm.	35	
Figure 14:	Sally Mann, <i>Hangnail</i> , 1989. Gelatin silver print. 47.6 x 57.8 cm.	38	
Figure 15:	Sally Mann, <i>Jessie at 5</i> , 1987. Gelatin silver print. 49.85 cm x 60.33 cm. Collection SFMOMA.	38	
Figure 16:	Sally Mann, <i>The Hot Dog</i> , 1989. Gelatin silver print. 25.1 x 20.3 cm.	38	
Figure 17:	Nan Goldin, <i>Twisting at my birthday party, New York City</i> , 1980. Cibachrome print. 9 x 13 3/4 inches.	38	
Figure 18:	Richard Billingham, <i>Untitled</i> , from <i>Rays a Laugh</i> , 1995. Colour photograph.	39	
Figure 19:	Stephen Shore, photographs from <i>American Surfaces</i> , 1972. Colour photographs.	40	
Figure 20:	LaToya Ruby Frazier, <i>Me and Mom's Boyfriend Mr Art</i> , 2005. Gelatin silver print. 38.5 x 48.6 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Angela Lorenz in honor of curator emeritus Davis Pratt.	42	

Figure 21:	Lebohang Kganye, <i>Setupung sa kwana hae II</i> , 2012. Inkjet print on cotton rag paper. 42 × 29.7 cm. Afronova Gallery.	44	
Figure 22:	Norm Kerr, <i>Family by the Fireplace</i> , 1965, Kodak Colorama.	45	
Figure 23:	John Divola, <i>San Fernando Valley</i> , 1971-1973. Gelatin silver print.	48	
Figure 24:	John Divola, <i>San Fernando Valley</i> , 1971-1973. Gelatin silver print.	48	
Figure 25:	Bill Owens, <i>Suburbia</i> , 1972. Gelatin silver print.	48	
Figure 26:	Eric Fischl, <i>Bad Boy</i> , 1981. Oil on canvas. 66 x 96 inches. Private collection, Zurich	49	
Figure 27:	Eric Fischl, <i>Barbeque</i> , 1981. Oil on canvas. 65 x 100 inches. Collection of Steve Martin.	49	
Figure 28:	Larry Sultan, <i>Los Angeles, Early Evening</i> , 1986. C-print. 36 x 30 inches.	50	
Figure 29:	David Goldblatt, <i>On the stoep: a girl in her new tutu</i> , 1979/80. Gelatin silver print. 50 x 60cm.	51	
Figure 30:	Jo Ractliffe, <i>doll's head, from Shooting Diana</i> , 1994. Black & white pigment print on cotton paper. 35 x 35 cm. Stevenson	52	
Figure 31:	Jo Ractliffe, <i>cattle truck, from Shooting Diana</i> , 2004. Black & white pigment print on cotton paper. 35 x 35 cm. Stevenson	52	
Figure 32:	Jo Ractliffe, <i>gun boy, from Shooting Diana</i> , 2004. Black & white pigment print on cotton paper. 35 x 35 cm. Stevenson	52	
Figure 33:	Santu Mofokeng, <i>Mrs Nhlapo, Rockville</i> , 1987 Gelatin silver print. Courtesy The Walther Collection and Lunetta Bartz/MAKER, Johannesburg	53	
Figure 34:	Natalie Payne, <i>12 August 2013</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 39 x 39 cm.	54	101
Figure 35:	Nigel Payne, <i>'Windrift'</i> , 1970. C-print. Private collection.	56	
Figure 36:	Natalie Payne, <i>12 December 2012</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.	58	102
Figure 37:	Édouard Manet, <i>Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe</i> , (Luncheon on the Grass), 1863. Oil on canvas. 208 x 264.5 cm.	60	
Figure 38:	Jeff Wall, <i>The Soryteller</i> , 1986. Silver dye bleach transparency in lightbox. 229 x 437 cm.	60	
Figure 39:	Larry Sultan, book jacket: <i>Pictures from Home</i> , 2017.	62	
Figure 40:	Larry Sultan, inside book: <i>Pictures from Home</i> , 2017.	62	
Figure 41:	Lydia Goldblatt, <i>Father</i> [sn], from <i>Still Here</i> , 2013. C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.	63	
Figure 42:	Lydia Goldblatt, <i>Bee</i> [sn], from <i>Still Here</i> , 2013. C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.	63	
Figure 43:	Natalie Payne, <i>6 April 2015</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 27 x 27 cm.	65	104

Figure 44:	Natalie Payne, <i>8 July 2015</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 27 x 27 cm.	66	105
Figure 45:	Larry Sultan, <i>Dad on Bed</i> , 1984. C-print. 36 x 30 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum. Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment.	67	
Figure 46:	Natalie Payne, <i>21 August 2013 I</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.	68	106
Figure 47:	Natalie Payne, <i>12 December 2012</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.	69	102
Figure 48:	Natalie Payne, <i>21 August 2013 II</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.	69	103
Figure 49:	Lydia Goldblatt, <i>Mother in the Garden</i> , [sn], from <i>Still Here</i> , 2013. C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.	70	
Figure 50:	Lydia Goldblatt, <i>Breath</i> , [sn], from <i>Still Here</i> , 2013. C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.	70	
Figure 51:	Larry Sultan, <i>Across the Divide</i> , 1984. C-print. 36 x 30 inches.	71	
Figure 52:	Natalie Payne, <i>12 August 2015</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 31 x 31 cm.	73	107
Figure 53:	Larry Sultan, <i>Nightstand</i> , 1984. C-print. 36 x 30 inches.	74	
Figure 54:	Natalie Payne, <i>19 May 2015</i> . Pigment print on display paper. 90 x 60 cm.	75	108
Figure 55:	Natalie Payne, <i>9 January 2013</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 31.5 x 21 cm.	76	108
Figure 56:	Natalie Payne, <i>27 June 2015</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 31.5 x 21 cm.	77	109
Figure 57:	Natalie Payne <i>30 December 2015</i> . Pigment print on cotton paper. 31.5 x 21 cm.	78	109
Figure 58:	Natalie Payne, <i>Encountering Windrift</i> exhibition installation photograph, The Point of Order, 2017.	79	
Figure 59:	Natalie Payne, <i>Encountering Windrift</i> exhibition installation photograph, The Point of Order, 2017.	79	
Figure 60:	Natalie Payne, <i>Encountering Windrift</i> exhibition installation photograph, The Point of Order, 2017.	80	
Figure 61:	Natalie Payne, <i>Encountering Windrift</i> exhibition installation photograph, The Point of Order, 2017.	81	
Figure 62:	Natalie Payne, <i>4 July 2015 III</i> . Pigment print on display paper. 90 x 60 cm.	82	110
Figure 63:	Natalie Payne, <i>31 August 2013</i> Pigment print on display paper. 90 x 60 cm.	84	110
Figure 64:	Natalie Payne, <i>12 January 2016</i> Pigment print on cotton paper. 31 x 31 cm.	85	111

LIST OF APPENDICES

Page

Appendix 1: *Encountering Windrift* (2012- 2017) – photographs. 100

Appendix 2: *Encountering Windrift* – Exhibition installation photographs. 124
The Point of Order, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, June 2017.

Introduction

A flood-song of memories mingles with domestic order – Lydia Goldblatt (2013:73).



Figure 1: Natalie Payne, *4 July 2015 I*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 31 x 31 cm.

4 July 2015 I (Figure 1) is the first photograph in the installation of my body of work titled *Encountering Windrift* 2012–2017 (The Point of Order Gallery, Braamfontein, Johannesburg). Produced in conjunction with my dissertation, the work involves a series of photographs that depict my childhood family home prior to and shortly after the death of my mother. The context in which I produced this work is middle-class South African suburbia, between 2012 and 2017. *4 July 2015 I* is an image of the doorway of my childhood home that leads between the lounge and the dining area. The double doors are covered in mostly black and white photographs of my mother taken by my father before the birth of my sister and I. My father placed these photographs of my mother onto the doors, and spilling onto the wall, the night before her wake. They remained there for over two years. During my mother's wake people stood transfixed, gazing at these photographs. They are a portrayal of youthful beginnings and hopefulness. My own series of photographs, on the other hand, speak of ageing, endings and loss.



Figure 2: Natalie Payne, *Detail of the lounge door*, 2015.

In the photograph *4 July 2015 I*, through an extended depth of field, certain details draw the viewer into the picture. Due to the directional lines created by the architecture of the space, the viewer is led through the open door towards a wooden divider that demarcates the division between the public and the private sections of the family home. Sunlight falling onto the mid-ground also invites this passage of focus. Doors, windows and passageways are generally considered as threshold or liminal spaces. They feature recurrently in my series of photographs. Doors and windows suggest the permeability of the private space of home by the public world outside. *4 July 2015 I* is a key image in the series in that it alludes so particularly to family photographs and to the issue of making a private life public. Indeed, my father's photographs of my youthful mother initiated my investigation into the family archive and my consideration of loss through photography. Many theorists consider photography not as an *aide-mémoire* 'a mnemonic device' but a *memento mori* 'remember that you have to die' (See Benjamin 1931 & 1936, Sontag 1971, Barthes 1981).¹ Through my photograph of the lounge door, the viewer, by way of my father's photographs of my mother, engages with my father's loss, as well as an apprehension of her/his own loss and inevitable death. The sense of loss is provoked by the diminutive size of the photographs – all the more so due to the fact that their content is lost by the way they have been framed from afar. They indicate mere traces of a figure, thus alluding to absence. Through this intertwining – of self and other as well as public and private – the

¹ The fact that photography and memory are deeply interconnected is undeniable. This relationship is complex, however, as a photograph may either nurture or obstruct memory. In *Camera Lucida* (1981) Barthes describes how, during the grieving process following the death of his mother, he comes to the realisation that photographs, which capture a moment that has been (100, 115), are a reminder of death in the future (97).

photograph furthermore suggests the central notion of this dissertation: the photograph as the embodiment of the encounter between photographer, referent and viewer.

I see my photographic process as driven by a motivation to come to terms with the loss of my mother. In late 2012 my mother was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. I tried to spend as much time as possible with my family during this fraught period. Whenever I was free from work constraints I would fly from Johannesburg to Cape Town to be with them. My sister had just moved back into the family home, so for the first time since my leaving, at the age of 19, we found ourselves together as a family under one roof. While spending substantial time in the house I grew up in, my camera became, in a sense, my diary. These photographs of everyday moments, as they unfolded in the private space of my childhood home, were made without conscious fixed intentions. Yet, I think that on one level I was attempting to stop the relentless flow of time: to hold onto my mother and my home. Photographer Larry Sultan (2017:28), in discussing the making of the photographs of his ageing parents in their suburban family home for his series *Pictures from Home* (1982–1992), states:

I realise that beyond the rolls of film and the few good pictures, the demands of my project and my confusion about its meaning, is the wish to take photography literally. To stop time. I want my parents to live forever.

With my mother's prognosis, I became aware that certain things that had always been constant in my life (my mother and my family home) were threatened. Social anthropologist Paul Connerton² (2009:20) speaks about home having a 'taken-for-grantedness': just as when our bodies become threatened by disease and we confront our own mortality, so we only become aware of the importance of 'home' when it is threatened. On the visits home prior to my mother's death, I found myself extremely aware of her future absence and felt compelled to photograph her in the spaces where I was so used to seeing her. After her death, I continued photographing the trivial, the mundane, and the everyday of the home I grew up in: the things one does not usually deem necessary to photograph, the things one takes for granted. As we went through the process of grieving, I was photographing my mother's absence, as well as traces of her presence felt in certain objects or places in the house.

I spent days going through drawers filled with family photographs, encountering those ubiquitous Kodak envelopes that have emblazoned across them texts such as 'share those precious moments' or 'memories fade, your photographs won't'. My father photographed my mother from the time he met her in 1959, until her death in 2013. He photographed my sister

² Connerton (2009:19), in *How Modernity Forgets*, in his examination of the cultural amnesia of contemporary society, suggests that 'home' remains a 'mnemonic system'.

and I from birth through adolescence, and on into adult life. He photographed the family home, neighbours, and friends. All the important happy occasions we shared are documented. The sad occasions are missing from these photographs; however, they are not missing from my mother's diaries. I read my mother's notebooks and diaries that I found neatly ordered in three shoeboxes at the bottom of her cupboard. She kept a diary from 1955 to 2013, mostly factual entries concerning her daily life. The falls, the failures and the deaths are all faithfully recorded, as are the triumphs, the births and the good times. The personal nature of the diary, which is generally not written for others to read, accommodates both the good and bad times. The family album, to be shared with others, is filled with photographs illustrating moments of togetherness, happiness, achievements and important milestones, shying away from the low points in family life. Family photographs thus perpetuate the myth of suburban bliss and the ideal family.



Figure 3: Nigel Payne, *Cynthia*, circa 1962. Gelatin silver print.

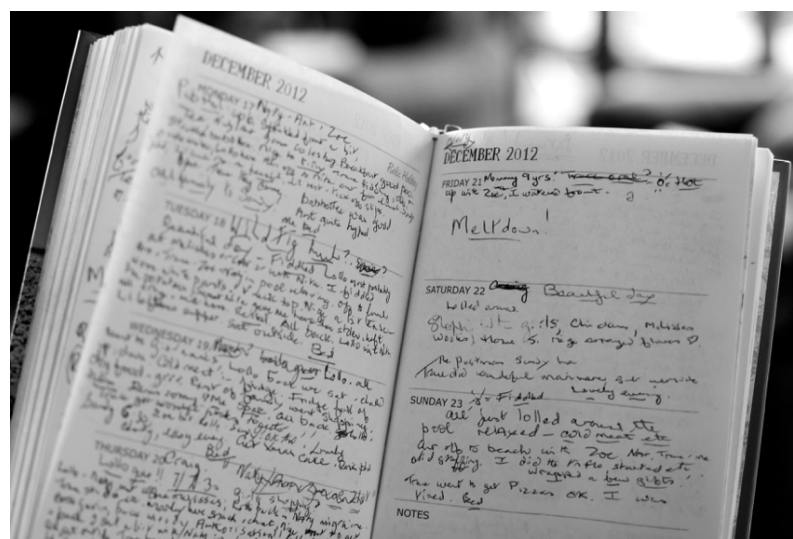


Figure 4: Natalie Payne, *Diary entries December 2012, 2014*.

In our family photographs my mother always seems happy: she smiles and poses for the camera, cigarette in hand. Yet her diary reveals a pensive, often depressed person. The suburban utopia did not seem to be enough. Betty Friedan (in Nicolaides and Wiese (eds) 2006:300), in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) speaks of ‘the problem that has no name’ that appeared to be troubling women all over suburbia in the 50s and 60s. The woman who has it all, yet felt a ‘strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning... she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – “Is this all?”’



Figure 5: Nigel Payne, *Erf 3299, 13 Montagu Way, Pinelands*, 1965. Gelatin silver print.³



Figure 6: Nigel Payne, *‘Windrift’, 13 Montagu Way, Pinelands*, 1967. Gelatin silver print.

All the images in my series of photographs *Encountering Windrift*, were taken within the parameters of a plot of land and a small family home situated in the suburb of Pinelands, Cape

³ The poplar tree in Figure 5, visible immediately behind the blue gum tree close to the roadside, is the same tree that features so prominently in my series of photographs: the pruned tree growing through the roof of my childhood family home (see Figure 54, page 34).

Town. Formerly a white middle-class suburb, Pinelands straddles the boundary between the city's leafy, upper-middle-class suburbs nestled at the foot of Table Mountain and the sprawl of townships and informal settlements known as the Cape Flats: an arid stretch of land where people of colour were forcibly removed from their homes in the city, and relocated under the apartheid government's policy of racial segregation (Clark & Worger 2011:51). The suburb of Pinelands, designed according to the notion of a 'Garden City'⁴, was named after the abundance of pine trees and is frequently praised for its peacefulness. For those who live there, however, it is notorious for the winds that batter it from all sides; winds, which, depending on their direction, bring either the smell of a nearby abattoir, or a sewerage plant. It really is the middle of the middle: a nowhere place that as a teenager, one could only long to escape from. My father bought the property in 1965, a sandy patch of land with two trees, and designed and built our home in 1967. My father and sister still reside there. Figure 5, a photograph taken by my father, depicts my mother and I visiting the empty plot. The image of mother and child poignantly references a time of looking forward, of hopefulness. In another photograph taken by my father, Figure 6, I am playing in my sandpit in the back garden of our newly built house. My father's iconic family photographs evoke the safe and nurturing environment of home.

As suggested above, my mother's diaries as well as my diaristic photographs, are more expressive of the duality of suburban life – life is comfortable, clean, ordered and pleasant but often slips over into a space of discomfit, sadness, and unrealised expectations. Reading through her diaries has deeply affected my process: indeed the photograph *4 July 2015 (I)* (Figure 1) alludes to the slippage between the comfort of domestic order, and the stifling nature of life in suburbia. The photograph embodies the encounter between these aspects of suburbia. The beige tones of the walls and carpeted floor, the wooden doors and furniture, the comfortable armchair in the right-hand corner and the family of four sculpted 'meerkats' on the shelf allude to the homely aspect. However, these very things, along with the dated, skewed furniture and the kitsch ornaments, quickly start to represent their opposite: the beige blandness of suburbia, boredom, hours spent watching television and a sense of suffocation.

In order to frame my autobiographical photographic practice, this dissertation develops certain theories that support the notion of the photograph as an 'embodied encounter.' In so doing I draw on contemporary philosophy and certain psychoanalytic theories. A photograph has long

⁴ Sir Ebenezer Howard (in Parsons & Schuyler 2002:5), in *Garden Cities of ToMorrow* [sic] (1902), outlined his garden city concept where the houses would be well built with 'a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round [sic] the walls'. These garden cities, which combined the advantages of both city and country, would offer an idyllic alternative to the overcrowded and polluted cities that were becoming increasingly unhealthy (5).

been considered as a product of the subjective point of view of the photographer (Eisinger 1995:16).⁵ However, photography theorist Ariella Azoulay (2008:21) suggests that a photograph cannot represent ‘a single sovereign, stable point of view’. Rather, that which is inscribed in the frame, as well as the interpretation thereof, is the product of an encounter of several protagonists: ‘camera, photographer, photographed subject, and spectator’. Azoulay (2008:21-22) writes that anybody involved in photography – the photographer, the referent and the viewer of the resultant image – are caught up in the ‘civil contract of photography’. According to this contract, even those who are disenfranchised are accorded agency through the photographic act.⁶ Like Azoulay’s ‘contract’ (2008:21-22), I consider a photograph as an embodied encounter between photographer, photographic referent⁷, and the viewer. Indeed, I use the term ‘*embodied encounter*’⁸ in order to signify an interrelationship between people, objects and places – ‘a citizenry’ (Azoulay 2008:93) – brought into being through the photographic act and the viewing of the image.

I utilise French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1968:130) notion of ‘embodiment’⁹ as the philosophical underpinning for my research, paying particular attention to his use of the terms ‘the intertwining’ and ‘the chiasm’. According to Merleau-Ponty (in Matthews 2010:6,12), the individual is a being whose self is contingent upon the social, political and cultural position of the body in the world, and in a particular spatiotemporal situation. In considering the photograph as an embodied encounter, I contend that photography provides us with what could be thus defined as a chiasmic interrelation of photographer, photographic referent and viewer. The chiasm, a philosophical term drawn from the Greek letter for ‘X’ – ‘chi’ (Toadvine 2016:[sp]) was introduced by Merleau-Ponty in the last completed chapter from the incomplete and posthumously published manuscript, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968).

⁵ For modernists, despite their claims concerning the objectivity of photography, the very notion of photography as art implies the subjective vision of the photographer (Eisinger 1995:12). Postmodernists, on the other hand, consider the photographers point of view as being socio-culturally constructed (Rosler, in Durden 2013:195).

⁶ Azoulay, in her groundbreaking book *The Civil Contract of Photography* (2008), offers a more nuanced approach to the act of photographing the suffering of others than the disparaging view expressed by a number of photography theorists (see Rosler 1981 and Sontag 2003). She suggests that the act of photography gives visibility to people who have been politically side-lined, such as those who are stateless or minority groups. This, she argues, justifies photojournalism and documentary photography.

⁷ In this dissertation I utilise the term ‘photographic referent’ to denote the situation, the subject, the thing or the place photographed. I borrow the term from Roland Barthes (1989:4-6), as explicated in his text *Camera Lucida* (1981), where he emphasises that a photograph and its referent are inseparable.

⁸ The word ‘encounter’ on its own signifies a confrontation, the embodied aspect of the encounter is where the interrelationship occurs, thus my formulation ‘embodied encounter’.

⁹ After the first mention of terms used throughout this dissertation such as ‘embodiment’, ‘chiasm’, ‘intertwining’ and ‘affect’, I will henceforth refer to them without quotation marks, except when using a direct citation. The same applies to other words that express specific concepts, for example ‘diaristic’ or ‘authentic’.

In this chapter, titled ‘The Intertwining - The Chiasm’, he outlines a potential solution to the subject/object dualism that pervaded his earlier writings on phenomenology and embodied being, particularly as expounded in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)¹⁰ (Carman & Hansen 2006:18-19). According to Toadvine, (2016:[sp]) the notion of chiasmus refers, physiologically, to the crossing over of the optic nerves, which makes vision possible, and, rhetorically, to a sentence with a word order that is reversed in a following sentence. Toadvine (2016:[sp]) suggests that Merleau-Ponty utilises both the physiological and rhetorical meaning of chiasmus – the chiasmic crossing over or reversibility – to illustrate the idea that we are simultaneously subject and object. Thomas Baldwin (2004:247-248) explains Merleau-Ponty’s formulation, which I expand on in chapter one, by noting that the chiasm implies an intertwining of our bodily being, our perception of other beings, other objects in the world, and the world itself. In line with this intertwined notion of being and perception, I argue that photographs are not simply reflections of reality: they have their own embodied agency. They become objects in the world that give rise to thoughts, feelings, and emotions that often exist independently of the photographer and her/his intentions.

I contend that the notion of the photograph as ‘the embodiment of an encounter’ is ably grasped through autobiographical modes of photography. Nan Goldin (in Townsend 2008:69), renowned for her intimate photographs documenting her ‘family’ of friends and lovers, writes:

If you try to make ‘universal art’, you’re going to make crap. If you talk...about where you live, your tiny little radius, you can make universal art. That’s what I have tried to do; by talking about the specific to talk about the general, or somehow not even to talk about it, but to touch other people who might come from different worlds, even if they don’t live the same lifestyle.

Lucy Soutter (2013:70) labels this ‘diaristic’ mode, where feelings and emotions are evoked, as ‘authentic’ photography. In reference to Goldin’s photographs, Soutter (2013:72) suggests that because they depict the photographer’s markedly subjective perspective, the viewer is invited into a space of physical intimacy with both the photographer and the photographic referent. The viewer encounters something of what it means and feels to be Goldin. As I discuss in more detail in chapter two, Soutter (2013:128) suggests that in contemporary philosophy and art theory there has been a shift towards a focus on art’s ‘affect’. Along with Soutter’s notion of an authentic¹¹, affective form of photography practice, I also employ Jill Bennett’s conception

¹⁰ Concerning this important work, Michel Foucault (in Carman and Hansen 2005:19) wrote: ‘In this text, the body-organism is linked to the world through a network of primal significations, which arise from the perception of things’.

¹¹ Soutter (2013:72-73) is aware that the notion of authenticity is problematic. This will be expanded upon in chapter two.

of affect as described in her book *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (2005). Affect, according to Bennett (2005:7), is feeling that precedes cognitive thought. She coined the term ‘empathic vision’ to describe the viewing of trauma-related artworks, and the way in which, through affect, such work touches others. An artwork, according to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2003:164), is ‘a bloc of sensations...a compound of percepts and affects’. Both Soutter (2013:88,128) and Bennett (2005:7,23&249) emphasise Deleuze and Guattari’s (2013:166-167) notion of art engendering an affective embodied experience. In terms of my own practice, what is of relevance is the possibility that an encounter with photographs may lead to what Bennett (2005:22,249) terms an ‘affective response’, where the viewer, through an embodied experience, is ‘seeing feeling’.

The following chapters intertwine theories on embodiment, affect and photography. I investigate personal or intimate modes of photographic practice and include critical analyses of specific practices of a number of photographers whose work displays a thematic concurrence with my work. I conclude with a reflection on my own recent body of work, *Encountering Windrift* (2012–2017).

In chapter one I develop the theoretical framework to substantiate the notion of the photograph as an embodied encounter. In support of a theory of photography that lies between the conflicting ideas of modernist and postmodernist thought, I draw on notions of embodiment, the chiasm and affect. Maurice Merleau-Ponty insists on our embodied ‘being- in-the-world’¹² (in Baldwin (ed) 2004:91) and a ‘chiasmic intertwining’ (1968:130) of self, other and the world. Jill Bennett (2005:36) posits that photographs are able to convey an embodied affective experience because of their ability to evoke the viewer’s own emotional and bodily memories. These notions challenge the separation of mind and body, and self and other. This further engages with the notion of an ‘encounter’ between epistemes in photographic history. Through the examination of modernist, postmodernist and current conceptions of photography I explore the historical and cultural strands of thought that have affected photography theory. As a reaction to the perceived modernist notions of the primacy of subjective experience, and aesthetic beauty as an essential determinant of an artwork, postmodernism negated the notion of an autonomous subject and

¹² Martin Heidegger introduces this notion in his influential philosophical work *Being and Time* (1927) to indicate that the world is a fundamental part of our being. In so doing he seeks to challenge the division between human beings and the world, which is considered as outside and separate from the self. This is further employed by Merleau-Ponty in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) with his notion of embodied being (Matthews 2010:4-10). I use this notion in my dissertation to express Merleau-Ponty’s consideration of the body as the vehicle through which we perceive the world. According to Merleau-Ponty (in Carmen&Hansen 2005:68) ‘body and world are conceptually, not just causally, two sides of the same coin. The world and I are intelligible each only in light of the other’.

marginalised aesthetics (Costello 2007:2). However, in much current photography practice aesthetics has been expanded beyond both modernist and postmodernist articulations to the idea of it being a combination of artistic subjective creativity and conceptual meaning that is socially and culturally inscribed (Soutter 2013:5).

In chapter two I elaborate on the concept of an embodied encounter through reference to specific autobiographical photographic practices. In this regard, I examine ‘diaristic’ bodies of work that document family and/or suburbia. I address the problematic issues of objectification and voyeurism inherent in photography. Through the deployment of Soutter’s (2013:70) notion of ‘authenticity’ in contemporary photography, I argue that when photographers are intimately involved in the events portrayed, the objectification of others¹³ is reduced, due to the fact that in depicting their own lives, the photographers are self-objectifying. The viewers’ understanding that the photograph is a product of this self-objectification may increase the ‘transactive affect’ (Bennett 2005:8) and thus induce an ‘empathic response’ (2005:10). In this manner, these photographs frequently collapse the barriers between self and other, and thus enable what I have termed an *embodied encounter*.

Chapter three consists of an in-depth analysis of specific photographs that have affected me, thus engendering an embodied encounter. I examine works from Larry Sultan’s series *Pictures from Home* (1982–1992) and Lydia Goldblatt’s series *Still Here* (2010–2012), both of whom photographed their ageing parents in their suburban homes. I undertake a comparative analysis of their work and my series *Encountering Windrift* (2012–2017), elaborating upon the way in which an embodied encounter manifests in the selected photographs. I consider each of these series as encompassing elements of both diaristic and tableau modes of photography, which serve to enhance the embodied encounter. Finally, I suggest that photographs that deal with everyday life, as well as potentially shared trauma-inflected moments, offer a space of communication for people beyond political, social, economic and cultural differences. Homi K. Bhabha considers that:

The intimate recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other (in Briganti and Mezei 2012:358).

¹³ I am aware of the complexity of the term ‘other/s’. In my utilisation of the term I am referring to any person who is not myself. I do not use it in the pejorative sense of ‘othering’, as in ‘different from’ or ‘not one of us’.

Chapter 1: Intertwinings – Theory and Photographic Practice

How would the painter or poet express anything other than his encounter with the world? –
Merleau-Ponty (1964:56).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty considers the act of artmaking as an expression of our perceptual encounter with the world (1964:56).¹ In line with Merleau-Ponty's (in Baldwin (ed) 2004:91) notion of our embodied 'being-in-the-world' and the concomitant idea of art as an expression of embodied perception, I consider a photograph as the embodiment of an affective encounter between photographer, photographic referent and viewer/s. I begin this chapter by unpacking the key concepts of my theoretical framework: 'embodiment', 'the chiasm', and 'affect'. This follows with a brief historical account of the intertwining of theoretical discourse and photographic practice. Finally, I examine instances of autobiographical photographic practice after postmodernism, which inform the model of photography theory proposed in this dissertation.

1.1: Embodiment

In conceptualising the notion of an embodied encounter, I advocate a phenomenological approach to both the practice and reception of photography. My use of the term 'embodiment' refers specifically to the notion as propounded by Merleau-Ponty in his book *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). According to him, we experience the world through our bodily sense perceptions (Matthews 2002:45). Merleau-Ponty asserts that our bodies are not simply objects – 'mechanistic, physico-chemical systems' – rather, we are embodied subjects (in Matthews, 2010:50). In his suggestion that the perceiving mind is unable to detach from the world of embodied sensations, he challenges Cartesian mind body dualism². He therefore offers another model of thinking through the self's relationship to others and the world s/he inhabits, where subjectivity is constituted through embodied relationships.

¹ In a number of essays on visual art, Merleau-Ponty utilises the act of artmaking to elaborate his notion of embodied sense perception. He refers primarily to painting, and particularly the work of Cézanne, as exemplifying embodied vision. For Merleau-Ponty, even the more mechanical act of photography still displays embodied vision, as the photographer selects a viewpoint and composes the image (Matthews 2002:134-138).

² French philosopher René Descartes is considered as the founder of modern philosophy. With his *cogito ergo sum* 'I think therefore I am' he proposes that the only thing we can be sure of is the thinking mind. This led to what has been termed Cartesian dualism, a separation of mind and body, with the subjective self identified with the mind, and the body considered as a thoughtless object (Matthews 2010:40).

I gained the initial motivation for a theoretical aesthetic framework of embodiment from Lacanian theorist Joan Copjec's extended essay *The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Somatic Support* (1996).³ Copjec postulates that postmodernism can be seen as a reaction to modernism and the idealisation of the subject. If modernism is viewed as an abstraction that included a denial of the body, postmodernism has seen a 'veritable cornucopia of corporeal kinds' (1996:1). However, Copjec is critical of the postmodern conceptualisation of people as only socially constructed bodies lacking autonomy, and suggests we are a combination of both: body and embodied mind (1996:2). She argues that the blanket negation of thinking subjective experience as well as a misused concept of embodiment prevalent in much postmodernist theory, specifically in film, paradoxically suggests a return to a Cartesian mind-body duality. Copjec (1996:3) thus advocates that the body is neither a subject nor an object, but a complex intertwining of the two. A second text that led me to the notion of embodiment was an essay by art theorist Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin.⁴ Dengerink Chaplin (2005:[sp]) examines the work of a number of theorists, including Merleau-Ponty, who have attempted to develop a theory of art that considers the important role of the body – 'a site of the senses' – in both the production and experience of art. I consider Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodied subjectivity as occupying a position that lies between modernist and postmodernist thought concerning the subject.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I am specifically interested in the connections and differences between modernist and postmodernist notions of embodiment as they pertain to philosophical problems of subjectivity and objectivity, which come into play during both the making and viewing of photographs. With the postmodernist mistrust of the grand narratives of the Enlightenment came a questioning of the Cartesian notion of the autonomous subject, which in turn led to a 'waning of affect', or, subjective emotion (Jameson 2003:15-16). The return to affect in cultural theory over the last couple of decades can thus be considered as a reaction to, and expansion of, the frame of embodiment. Feminist critical theorist Judith Butler (2015:1&6-7) both draws on and expands Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology: she writes that the subject is

³ Copjec's text along with questions pertaining to the objectifying gaze in photography led me to Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1973). Lacan (1998:71), in his analysis of the gaze, references Merleau-Ponty's final manuscript *The Visible and The Invisible* (1968), which, in turn, serves as the theoretical underpinning of this dissertation.

⁴ The text, *Art and Embodiment: Biological and Phenomenological Contributions to Understanding Beauty and the Aesthetic* (2005), along with Copjec's essay, although no longer primary to my current research, are important to mention in that they led to my consideration of the notions of embodiment and the chiasm as they pertain to photography. In my earlier research on photographic portraiture, the notion of embodiment provided a solution to the subject-object duality of photographer and sitter.

affected and informed by ‘humans, institutions, and organic and inorganic processes’ (2015:6). She thus reiterates Merleau-Ponty’s (in Baldwin (ed) 2004:91) notion of our embodied ‘being-in-the-world’ and our inextricable connection to others.

Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida* (1981:9), adopts a phenomenological approach to photography, asking: ‘What does my body know of Photography?’ Through analysing his emotional and embodied reaction to photographs, he endeavours to formulate a universal *eidos* ‘essence’ of photography. What is fundamental for Barthes is the fact that the specificity of photography, as opposed to other mediums such as painting or sculpture, lies in it being a trace of what was in front of the camera in a certain place, at a moment in time; and how this trace incorporates the viewer in that moment. He writes:

From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here...A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light though impalpable, is here a carnal medium/a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed (1981:76, 80 and 81).

With the implication of a shared point of encounter between self, other and the world, Barthes’ notion of the photograph as a ‘shared skin’ relates to Merleau-Ponty’s (1968:130) notion of the ‘the chiasm – the intertwining’.⁵

1.1.1 : The Chiasm – The Intertwining

Maurice Merleau-Ponty employed the notion of embodiment in his writings to express the idea that perception, via our bodily senses, is our primary means of experiencing the world. This is key to my theorising the photograph as an embodied encounter. Merleau-Ponty’s large body of work has often been dismissed as belonging to the French phenomenological tradition that lost favour due to its adherence to the Cartesian mind-body duality (Schmidt 1985:158).⁶ Opposing the phenomenological approach, some French structuralists and post-structuralists seemed to argue in favour of a ‘cold and concerted destruction of the subject’ (Deleuze in Schmidt 1985:4). Yet even though Merleau-Ponty has been classified as a Cartesian phenomenologist,

⁵ Barthes’ notion also links to Copjec’s (1996:7-8) embodied Lacanian view of photography.

⁶ German philosopher Edmund Husserl challenged the primacy of the mind as exemplified by Descartes *cogito* ‘I think’ and introduced the notion of the embodied experience and ‘intersubjectivity’; however, he maintained the Cartesian and Kantian emphasis on human subjectivity (Matthews 2010:6). His student, Martin Heidegger, introduced the notion of ‘being-in-the- world’, which Merleau-Ponty utilised in his phenomenology (2010:12).

in his later work, particularly *The Eye and the Mind* (1961) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), he indicates a profound shift from the Cartesian *cogito*⁷, or, the primacy of the mind over the body. In the last chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible*, titled ‘The Chiasm – The Intertwining’, Merleau-Ponty introduces his ontology of the flesh which implies an ‘entanglement or interweaving, like the woof and warp of a fabric’ of subject and object, self and world, and mind and body (Toadvine 2016:[sp]).

The chiasm implies that the body is an irreducible combination of subjective and material existence (Merleau-Ponty 1968:136): we are neither a disembodied mind nor only a physical, socially constructed body but an embodied being (Matthews 2010:6,12). Merleau-Ponty (1968:138) utilises the notion of the chiasm to suggest the reversibility of ‘the body sensed and the body sentient’ and the ‘adhesion of the seer and the visible’. To explain this notion, he uses the analogy of the left hand touching the right hand, the one touching being simultaneously tangible, which he then extends to the seer being seen (1968:133).⁸ According to Merleau-Ponty we are neither simply subjects looking out onto the world nor simply objects in the world, we are simultaneously both and have a subjective understanding of our world through our sense perceptions (1968:133). The body is the vehicle for our subjective experience – we are intertwined with the world. As explained on pages seven and eight of the introduction, the chiasm is where the subjective body and objective world cross over.

Kaja Silverman⁹ (2015:10) defines photography as an analogy, in which the world is more indirectly revealed to us than supposed. According to Silverman (2015:88) ‘the photograph not only analogises the external world, but it also links us to one another through a particularly binding and democratising kind of analogy: the one called chiasmus’. She defines Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the chiasm as ‘the name for the ontological thread stitching the seer to what is seen’ (2015:88). Silverman’s conception of photography as an analogy links to Barthes’ (1981:81) assertion of the umbilical cord that connects the photographic referent to the viewer’s gaze.

⁷ I do not wish to underestimate the importance of Descartes, who, with his radical doubt and reasoning, is considered the father of modern philosophy (Scruton 2002:26). His *cogito ergo sum* ‘I think, therefore I am’ forms the basis of the Western notion of subjectivity (2002:27).

⁸ Burke and Van Der Veken (1993:xx) define Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the chiasm as ‘an interweaving and overlapping...of the invisible and the visible, the seeing and the seen, subject and world, person and other person...such that...they are in one another – the seeing seer is seen’.

⁹ American art historian and critical theorist Kaja Silverman introduces the notion of photography as analogy in her book *The Miracle of Analogy or The History of Photography, Part I* (2015).

Merleau-Ponty (1964:19) refers to artmaking as a means to elucidate his philosophy. In reference to the paintings of Cézanne, he writes that they ‘make visible how the world touches us’. Merleau-Ponty considered art as a meaningful phenomenological activity where, through the embodied act of artmaking, the self and the world are brought into contact, with the artwork enabling one to access the world as encountered by others (Parry 2011:2). Jill Bennett describes this ‘interpersonal transmission of experience’ generated by an artwork as an ‘affective transaction’ (2005:7).

1.1.2 : Affect

Affect theory is significant in formulating my notion of the photograph as an embodied encounter in that affect can be considered as a sign of embodied engagement. As I explain below, affect implies an interrelation of self and others. It also highlights the importance of our somatic response to the world as opposed to the Cartesian privileging of rational thought and intellectual inquiry. Barthes (1981:27) developed the corporeal notion of the ‘punctum’¹⁰ in order to understand why he felt an intense embodied response to certain photographs and not others. His notion of the punctum is relevant to my positing the photograph as embodying an encounter since it stresses the affective impact of the photograph on the viewer and thus allows feeling back into the meaning-making process (1981:25). In my use of the term ‘affect’ I draw primarily on the writings of Jill Bennett, who speaks of the way in which trauma-related artwork may affect the viewer through what she terms ‘empathic vision’. Affect, according to Bennett (2005:7), is not only that which is expressed by the artist through the artwork but also arises as a result of the relation between viewer and artwork. Bennett (2005:12) contends ‘the operative element of the artwork is it’s affective rather than its signifying capacity’. This quote is critical to my thesis in that it suggests that what is important in photography, over and above the notion of a photograph as the documentation of the objective world – its denotations and its connotations – is its ability to provoke affect. Bennett’s understanding of art as ‘an embodiment of sensation that stimulates thought’ (2005:8) is important in that it informs my formulation of photography as proposed by this dissertation: that it is a chiasmic spatio-temporal moment of

¹⁰ Barthes (1981:25-27) draws a distinction between what he terms the ‘studium’ and the ‘punctum’ of the photograph. The ‘studium’ is the set of contextual elements that situate the viewer in a particular environment that enables her/him to decipher the context of the photograph. The ‘punctum’ is ‘this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me... A photograph’s punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)’.

being for photographer, subject, and viewer, accompanied by the subjective affect of all parties, in chronotopic¹¹ synthesis, that is embodied in the photograph.

Affect theory has been somewhat overused in contemporary art discourse, and there is no clear theory of exactly what 'affect' is (Best 2011:31).¹² Best (2011:5) states that there is a range of conflicting usages of the term but utilises psychoanalyst Irène Matthis's definition of affect as being 'the generalised concept for all those embodied processes that, when they reach consciousness, can be perceived on the one hand as feelings and on the other as emotionally charged physical concomitants'. Best argues (2011:8) 'the affective dimension...is a feature of both subject and object' and forms part of the aesthetic encounter.¹³ Seigworth and Gregg (2010:2) describe affect as the force of an encounter, which 'transpires within and across the subtlest of shuttling intensities: all the minuscule...events of the unnoticed'. This definition of affect applies to the photographs of my family going about their daily life in suburbia, which frequently depict the 'events of the unnoticed', the minutiae of the transient. In applying the notion of affect to the viewing of photographs, what is important in my view are the 'non-conscious affective resonances' that may be produced by the work that then lead to the arousal of feeling (Best 2011:1). Reiterating Bennett, art theorist and philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (in Best 2011:ii), writes that: 'Art works affect before they inform, perform or communicate'.

In *Empathic Vision* Bennett (2005:7) describes the ability of artworks to act as 'vehicles for interpersonal transmission of experience'.¹⁴ She discusses Gilles Deleuze's notion of the 'encountered sign' that is experienced in an involuntary manner through intuitive feeling as

¹¹ The chronotope, as utilised by Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (in Holquist 2008:84), alludes to the inseparability of space and time. He describes this intertwining as follows: 'Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history'. Once again, in this quote, there is an allusion to Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968).

¹² I recognise that the notion of affect is problematic. Ruth Leys (2011:435), amongst a number of other theorists, critiques the turn to affect in the humanities and social sciences. While understanding this turn to affect as a consequence of the disembodiment caused by overvaluing reason and rationality (2011:436-458), she argues that affect theorists, in their suggestion that affect is pre-cognitive, have in fact reintroduced a mind-body dualism. She also questions affect theorists' dependence on, and misinterpretation of, research in neuroscience (2011:468).

¹³ Susan Best (2011:1,8) writes of 'a methodological blindspot in art history: the interpretation of art's affective dimension'. She argues that this has arisen as a result of the anti-aesthetic, anti-expressive and anti-subjective approach of postmodernism. She advocates for an account of art where subjectivity is embedded in the work as well as produced by the viewer's interaction with the artwork.

¹⁴ Artworks give rise to what Teresa Brennan (2004:1) calls the 'transmission of affect'. This refers to the physiological impact of affect – the way affect moves from one person to another or from an environment to a person (2004:4). According to Brennan this means that our energies are not self-contained nor is there an absolute distinction between the individual and the environment (2004:6).

opposed to rational cognition (2005:7).¹⁵ Following Marcel Proust, who wrote on the powerful nature of involuntary memory (as opposed to the conscious or ‘voluntary’ act of remembering), Deleuze (2000:61) suggests that what is important about affect is that it forces us to engage involuntarily.¹⁶ It is this form of pre-cognitive, involuntary engagement with artworks that is important for Bennett’s (2005:22) notion of ‘seeing feeling’. She defines works of art as ‘transactive’ rather than ‘communicative’ (2005:8). Bennett suggests (2005:8) that even though artworks affect the viewer, the viewer never gains direct access to another person’s perceptions and experience, except through the aesthetic experience. An aesthetic encounter with an artwork, she posits, facilitates access to the ‘interior phenomenology of another’. She argues that this ‘affective transaction’ may trigger ‘empathic vision’. Empathic vision does not imply a purely emotional or sentimental reaction but leads to deeper critical thought (2005:10). ‘Affective transaction’ (2005:10) relates in my view to Merleau-Ponty’s (1968:130) notions of the ‘embodied’, ‘intertwining’ or ‘chiasm’ where individual subjectivity is entwined with objects and other subjectivities through embodied temporal reciprocity. ‘Affective transaction’ (2005:7) is an irreducible human phenomenon at the ‘chiasm’ (1968:130) of experience.

The notion of ‘affective transaction’ is echoed in the work of artist and psychoanalyst, Bracha Ettinger, who espouses the notion of ‘subjectivity-as-encounter’, suggesting a ‘co-affecting’ between subjectivities (Pollock 2006:2-3). Ettinger’s affective experiential theory intertwines with her artwork and is utterly embodied in its ‘bodily thinking’. She introduces the notion of a ‘matrixial borderspace’ – an intersubjective relational field where subjectivity ‘is an encounter between I and uncognized yet intimate non-I’ (Ettinger 2006:218). Ettinger introduces this term in an attempt to offer a more contemporary and feminine interpretation of the Freudian and Lacanian phallogentric psychoanalytic model. According to her model, the womb is utilised, like the phallus, as a symbolic concept. Instead of the formation of subjectivity through anxiety and separation, it suggests that the formation of subjectivity is based on the co-existence between self and other that begins in the womb. This in turn enables a ‘primordial capacity for affect and for connection to others’ (Kinsella 2015:8). Tina Kinsella (2015:9) extends Ettinger’s

¹⁵ This notion is developed in Deleuze’s *Proust and Signs* (2008). What is also of interest to note concerning Deleuze is that he was one of the few post-structuralist French philosophers to notice the resonance of Merleau-Ponty’s final work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964), with poststructuralist conceptions of subjectivity (Carman & Hansen 2006:19).

¹⁶ Proust’s influential *À la recherche du temps perdu* ‘In Search of Lost Time’ (1913–1927), which explores the nature of perception and memory, has been addressed by numerous writers and philosophers. Merleau-Ponty (1968:149) suggests ‘no one has gone further than Proust in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible, in describing an idea that is not the contrary of the sensible, that is its lining and its depth’ (see also Benjamin 1929 and Deleuze 1964). Proust’s famous passage describing the flood of memory that results from tasting a *madeleine* (a small sponge cake) dipped into tea refers to the nature of involuntary memory.

notion of ‘subjectivity-as-encounter’ to ‘subjectivity-as-affective- encounter’. She argues that one can access a ‘transsubjective stratum’ through the affective experience of the aesthetic encounter with an artwork (2015:9). Kinsella (2015:1) suggests that Judith Butler, through her notions of ‘precariousness’ and ‘precarity’¹⁷ – a bodily vulnerability that is shared by all individuals – speaks of the self/other relation as a ‘co-existence’. For Butler (in Kinsella 2015:1), ‘precarity’ is the common threat of injury, suffering, and death, and may serve to create solidarity between individuals – or enable an ‘affective transaction’ (Bennett 2005:7). This is, according to Butler (in Kinsella 2015:3-4), a ‘chiasmic intertwining relation’ where individual bodies are not conceived of as ‘being completely distinct from one another’: instead, subjectivities can be viewed as interdependent and ‘co-affected’. Butler (2015:36) in referring to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the chiasm, where he labels that which is intertwined as ‘the flesh’, states ‘flesh is not something one has, but rather, the web in which one lives’.¹⁸ All of the above notions, in line with Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm, serve as a challenge to the Western subject-object dualism.

Photography is frequently accused of transforming a subject into an object (Barthes 1981:14) and indicted as being aggressive and voyeuristic (Sontag 2008:7-16). While I agree with aspects of this criticism, I believe that in instances where the photographer is deeply involved in the lives of those s/he photographs, the degree of objectification is lessened. Matthew Ryan Smith (2012) describes the act of looking at autobiographical photographs, particularly those that portray suffering or ‘everyday trauma’¹⁹, as ‘relational viewing’. An affective encounter with a photograph may generate empathy, and thus serve to bring people closer together in an empathic exchange as per Bennett’s theorisation. I consider affect, in the form of feelings and emotions, as a non-Cartesian correlation to critical thought (a matrix of relations), may lead to a greater awareness of our commonality²⁰ as human beings despite our cultural and ideological differences. The aphorism ‘affect is the flesh of the signifier and the signifier of the flesh’ (Green in Best 2011:44) refers to the embodied intertwining of representation and affect.

¹⁷ Influential philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler introduced the concept of ‘precarity’ in her book *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning* (2004). She draws from Emmanuel Levinas’s notion of ethics based on the precarious life of others (2004:xviii).

¹⁸ Deleuze, in his allusion to Merleau-Ponty, defines the flesh as ‘[t]he being of sensation, the bloc of percept and affect, which appear as the unity or reversibility of feeling and felt, their intimate intermingling like hands clasped together’ (in Carman & Hansen 2005:19).

¹⁹ Smith (2012:24) defines everyday trauma as being ‘inclusive and recognisable throughout society’, thus the affective response provoked by viewing photographs representing others people’s everyday trauma ‘can offer ways of bridging differences that may limit our understanding of each other’.

²⁰ The notion of commonality as opposed to difference links to academic and writer Njabulo Ndebele’s emphasis on the need for a greater understanding of the interpersonal intertwining of people in ordinary everyday life (Brystrom & Nuttall 2013:324).

The notion of relationality or reciprocity, of shared and translated affect through ‘chiasmic’ or ‘intertwined’ (Merleau-Ponty 1968:130), or even ‘entangled’²¹ (Nuttall 2009:1) embodied encounters with photographic objects and simulacral depictions of ‘shuttling intensities’ (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:2) is integral to my theory and practice of photography.

Currently we are witnessing a repudiation of the effects of the postmodernist dethronement of the subject, while simultaneously being unable to return to the dualistic tradition of Western humanism (see Gardiner 2011:115-130 and Soutter 2013:70-89). Merleau-Ponty’s model of embodied subjectivity offers an alternative discourse to that of postmodernism, as well as indicating a ‘post-Cartesian paradigm’, which I consider as being crucial to an understanding of contemporary photography as an art practice (Gardiner 2012:126).²² Jean-Luc Nancy in his writings in the 1990s, exhibits a phenomenological approach in that he considers the formation of subjectivity as occurring through ‘concrete sensory engagements with reality’ (Soutter 2013:87).²³ This return to non-Cartesian phenomenology, in its concern with the way we experience reality, is inextricably also a return to the phenomenon of affect and an affirmation of the idea that a photograph may simultaneously act as a ‘chiasm’, or a fulcrum point for an ‘intertwining’ (Merleau-Ponty 1968:130) or ‘affective transaction’ (Bennett 2005:10) between the embodied subjective vision of the photographer, and that of the viewer – linked across time through the skin-like umbilicus of the photograph (Barthes 1981:80-81).

In what follows, I examine the crosscurrents in Western modernist, postmodernist and current thought in order to interrogate shifting perceptions concerning notions of embodiment, subjectivity and affect. I include a brief historical account of photography, investigating the effect of theoretical discourse on both its practice and reception.

²¹ Associate professor of literary and cultural studies at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) Sarah Nuttall, in her book *Entanglements: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-apartheid* (2009), introduces the notion of social, racial and spatial ‘entanglements’ that exist between people in order to map, what she terms, our ‘mutuality’ as opposed to our ‘difference’. I expand on this in chapter two.

²² Gardiner (2012:126) states that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology suggests the beginnings of a post-humanism. According to Roelvink and Zolkos (2013:47) post-humanism reframes the human subject as embodied, connected and co-evolving, ‘not enclosed within intra-species boundaries of existence’ but rather situated ‘within the other-than-human world, which includes animals, plants, and things.’

²³ In *Who comes after the Subject?* (1991), French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, in deconstructing the Enlightenment notion of the subject, offers a contemporary version of subjectivity that does not imply Cartesian dualism. In *Corpus* (1992) he defines the body as ‘the body of sense’, alluding to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of subjectivity as embodied sense perception.

1.2: Shifting Perspectives – Modernism, Postmodernism and Photography

Modernist and postmodernist theory is deeply intertwined with both the practice and the reception of photography. There is a large body of writing on photography, with theorists and practitioners alike expressing varied and often contradictory notions. Early photographs were seen as something one receives from the world, almost without human intervention, other than through the mechanical capturing device (Silverman 2015:15, 26).²⁴ Nineteenth century critics considered photography as ‘a purely scientific and unfeeling art’ (Brown & Phu 2014:10). With modernism, photography was associated with the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium, and the unique vision of the photographer. Postmodernism denigrated each of these notions emphasising, instead, a more conceptual approach. I briefly examine modernist and postmodernist photography in order to situate my position in the ongoing debate concerning ‘what photography is’²⁵.

1.2.1 : Modernism

Modernism, the term used to describe cultural and aesthetic innovations that evolved during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, can be described as the culmination of the Cartesian celebration of reason, logic and rationality (Hirsch 2009:170). Scientific research and technological advancements made during the Enlightenment challenged the dominance of the church and royalty.²⁶ Modernity saw the advent of the autonomous individual (Caputo 2016:29).²⁷ Modernism, in its belief that the work of art is ‘a purely self-sufficient and self-reflexive experience’ (Foster, Krauss, Bois & Buchloh 2004:23), adhered to the Kantian

²⁴ Henry Fox Talbot, the early British pioneer of photography, defined the pictures he created as being drawn by ‘the pencil of nature’; and Frenchman Jacques-Mandé Daguerre spoke of the photographic process he invented as ‘not merely an instrument, which serves to draw nature [but]...a chemical and physical process that gives her the power to reproduce herself’ (Silverman 2015:26).

²⁵ Barthes (1981:3), in *Camera Lucida*, attempts to define what photography is. *What Photography Is* (2011) is also the title of a book on photography by James Elkins that critiques Barthes’ view of photography.

²⁶ Prior to the Enlightenment artists’ subject matter had to be approved by the church, the state or the aristocracy. With the Enlightenment, this was no longer the case since the secular tradition of Renaissance humanism placed man rather than God at the centre of the universe (Smith & Wilde 2009:52-53).

²⁷ Philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1825), in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), formulated the modern human subject as ‘a rational being characterised by free will’ (Trombly 2012:19).

formalist approach to aesthetics and artistic autonomy²⁸ but placed even greater emphasis on medium specificity, artistic genius and subjective expression. The artist was considered a creator who was now able to express himself according to his subjective sensibility. Clement Greenberg is the art critic most associated with twentieth century modernism: ‘Greenbergian formalism’, signifying form over meaning or subject matter (Jones 2006:138).²⁹

In the 1920s American photographers embraced the ability of the photographic medium to reproduce reality. This ‘straight’ photography, exemplified by sharp focus, formal composition and technical excellence, yet still illustrative of the photographers’ unique vision (Soutter 2013:3), marks the beginning of American modernist photography.³⁰ Photographer Paul Strand (1890–1976), who was influential in shaping American modernism and the practice of documentary photography, described the essence of photography as its ‘absolute unqualified objectivity’ (in Eisinger 1995:122).

The notion of the photograph as an authentic trace was epitomised by the rise of documentary photography.³¹ Inherent to the documentary tradition are the notions of the photographer as witness and the implicit truth-value³² of the photograph. These were the guiding principles of South African photography from the 50s up until the mid-90s, where the purpose of photography was often directed towards documenting the struggle against apartheid. In a country where the truth was hidden, it became imperative for photographers to make visible the

²⁸ Kant, in *The Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790), outlined an aesthetic theory that was to profoundly shape the definition of what constitutes art. Kant stressed the universality of judgements concerning beauty and the autonomy of the artwork (Costello 2007:7,8). Modernist art critic, Clement Greenberg, in his essay *Modernist Painting* (1960), where he attempts to define modernism, labels Kant ‘as the first real Modernist’.

²⁹ Greenberg advocated the notion of paintings ‘for eyesight alone’ (Jones 2006:137).

³⁰ Straight photography arose as a reaction to pictorialism, the dominant art photography movement in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Through the use of soft-focus images of romantic scenes, pictorialist photographers attempted to emulate painting and create images that ironically looked less photographic but produced aesthetic feelings (Hirsch 2009:93).

³¹ The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century saw the emergence of documentary photographers, such as Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, who used hand held cameras and ‘dangerous flashlight powder to illuminate the horrid details of grim poverty’ (Hirsch, 2009: 219). In America in the 1930s, a socially conscious, revelatory and educational form of photography arose, practiced by photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans who were hired by Roy Stryker’s Farm Security Administration to document the effects of the depression on America and create public awareness.

³² In contrast, Allan Sekula (1982:94), a postmodern photography theorist, labels the notion of the truth-value of photography as mythical.

reality of black South Africans living under the apartheid regime (Hayes 2007:144). Figure 7, a photograph by *Drum*³³ photographer Ernest Cole (1940-1990) documenting a cramped non-white bus ride, exemplifies the role of the camera as a weapon for social change.



Figure 7: Ernest Cole, from *House of Bondage*, 1967. Gelatin silver print.³⁴



Figure 8: Robert Frank, *Ranch Market, Hollywood*, 1956. Gelatin silver print.

³³ *Drum*, a magazine renowned for 'truth telling and high fashion' (Potenza 2017:65), was founded shortly after the legislation of apartheid. Despite the editorial policy of not getting involved in political issues, the magazine did begin giving a voice to the oppressed. Photographers associated with *Drum* during the 1950s were Alf Khumalo, Bob Gosani, Ernest Cole, Peter Magubane, and Jurgen Schadeburg, all of whom produced serious bodies of personal work alongside their commercial work for the magazine (Hayes 2007:144).

³⁴ Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage* (1967) was published a year after he went into self-imposed exile, but banned in South Africa. The book, which includes his photographs and words, 'ripped open the belly of the apartheid beast' with its penetrating exposé of the horrors faced by black South Africans on a daily basis (Hayes 2007:144).

With his book *The Americans*, published in 1959, Robert Frank had a profound influence on late modernist photography.³⁵ According to Geftter (2009:9), the ‘immediacy, spontaneity, and compositional anarchy’ of his framing challenged the rigid formalism of the earlier modernists. What is notable in Frank’s oeuvre is the documentation of his personal experience in the authentic mode of the so-called snapshot aesthetic (as in Figure 8, with the head of the woman positioned at the bottom of the frame, almost appearing decapitated) – a mode that only became possible with the availability of discreet portable cameras.

Modernist photography reached its apotheosis with John Szarkowski’s ascension to the ‘judgement seat’³⁶ as director of photography at MOMA in 1960 (where he remained until 1991). His exhibitions firmly entrenched notions of the autonomy of photographic artworks and the subjective expression of the photographer (Wells 2003:84). In the exhibition *New Documents* (1967) Szarkowski showcased the photography of Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Gary Winogrand, who were all directly influenced by Frank’s *The Americans*. The aim of these three photographers, he writes, ‘has been not to reform life, but to know it’ (in Geftter 2009:12). Their work, which combines ‘the un-self-conscious informality of the family snapshot with the authenticity of documentary photography and the immediacy of a news picture’ (Geftter 2017:[sp]), clearly exemplifies the shift from the notion of the photograph as objective document towards incorporating an increasingly subjective vision of the world.



Figure 9: William Eggleston, *Untitled (Memphis)*, 1970. Colour photograph. Dye-transfer. 16 x 20 inches.

³⁵ *The Americans*, an intensely personal view of America, challenged the way Americans saw themselves (Hirsch 2009:307). Initially Frank was unable to find a publisher for the book, which is now considered as one of the more important photography books of the twentieth century.

³⁶ This is the name given to the directors of The Museum of Modern Art by Christopher Phillips in his essay ‘The Judgement Seat of Photography’ (in Bolton (ed) 1992:15).

In the press release for the exhibition *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960* (1978), Szarkowski proposed a ‘new critical framework for the appreciation of contemporary photography’ (1978:1). He outlined his notion of a photograph as either ‘a mirror, reflecting a portrait of the artist who made it, or a window, through which one might better know the world’ (1978:4). He suggests that photographs are generally an amalgamation of mirror and window.³⁷ The exhibition is notable for including the colour photography of William Eggleston and Stephen Shore. Prior to the groundbreaking work of these two photographers, colour photography was considered as the domain of vernacular and commercial photography and inappropriate for art photography.³⁸ In defence of the ‘trivial’ suburban colour photography of William Eggleston (Figure 9, the bland image of a tricycle being an example), Szarkowski (2002 [sp]) commends the commonplace as worthwhile subject matter for art photography. This more quotidian work, emerging from the photographer’s immediate surroundings and subjective experience, profoundly changed the nature of photographic practice.

1.2.2 : Postmodernism

Postmodernism, which emerged in the mid-1980s, challenged the tenets of modernism³⁹, rejecting in art, ‘all things Greenbergian’ (Heartney 2013:10). Postmodernity arose as a result of a loss of faith in the grand narratives of the past (Lyotard 1984:xxiv)⁴⁰, and increasing doubt concerning the ability of reason to liberate and transform society for the better (Ferraris 1988:16). Postmodernism has been notoriously difficult to define. Rather than being considered as a cultural or theoretical framework it has been labelled as a ‘dissenting mood’ (Spencer 2009:145). With the development of psychoanalysis, including the Freudian notion of the ‘unconscious’ and Lacanian⁴¹ interpretation of the formation of identity, there occurred a progressive shift away from the notion of subjectivity as autonomous, culminating in the subject

³⁷ Although this notion might appear rather outdated I find it of relevance for my argument in that it implies the intertwining of subjectivity and objectivity implicit in photography.

³⁸ Nowadays colour photographs, by photographers such as Andreas Gursky, Cindy Sherman and Jeff Wall, command some of the highest prices at art auctions.

³⁹ See outline of modernism on pages 20–21.

⁴⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), examines ideas being developed at the time concerning institutional and ideological forms of knowledge (Sim 2009:263). He introduced the term ‘master narrative’ in order to define an abstract idea that is supposed to provide universal explanations (Sim 2009:226).

⁴¹ French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan is considered as one of the founding fathers of postmodernism (Sim 2009:256). Postmodernism challenged the notion of a stable self, suggesting instead that the self is constructed through ideology and language (312).

being constructed by language and context (Sim 2009:312). With the post-structuralist adoption of the Foucauldian theory of subjectivity as being determined by epistemic knowledge, and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the self as a stable unified entity, postmodern theorists rejected the creative subjectivity of the artist (Sim 2009:196 & 211- 212). Due to the mediated nature of experience, any notion of authenticity and originality was suspect (Hirsch 2009:383).⁴² Postmodernism challenged the modernist idea of meaning being placed into an artwork by the artist, stating instead that the viewer creates meaning, and meaning is contextual (Eisinger 1995:507).

Already in the 60s and 70s younger photography critics and artists, such as Susan Sontag⁴³, Allan Sekula, Douglas Crimp and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, began challenging Szarkowski's formalism by deconstructing the assumptions traditionally held about photography. This gave rise to a postmodernist conception of photography. Solomon-Godeau (2003:152) exemplifies what postmodernism is in relation to modernism by discussing two photographs: Edward Weston's *Torso of Neil* (1926), a 'canonical photograph of high modernist art photography' and *Portrait of Neil, after Edward Weston* (1979), Sherrie Levine's rephotographed version of the same photograph. Weston's photograph clearly expresses the tenets of modernism. It is an autonomous artwork – a 'straight'⁴⁴ photograph, formally composed, and carefully hand printed on archival fibre-based paper⁴⁵. Weston (2003:104-105) considered the photograph as an instantaneous and realistic recording of the subject yet firmly believed in the subjective expression of the artist through a chosen medium. Postmodernism refuted each of these aspects. Levine's artwork is a copy of another artist's work thus negating the notion of medium specificity, subjective creative expression or a direct record of reality. It is a 'simulacrum' – a copy of a copy (Wells 2009:22). Levine's appropriated photograph reiterates the postmodern assertion of the impossibility of 'pure, unblemished meaning or experience at all' (Eagleton in Grundberg 1990:5). For Sekula (in Durden 2013:200) the meaning of a photograph, which can

⁴² This has been advocated by Roland Barthes in his essay 'Death of the Author' (1967) and Frederic Jameson's insistence on the 'death of the subject' (2003:15).

⁴³ Sontag's *On Photography* (1977), which Durden (2013:214&215) defines as 'a modernists anxiety about photography's postmodern effects', was considered as one of the first books on postmodernist photography theory.

⁴⁴ 'Straight' photography, practised by photographers such as Edward Steichen and Alfred Stieglitz in their later work, Ansel Adams's landscapes and Paul Strand's 'brutally direct' photographs, epitomised modernist photography (Solomon-Godeau in Wells (ed) 2003:155,158). The term refers to a straightforward rendition of reality, crisp detail and technically perfect prints.

⁴⁵ Black and white fibre-based prints are possibly still the most 'archival' of all photographic printing methods and have the ability to articulate extremely subtle tonal variations.

never be a ‘neutral reproduction of reality’, is always contextual. Solomon-Godeau (2003:160) describes the common denominator of postmodern photographic practice as being ‘its collective resistance to any type of formal analysis, psychological interpretation, or aesthetic reading’. She insists on the social-constructedness of photographic meaning, which is always culturally coded. Concerning postmodern art photography, Andy Grundberg⁴⁶ (1990:3), writes: ‘Decoration and representation were out, eye appeal was suspect, emotional appeal thought sloppy if not gauche’. In a rebuttal to Szarkowski’s notion of the photograph being either a mirror or a window (or a combination of both), he states ‘[p]hotographs are no longer seen as transparent windows on the world, but as intricate webs spun by culture’ (1990:101). Victor Burgin’s seminal collection of essays on photography, *Thinking Photography* (1982), clearly expresses the postmodern idea that the purpose of art is to consider the way in which images make meaning. Burgin (1982:1-4), with his neo-Marxist and structuralist photo critique, is interested in the way photography both represents society and shapes ideologies.

Aesthetics also underwent a dramatic shift from the early modernist desire to experience visual pleasure through the work of art to the postmodernist anti-aesthetic⁴⁷ stance, which rose to prominence in the 70s and celebrated ‘the ugly, the raw, the common, the everyday’ (Jones 2006:164). Modernist aesthetic autonomy was equated with bourgeois subjectivity. Douglas Crimp used the term ‘postmodernism’ in the exhibition catalogue for *Pictures*⁴⁸ in 1979. He considers Cindy Sherman’s *Film Stills* (1977-1980), in which the artist poses as female characters typical of film noir, as postmodern since ‘they use art not to reveal the artist’s true self but to show the self as an imaginary construct’ (1980:35). Photography, as a medium that lends itself to the notions of social-constructedness, and infinite authorship, as well as in the mechanical ability to reproduce copy after copy, was considered as the emblematic medium of postmodernism (Sheikh in Warren 2006:1295).

⁴⁶ Grundberg is a former photography critic for *The New York Times*. His writings, gathered together in *The Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography, 1974–1989*, articulate postmodernist ideas concerning photography.

⁴⁷ In Hal Foster’s *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983) various authors react to Greenbergian formalism and question notions of the aesthetic. In Foster’s book *Vision and Visuality* (1988) the fact that vision itself is a product of socio-political forces is stressed. Modernist ocularcentrism (the Western hegemony of the visual over the other senses) was challenged by postmodernist thinkers and resulted in what Martin Jay (1994) labels the ‘denigration of vision’.

⁴⁸ The artists included in this exhibition, such as Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince, became known as the ‘The Pictures Generation’. Through their art they deconstruct dominant discourses and address issues of representation (Wells 2004:22).



Figure 10: Cindy Sherman, *Untitled film still #10*, 1978. Gelatin silver print. 18.6 x 24 cm.

1.3: Embodiment and Affect in Photography After Postmodernism

Photography after postmodernism is an extremely diverse field. The notion of distinct genres in art and photography no longer hold sway as modes of practice intermingle. It is no longer trusted that a photograph has the ability to represent the world in an objective and unmediated manner. It is commonly acknowledged that both the making and the interpretation of a photograph are context-dependent. With prices for photographs rising exponentially, photography no longer has to fight for its acceptance as an art form (Durden 2014:6). In my exploration of the vast field of photography after postmodernism I concentrate on what is of relevance to my research: a hybrid form of autobiographical photographic practice that is both concept driven, and expresses subjectivity.

In theorising a photograph as the embodiment of an encounter, I propose a liminal position that lies between the conflicting ideas of modernist and postmodernist thought, and in line with a number of photographic theorists after postmodernism who neither adhere to the modernist notion of medium specificity, nor to the postmodern rejection of ‘an original’ (Durden 2013:75). While I subscribe to the postmodern notion of the self being shaped by socio-cultural circumstances, and the consequent idea that these circumstances shape photographic meaning, my theoretical formulation does not reject the modernist notion that photographs embody the subjective vision of the photographer. This point of view has been expressed in recent writings

on photography that challenge the materialist theoretical approach espoused by Burgin, Sekula and many of the *October* theorists.⁴⁹ Written in response to Burgin's *Thinking Photography* (1982), Brown and Phu, in *Feeling Photography* (2014), argue in favour of a return to affect and the acknowledgement of personal thoughts and feelings in the process of making meaning. This position has been echoed in contemporary philosophy, which indicates a return to phenomenology and the notion of the embodied subject. What has become apparent is that, despite its deconstruction, the notion of the subject persists.⁵⁰

The return of emotion is reflected in post-structural feminist theorist Hélène Cixous' notion of *écriture féminine* 'feminine writing'. Jacques Derrida, with his linguistic deconstruction, in a challenge to Western master narratives of phallogentrism and logocentrism⁵¹, coined the neologism 'phallogocentrism' (Felluga 2015:217). This notion highlights the way in which language in the Western world privileges the masculine. Cixous employs Derrida's notion of phallogocentrism in her theory. Instead of a phallogocentric masculine writing that privileges reason she promotes a more personal and autobiographical feminine form of writing that can be moving and not without sentiment (Cixous 1976:879). With her statement: 'Women must write through their bodies' Cixous (1976:886) advocates an embodied form of writing.

My interest in the term 'embodiment' stems from the fact that it incorporates both positions expressed in a preceding paragraph: thinking and feeling photography. Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment (as described earlier in this chapter), with its emphasis on intersubjectivity and intercorporeality, challenges the notion of the disembodied and autonomous subject suggesting, instead, an intertwining of self, other and the world (Gardiner 2012:125). Jonathan Gilmore (2005:293) argues that Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the split between the self and 'its external attributes, actions, and experiences' implies a rejection of the dichotomy between 'internalist explanations of art', in which the artist's intentions or life give meaning to the artwork, and 'externalist explanations', whereby meaning is contextual. Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment therefore suggests a combination of internalist and externalist explanations – the meaning of an artwork being both subjective and contextual.

⁴⁹ *October*, a quarterly journal, founded in 1976, introduced the American art world to post-structuralist theory. In its examination of the critical and social contexts of art, it remains a highly relevant peer reviewed journal (MIT Press Journals [sp]).

⁵⁰ Already in 1979, French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (in James 2006:49) wrote: 'Returning, one might say, after having been exiled or eclipsed for a number of years...the Subject is once again occupying contemporary discourses'.

⁵¹ According to the logocentric view, words and language are regarded as an unproblematic and consistent expression of external reality: a view that has been challenged by Derrida's deconstructionism (Sim 2009:196&262).

This return of emotion to theory after its banishment by postmodernism is echoed in Soutter's notion of 'authenticity' in contemporary photography. Her definition of authenticity (outlined in more depth in chapter two) is central to my argument advocating a position that combines aspects of modernist and postmodernist theory. She refers to a particular kind of authenticity⁵² in autobiographical photography after postmodernism: photography that evokes 'empathy', which she further describes as '[a] kind of embodied, experiential recognition...a connection between the subjectivity presented in the work and the subjectivity of the viewer' (2013:73). The notion of intertwining subjectivities is crucial for my understanding of the photograph embodying a particular kind of encounter. Charlotte Cotton (2009:137) describes this mode of photography as being dependent upon the intimate relationship between photographer and subject, and for Soutter (2013:70-71) such photography embodies 'the essence of its makers'...lives'.

While the possibility of capturing any form of essence, and the authenticity of the image had been seriously undermined by postmodernist theory, with the advent of digital photography one can no longer even be certain that a photograph carries the trace of its referent. However, Soutter (2013:70) remarks that what is interesting concerning photography after postmodernism, is that it still continues to explore the notion of the self. Notwithstanding the postmodern decentering of the subject, we need some notion of self in order to understand our lived experience. The contemporary artist is considered as being constituted by both social circumstances *and* individual agency. Soutter (2013:79) advocates a move from 'author to narrator' where the photographer makes autobiographical meaning available to the viewer. A photograph, Soutter argues, implies an embodied photographer 'performing her/his subjectivity' and, like Cotton (2009:137), she highlights the direct relationship between photographer and subject where the photograph

...presents a particular sensibility or subjectivity, articulated as being in the first person, i.e. narrated by an "I" interdependent with others. The work often refers to the body with poignancy, verging on trauma that may touch the viewers' sense of self (Soutter 2013:88).

Many practitioners of photography after postmodernism portray the intimate details of their own lives. They are deeply invested in the moment they photograph, and their work gives the viewer a sense of emotional/intimate engagement with that moment. Nan Goldin's series

⁵² Postmodernist artists and theorists consider the idea of authenticity to be problematic. Grundberg (1990:17) writes: 'There is no place in the postmodern world for a belief in the authenticity of experience, in the sanctity of individual artist's vision, in genius or originality'.

The Ballad of Sexual Dependency (1986), a thoroughly personal and raw account of a lived reality characterised by excess, clearly flies in the face of the postmodern theoretical stance and the photography of ‘The Pictures Generation’ that dominated the 1980s (Durden 2014:362). Goldin’s work was to have a major impact on photography after postmodernism, with her images giving ‘legitimacy to an approach that has...been adopted and understood as “snapshot style” or “diaristic”’ (Bright in O’Hagan 2014:[sp]).



Figure 11: Nan Goldin, *Jimmy Paulette and Tabboo! In the bathroom, NYC, 1991*. Cibachrome print. 50.5 x 61 cm.

In reference to the work of postmodern photographers such as Jeff Wall⁵³, as well as those trained at the Dusseldorf school⁵⁴, Soutter (2012:[sp]), suggests that what was important in their work was not just intellectualism but also ‘the visual intensity, the strength of the photographs as pictures’. This suggests a return to modernist notions of aesthetics. She writes that what is of importance in the aesthetic experience of the photographic image is not only the interpretation but also the emotions that are experienced prior to and in addition to interpretation (2012:[sp]).

⁵³ Jeff Wall is known for his large-scale photographic tableau, which will be discussed further in chapter two.

⁵⁴ The Dusseldorf School refers to an entire generation of German photographers taught by Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf. The Bechers were committed to the German tradition of *Neue Sachlichkeit* or New Objectivity, straight photography that arose in Germany in the 1920s as a reaction to German Expressionism. They promulgated the so-called ‘deadpan’ style, a matter-of-fact rendition of the objects or subjects portrayed, which became ubiquitous in German postmodern photography and has had an important influence on much contemporary photography (Cotton 2009:82-83).

Contemporary art photography has been concerned with the viewer's experience of the photograph, which, argues Soutter (citing Goldstein 2013:45), is evidenced in the work of Thomas Struth⁵⁵:

By considering a photograph as objective, Thomas Struth is not describing a transparent window to the world, rather, his view is focused on the reality of the photograph itself – as it is both produced by and reflects the pictorial, formal and social relations, inseparably connecting the camera, the photographer and the spectator.



Figure 12: Thomas Struth, *Museo Del Prado 8-3, Madrid 2005*. C-print mounted on UV plexiglass.

In Figure 12, the viewer encounters a photograph by Struth of the audience at the Museo Del Prado in front of a well-known work of art, Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656): an image laden with art historical connotations that, like Struth's photograph, speaks to the act of viewing and the gaze.⁵⁶ The clarity and large size of the photographic print, along with the gaze of those looking outwards towards the viewer – from Velázquez's painting and the one woman from Struth's tableau – leads to a deeply engaging experience for the viewer. The viewer is drawn into the hustle and bustle of the group of schoolchildren who are somewhat absentmindedly standing in front of the iconic painting. One can sense the irritation of the woman in the blue jersey who is trying to battle her way through the throng. The spectator of the photograph experiences both a visceral and physical sense of embodiment through the act of viewing Velázquez's painting, along with the audience depicted in the photograph. This is enhanced by the converging diagonal lines created by both Struth's and Velázquez's use of perspective. The

⁵⁵ Thomas Struth, one of the Becher's protégés, studied at the Dusseldorf school from 1973 to 1980.

⁵⁶ Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault both undertake an extensive analysis of *Las Meninas*: Lacan in terms of the gaze and the scopic drive in *Seminar XIII, The Object of Psychoanalysis* (1965–1966), and Foucault in terms of representation in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970).

viewer's gaze is led towards the person positioned the furthest away – the shadowy figure of a man standing on the stairs, who appears to be looking back at the scene depicted in the painting, at the audience in Struth's photograph, at the photographer and finally at us, the viewers.

The relationship between photographer and viewer, suggests Goldstein (in Soutter 2013:45) can be considered as a 'dynamic network of relationships'. This inseparable connection between those involved in the photographic act and the viewing of the resultant image is what I term the embodied encounter between photographer, photographic referent and viewer. The embodiment of this encounter signifies that the photograph not only bears an indexical relationship to reality but also gives rise to meaning that is dependent on the intertwined relationship between photographer, referent and viewer, and their own social, cultural and historical contexts. In the following chapter I argue that this notion is heightened in an intimate or autobiographical mode of photography, where the photograph acts as both a receptor and a transmitter of affect.

Chapter 2: Wielding the Camera in Suburbia and the Home

The anarchy of the chiaroscuro of the everyday – György Lukács (cited in de Certeau 1988:199).

In the first chapter of this dissertation I explored the influence of various theoretical stances on photographic practice. Modernist photography adhered to notions of medium specificity and aesthetic formalism. Despite the alleged objectivity of the medium, modernist photography is often based on the expression of subjective feelings. Postmodernism, with its deconstruction of the subject and denigration of aesthetics, dismantled each of these notions. In the preceding chapter, I argued that theories of embodiment and affect have had a major influence on some modes of photography practice after postmodernism. From ‘thinking photography’¹ there has been a shift towards ‘feeling photography’²: from the postmodernist disavowal of personal feelings and emotions, there has been a move towards an acknowledgement of their role in both the production and reception of photographs. In this chapter, I address the theoretical notions discussed in the previous chapter through reference to the work of selected photographers who have had an influence on my approach to photographic practice and theory. In so doing, I explore notions of suburbia, home and the everyday, and the manner in which these contexts may come to be embodied in photography.

The moment that is embodied in my photographs is my encounter with the traumatic passing of my mother, losing her, and the process of grieving. The context is a middle-class suburban home in post-apartheid South Africa. My photographs challenge the traditional notion of the family photograph in that they do not portray only happy moments or important occasions emblematic of family cohesion. Instead, these are the moments in-between. They reflect the banality of everyday life: no one consciously poses for the camera, and people are often caught off guard. I photograph spaces that one would not normally consider worthy of attention: objects that exist on the periphery of consciousness and the repetitive daily occurrences that are in no

¹ *Thinking Photography* (1982), referenced in the previous chapter, is the title of an influential book edited by conceptual artist, photographer and writer Victor Burgin. The book, comprising eight essays by postmodern thinkers including Burgin serves as a ‘contributions towards photography theory’ (Burgin 1982:1). Burgin (1982:2) considers photography as a ‘practice of signification’. The essays in the book investigate the role of photography in disseminating and producing ideology, and stress the importance of photography as an intellectual pursuit and a conceptual practice.

² *Feeling Photography* (2014) edited by Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu is a collection of essays that address affect theory in relation to photography. As mentioned in chapter one, Bennett (2005:12) challenges Burgin’s insistence on the primacy of a photograph’s signifying aspect, suggesting that what is more significant is its affect.

way extraordinary. Through my autobiographical photographs others may witness my everyday life. Despite the fact that our individual lives may differ considerably, every one of us lives an everyday life. As Henri Lefebvre (1991:97) writes:

Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and its form.

2.1: The Participating Witness

The mode of photographic practice that informs my approach could be labelled as ‘diaristic’, ‘autobiographical’ or ‘subjective documentary’, amongst a number of other terms that are indicative of an intimate or emotional attachment to that which is being photographed. Each of these terms is intrinsically problematic, since each implies certain conventions that the specific bodies of work I examine may or may not uphold. Furthermore, these terms are used interchangeably with the distinction between them becoming blurred. What is implicit in this mode of photography is that the photographer is a *participant* rather than simply an observer of that which is portrayed in the images. This fact is often used to justify making private images public and frequently excuses the photographer from critically engaging in her/his subject. At the same time, however, the concern for critical distance can become a controversial means of objectifying the subject.

‘Photographs objectify: they turn an event or person into something that can be possessed’ writes Susan Sontag (2003:81).³ The issue of objectification is problematic for me as a photographer, particularly in the case of portraiture. This became very apparent to me when I began working on a series of photographic portraits of young people in their bedrooms. I had begun this body of work for my master’s degree, hoping that these photographs would serve to validate the notion of a photograph embodying an encounter. I was particularly interested in the interaction of photographer, referent and viewer implicit in portrait photography. However, these photographs were not highly successful in evincing an emotional encounter. It is generally

³ Sontag wrote two seminal texts about photography, *On Photography* (1977) and *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), which examine the aesthetic and ethical problems of photography.

considered that the one wielding the camera has more power than the one being photographed.⁴ I was photographing children and teenagers in their bedrooms thus, despite my having asked permission, I was invading their privacy. They were not my children. I did not know them intimately. This led to a level of discomfort during the photographic process. The unequal power dynamic between photographer and photographed subject became clearly visible in many of the photographs I took. Additionally, having worked as a commercial portrait and fashion photographer I seemed unable to escape the conventions of these modes of practice, which had the effect of creating distance between photographer, sitter and viewer. Sontag speaks about the photographic act as being not only an encounter between photographer and event but an invasive and voyeuristic event in and of itself (2008:11). In an unavoidable way, my photographic gaze, in these transactions with pre-teen and teenage sitters, implied a voyeuristic gaze.



Figure 13: Natalie Payne, *Hannah, Claremont*, 2013.
Pigment print on cotton paper. 42 x 42 cm.

With my utilisation of the term ‘gaze’ I am referring specifically to the postmodernist notion of the gaze as objectifying and the concomitant idea of photography being an act of voyeurism (Sontag 2008:12-14). In a seminal and oft-cited essay on film theory Laura Mulvey discusses

⁴ This is the stance taken by numerous postmodern writers on photography (see Sontag 1977 & 2003, Rosler 1981 and Bolton 1987). However, Ariella Azoulay, in *The Civil Contract of Photography* (2008:17), re-evaluates the power dynamic at play in photography, giving agency back to those photographed.

the way in which the male gaze objectifies women.⁵ Mulvey (2005:383) states that cinema offers the pleasure of 'scopophilia'⁶. According to Sartre (1984:349) in the well-known chapter 'The Look'⁷, through the awareness of being seen by another person, one experiences oneself as the object of another's look. Lacan's (1998:106) notion of the gaze also suggests the anxiety that arises when a person feels s/he is the object of another's look⁸. Merleau-Ponty drew on and challenged Sartre's objectifying notion of the gaze. In formulating a stance within which I feel ethically able to function as a photographer, I turn to Merleau-Ponty's chapter 'The Intertwining – The Chiasm'. Merleau-Ponty's (1968:138) notion of the intertwining of self and other, the seer seen, presents an alternative interpretation of the gaze to that offered by postmodern photography theorists, film theorists and philosophers. Martin Jay, according to Gardiner (2012:119), suggests that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodied perception enables a 'dialogic specularity,' which, as opposed to the anxiety caused by Sartre's look of the other, invites a

...reciprocal exchange, an inherently ethical attunement and receptiveness to others that encourages a radical questioning of the egological self.

Photographing my family dealing with personal suffering and loss poses ethical questions. I was only able to 'make'⁹ these photographs because of an intimate relationship with them. Needless to say, I question whether these photographs are in fact any less voyeuristic than the photographs of teenagers. I do believe, however, that my current project is more in line with the notion of the gaze as a reciprocal exchange in that the power dynamic at play between myself and my family is quite different to that between myself and the teenagers. Additionally, in the photographs of my family I shift my gaze from depicting the subject directly, as with the teenagers, to focusing on peripheral subjects that may speak to human experience in a more subtle/liminal way, and thus provoke affect in the viewer.

⁵ 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975).

⁶ Freud, according to Mulvey (2005:381), defines scopophilia as the pleasure derived from 'taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze'.

⁷ The Freudian notion of the scopic drive was utilised and extended by existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1984:349) with the notion of 'the look' in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1998:106) in the theory of the gaze as developed in *Seminar XI* (1973).

⁸ Through the example of the sardine can glinting like a winking eye, Lacan (1998:95) suggests the uncanny feeling we experience when we feel that what we are looking at looks back at us. Lacan's theory of the gaze, although it diverges from Merleau-Ponty's thought quite considerably, was highly influenced by the final manuscript *The Visible and The Invisible*. Lacan (67-105) references this work and Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'the seer seen' in the section 'Of the Gaze' in *Seminar XI*.

⁹ I use the terms 'make' and 'take' a photograph interchangeably. While I acknowledge that the terms 'take' or 'capture' have aggressive 'phallogocentric' undertones, I believe that these words adequately express the photographic act. At other times, when the process is more one of creating something with someone, 'make' is a more appropriate term.

Richard Brilliant (1991:9) ascribes the compelling nature of photographs – portraiture in particular – to a connection with the primal gaze of the mother, which constitutes a chiasmic moment for the child as there is no separation between self and other. This can be construed in the sense of embodiment one may perceive from the encounter with photographs. Brilliant's (1991:9) understanding of the gaze has captured my interest for how it speaks to Copjec's (1996:3-4) discourse on the necessity of shifting the term to a more inclusive framework of thinking about the subjective and objective at play in art generally but in photography more specifically. According to Lacan, the gaze is fundamentally internal to the theory of the mirror stage, where the child, aged six to 18 months, in seeing his reflection in a mirror both recognises its subjective self and experiences itself as a seen object (Bailly 2009:29). This is anticipated in the earlier stage of development where the child's first conception of itself as a subject is via the maternal gaze, where the child, bathed in the mother's love, is at one with the world (2009:37), or in other words, a subjective and objective fusion of sensibility. Lacan asserts that we search for this oneness for the rest of our lives, both desiring and never quite managing to attain it. It is this lack that leads to our drives, and the attempt to rediscover this maternal gaze is what lies beneath the scopic drive (Levine 2008:70).

The notion of the scopic drive accounts for our fascination with both photographing and looking at photographs of other lived subjectivities. Through photographs we access the gaze of others. We can see from where they see. Without conflating self and other, we have access to another person's embodied being-in-the-world. According to Joanne Lowry (2000:13) 'the act of taking the photograph is a communicative act in itself, which exposes the social dynamic through which identities (both of the photographer and the subject) are formed'. This echoes Lacan's (1998:106) notion of the formation of subjectivity through the gaze of others as well as Merleau-Ponty's (1968:134) notion of the intertwining of self and other.

In the participatory mode of the autobiographical, photographers portray their own lives, frequently turning the lens on themselves, and thus, in a sense, they themselves are objectified. In my body of work I am photographing my family and home, but these images may be viewed as a projection of myself. The participatory mode, however, does not necessarily absolve photographers who practice in this manner from accusations of exploitation.



Figures 14-16: Sally Mann, *Hangnail*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 47.6 x 57.8 cm.



Jessie at 5, 1987. Gelatin silver print, 49.85 cm x 60.33 cm.



The Hot Dog, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 25.1 x 20.3 cm.

Many photographers have been criticised for using their intimate connection with friends, family and children to create bodies of work that are, on some level, voyeuristic. An example that immediately springs to mind is Sally Mann's *Immediate Family* (1992). With her photographs of her children running feral and naked in the rural landscape of the American South (Figures 14-16), Mann's controversial work, while frequently appraised as being highly evocative and poetic, portraying the vulnerability, rawness and sensual beauty of youth, has received much criticism. She has been accused of irresponsibly sexualising her children and her exhibitions have frequently been censored (Cox 2009:[sp]). In her memoir *Hold Still: A Memoir with Photographs* (2015) she admits that her critics 'were in some measure correct'; however, she argues: 'Children cannot be forced to make pictures like these. Mine gave them to me' (Krug 2015 [sp]).



Figure 17: Nan Goldin, *Twisting at my birthday party*, New York City, 1980. Cibachrome print. 9 x 13 3/4 inches.

Despite the fact that she is photographing her friends and lovers with their permission, Nan Goldin, too, has been accused of a voyeuristic depiction of others.¹⁰ In her own defence she writes: ‘the photographer is by nature a voyeur, the last one invited to the party. But I’m not crashing; this is my party’ (in Kaplan 2005:92). Another photographer ‘guilty’ of a rather crude exposure of family members is Richard Billingham, who, in his series *Ray’s a Laugh* (1995), documented his working class alcoholic father and overweight mother as they go about their daily life in their council flat (see Figure 18). Like Goldin he has been accused of exploiting his subjects for artistic recognition and/or financial gain.¹¹



Figure 18: Richard Billingham, *Untitled*, 1995. C-print.

Lucy Soutter (2013) presents various critical positions in contemporary art photography, including an investigation into the notion of ‘authenticity’ after postmodernism. Soutter (2013:76) labels the intimate photography of photographers such as Goldin and Billingham, as ‘authentic’. She does, however, problematise the notion, questioning the equation of authenticity¹² and truth (which postmodernism shattered), suggesting that it would be naïve to consider any form of contemporary photography as innately ‘authentic’ (2013:70). She argues, instead, for a notion of ‘authenticity’ that has ‘less to do with truth than with subjectivity as

¹⁰ Nan Goldin, in her series *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1985), reveals the lifestyle of an alternative subculture to which she belonged (as portrayed in Figure 17).

¹¹ Smith (2012:1), employing Bennett’s notion of empathic vision, argues that both Goldin’s and Billingham’s autobiographical photography may be ethically justified because of the intimacy of the relationship between the photographer and photographed subject, which leads to a ‘relational experience’ that may extend to the viewer.

¹² With postmodernism the notion of authenticity lost credibility. Authenticity is aligned with the idea of being true to oneself and is thus associated with individual self-absorption associated with Western capitalism and a concomitant reduction in concern with broader social and political issues (Taylor 2003:14). Charles Taylor (2003:48), in his book *Ethics of Authenticity*, suggests a form of authenticity that takes into account both individual self and society, suggesting that one’s own identity depends fundamentally on one’s ‘dialogical relations with others’.

performed, enacted and negotiated’ (2013:70). Soutter’s notion of authenticity is relevant to my research and practice insofar as it presents an argument for, rather than trivialising, a mode of photographic practice that involves personal subject matter and feeling.

Both Goldin and Billingham use the snapshot technique of amateur photography. This mode of photography, frequently labelled ‘diaristic’ – a mode of photography that gained popularity in art photography of the 70s, with Stephen Shore’s snapshots of his travels around the United States (Figure 19)¹³ – has become ubiquitous.¹⁴ In this mode of photography, one has a sense of the photographer’s embodied presence through the use of off-kilter framing, on-camera flash, everyday subject matter and lack of technical skill typical of family photography. What is pertinent is that we, as viewers, are drawn into an embodied photographic experience as these photographs remind us of the amateur snapshots one finds in one’s own family albums.¹⁵



Figure 19: Stephen Shore, photographs from *American Surfaces*, 1972.

¹³ Shore (in Miller 2009:5) writes: ‘My interest in snapshot photography began because, every now and then, I would come across a picture that was startling in its directness. Made without pretence to art, these images were without artifice and their simplicity gave them a special vitality...unmediated and unconditioned’.

¹⁴ This technique, especially the use of harsh on-camera flash, has been used extensively in recent fashion and popular culture photography, almost to the point of cliché. The use of flash has the effect of flattening the picture plane thus highlighting the two-dimensionality of the photograph.

¹⁵ Due to the fact that my father was a keen amateur photographer, our family albums were less typical of the genre. He paid attention to his framing and use of light, creating photographs more in line with the aesthetics of modernist photography.

The participatory mode of autobiographical photography frequently borrows from the genre of family photography. Family photographs are often considered boring, banal and irrelevant. They document moments of happiness, pleasure, family unity and important rituals while generally ignoring the darker side of family life. They are stereotypical, conventional and they reinforce a specific cultural ideology (See Sontag 1977; Bourdieu 1990 and Hirsch 1997 & 1999). ‘The camera’, writes Marianne Hirsch (1999:xvi), ‘is the family’s primary instrument of self-knowledge and self-representation’. Hirsch’s notion of the ‘familial look’ is furthermore key to my theorising autobiographical photography as the embodiment of an encounter in that it evinces Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm. As mentioned in chapter one, the notion of the intertwining of the seer and the seen is central to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s discourse. Family structures, according to Hirsch (2002:8-9), are established through the subjective ‘familial look’ while simultaneously framed by the culturally constructed ‘familial gaze’. The external ‘familial gaze’ provides the ideological framework the family attempts to live up to and which is thus expressed through family and personal photographs. Family photographs are also indicative of French philosopher Michel Foucault’s (cited in Gutting 2005:50) notion of power and knowledge, whereby, through subtle coercion, societies conform to specific ideologies.¹⁶

Personal and family photographs, termed vernacular photography, although not considered as belonging to the genre of serious art photography, have aroused greater interest recently as a source of historical documentation due to their strong link to memory and identity (Wells 2009:165). Many artists have created work that probes the home, the family and everyday life, with photographers frequently focusing on those closest to them, whether as their primary practice or as an aspect of it. The list of work that has made an impact on the history of photography is long. I have mentioned Sally Mann’s iconic and controversial (to some), *Immediate Family* (1992), Nan Goldin’s ‘anti-family album’ *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1985) and Richard Billingham’s harsh documentary, rather cruel, yet humorous portrayal of his parents in *Ray’s a laugh* (2000). There have also been numerous exhibitions with the representation of family and home as the curatorial theme. Peter Galassi’s (1991:1) exhibition at MOMA, New York, *Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort* (1991) examined the ‘state of the American Dream of domestic happiness’. He suggests that photographers are increasingly turning to photograph at home as it is a site of ‘unchartered mysteries’ (1991:2).

¹⁶ Foucault (in Kelly 2013:511) analyses how human beings become subjects, as in subject to others as well as subject to an identity position. He claims that the social forces, which control individuals, lead to changes in thought and ‘power transforms and consequently exists within knowledge systems and discourse’ (in Gutting 2005:50).

Nan Goldin's slide presentation *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1985) was shown in conjunction with this exhibition. Goldin's body of work, consisting of photographs of friends and lovers, as well as self-portraits, began in the 80s as live slideshows in the nightclubs she and her friends frequented. The photographs were produced over a number of years, with the photographer deeply entangled in the lives of the people she photographed. Her family photo album completely subverts the genre. She speaks of her subjects as her family – 'The Family of Nan' (Kaplan 2005:89) – but hers is by no means a traditional family: the people she photographs are often those who have been rejected or marginalised by society. She continues to photograph her 'family' as they age, clean up from drug addiction, become ill with HIV or get married, settle down and have children. In exposing a more real lived experience they challenge the conventions of family photography that traditionally serve to uphold a hegemonic Western ideology of happy and cohesive heteronormative families. Goldin (cited in Kaplan 2005:87-88), in a quote that clearly illustrates Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm says:

My work does come from the snapshot. It's the form of photography that is most defined by love. People take them out of love, and they take them to remember – people, places, and times...For me it is not a detachment to take a picture. It's a way of touching somebody – it's a caress.



Figure 20: LaToya Ruby Frazier, *Me and Mom's Boyfriend Mr Art*, 2005. Gelatin silver print. 38.5 x 48.6 cm.

More recently, in *The Notion of Family* (2014), LaToya Ruby Frazier has documented three generations of her family living in Braddock, Pennsylvania. Frazier (2015:[sp]) describes her photographs as a collaborative process between her mother and herself: 'Mom is co-author, artist and subject. She turns the camera on me to document us. I am also the subject and content of the work'. In the photograph *Me and Mom's Boyfriend Mr Art*, 2005 (Figure 20) the viewer's

sense of an embodied encounter is enhanced through Frazier's use of perspective and her strong framing technique, with the everyday space of the adjoining bedrooms incised by the doors opening into each bedroom. The dark negative space created by the doors almost abuts with the viewer's position, and the two figures turned away from one another suggest a specific relationship of familiarity, proximity and disconnection that frequently exists between people who share a home space: a relationship the viewer can identify with. Frazier's series, like those mentioned above, interrogates the genre of family photography. These alternative 'family albums', which challenge conventional, stereotypical family photographs that exclude any images that negate familial love and connection, in fact often offer a far more real representation of family life (Hirsch 1999:xvii).

Increasingly young South African photographic artists have been creating bodies of work that are indicative of the notion of the participatory witness. In part, these modes have arisen in response to the 'historic visualisation of Africa' by western photographers who frequently portray a stereotypical 'outsider' view or who perpetuate notions of exotic alterity (See Garb, 2011:11,12,27,35, 58&75). The work of these younger artists illustrates a shift towards a narration of personal experience, where photographers turn their cameras away from the grand narratives of apartheid-era documentary photography, towards a more intimate portrayal of everyday life and personal vulnerability. They confront, in various ways, the ethics of representation and are producing bodies of work that emphasise their 'insider' status. Such work, suggest Bystrom and Nuttall (2013:308), 'focuses on and circulates through feeling and affective life'. Through expressing their personal lives, South Africans may construct 'forms of citizenship unavailable, or submerged by, a history of segregation' (2013:307). Nuttall (2009:1) envisages a contemporary form of intersubjectivity, which she labels 'entanglement' and defines as

...a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness...

For Nuttall (2009:1) 'entanglement' suggests an alternative to the current emphasis on difference in African and post-colonial studies (despite the good reasons for this, she insists), exploring, in addition to difference, sameness and what makes us human. What is important for me is the entanglement – or, as I use Merleau-Ponty's term, the intertwining – of photographer, referent and viewer in the photographic encounter. Through my body of work, I explore our 'sameness' as human beings despite the evident differences and the inequalities still prevalent in South African society.

The list of young South African photographers practicing in this mode – which Bystrom (2016:xii) defines as ‘the aesthetic figuration...of home spaces, domestic life, and family histories’ – is long. A series of photographs that is particularly pertinent to my research in its elucidation of the photograph as an embodied encounter is the two-part photographic project called *Ke Lefa laka* ‘Heir Story’ (2012 - 2013) by Lebohang Kganye (B.1990). In this series, the artist reimagines her family archive.



Figure 21: Lebohang Kganye, *Setupung sa kwana hae II*, 2012. Inkjet print on cotton rag paper. 42 × 29.7 cm.

After the death of her mother, Kganye spent time going through the family photographs and rediscovered her mother as a fashionable young woman living in Soweto (Lebogang Khanye [sa]:[sp]). In the photograph *Setupung sa kwana hae II* ‘The porch back home’ (Figure 21) we see a young woman in a bright pink dress leaning against a brick wall and a window with burglar bars, typical of houses built during the apartheid era in South African townships. Kganye has superimposed an image of herself, similarly clothed, over that of her mother. The knowledge of the struggles faced by a young black woman during apartheid superimposed with the image of her daughter living in a post-apartheid, globalised society creates a jarring effect. With the photographer’s actual embodiment in the image the notion of the chiasm as an embodied encounter is given literal visual form: Kganye does not superimpose herself perfectly onto her

mother, instead the figures cross and blend into one another. This form of photography also engages with the notion of the projection of self into the artwork – for the photographer, and also for viewers.

In the first part of this chapter I deal with the notion of the photographer as a participating witness, and examine the practice of photographers engaged with a form of family photography. I associate this mode of practice with the body of work I have produced in conjunction with this dissertation, *Encountering Windrift* (2012–2017), as well as the photographs from Larry Sultan's *Pictures from Home* (1982–1992) and Lydia Goldblatt's *Still Here* (2010–2012), which I examine in some depth in the final chapter. These three series of photographs embody an encounter with family and suburbia. Therefore, in the next section of this chapter, I turn to an examination of suburbia and its photographic representation.

2.2: Ideal Companions – The Camera and Suburbia



Figure 22: Norm Kerr, *Family by the Fireplace*, 1965. Kodak Colorama.

In 1899 Kodak introduced the small handheld Brownie camera that was to change the role of photography in everyday life forever. The advertising slogan, stating: ‘You press the button, we do the rest’ (Wells 2009:119), implied that this was a camera that was simple enough for anyone to use. With the Kodak Brownie began the democratisation of photography and the documentation of private family life for future perusal. Kodak and suburbia were ideal companions, with the Kodak camera documenting happy family moments, shared in the privacy of the home. Kodak advertisements, in their idealised representations of middle-class families living the suburban dream, promoted picture taking as an essential aspect of family life (Cadoza 2012:[sp]).¹⁷

¹⁷ From 1950 to 1989 Kodak displayed large backlit photographs, called Colorama's, at Grand Central Station in New York, which ‘reflected and reinforced American values and aspirations’ (Cadoza, 2012 [sp]).

Even though I may not subscribe to the politics, the aspirations and the desires that are frequently associated with conventional suburbanites, it is a place I return to and a place where I am ‘at home’. In his seminal text on domestic space¹⁸ French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1994:7) writes: ‘Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the “house”’. He introduces the concept of ‘topoanalysis’ (1994:xxxv-xxxvi), which he defines as a psychological, psychoanalytic and phenomenological study of the house as the primary site of our intimate being. The house we were born in (our first home) is ‘our first universe’ that both contains us and projects us out into the world (1994:4). It contains our earliest memories, forms our thoughts and cradles our dreams (1994:6-7). It plays a large role in the formation of who we are and lives on in us (1994:56). The house offers not only physical protection but also psychological and emotional wellbeing. Objects from the home are suffused with our mental experience of them and, in the process, take on deeper significance (1994:68). Psychoanalysis implies a temporal ordering of our memories: Bachelard’s (1994:xxxv) notion of ‘topoanalysis’, however, suggests that memories are ordered spatially with our earliest memories contained within the space of our childhood homes. Our memories of the various parts of the house and the objects in it are entwined with our ongoing current experience. Our home is the place where our sense of embodiment is most fully realised, it is in the home that we are often most ourselves.

Topoanalysis is important for developing my argument in that it reiterates Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the chiasm and the intertwining. Merleau-Ponty (cited in Racz 2015:11) speaks about how, as he instinctively moves about his home, he does not need to consciously think about where things are: he simply knows. In the home, where the boundaries between subject and object become blurred, the intertwining of mind, body and world is amplified (Racz 2015:15). Topoanalysis also implies a merging of subject and object in that the objects that surround us are imbued with emotion and thus become subjective ‘presences’.¹⁹

At home, we experience our first relationships: we experience love, security and stability. However, home is also where we often first experience fear, failure and loss. Colin Richards (2003:[sp]), in an essay titled ‘The Crossroads of Home’, writes: ‘Home is sweet; home truths

¹⁸ *The Poetics of Space* (1957).

¹⁹ Jean Baudrillard (in Briganti & Mezei 2012:211) writes: ‘Human beings and objects are indeed bound together in a collusion in which the objects take on a certain density, an emotional value – what might be called a “presence”. What gives the houses of our childhood such depth and resonance in memory is clearly this complex structure of interiority, and the objects within mark out the symbolic configuration known as home’.

are harsh; feeling at home is a tranquillised deception; home is where the heart is lost ... It is about belonging, loss, the longing to belong' (2003:[sp]).²⁰ A 'crossroad' implies a critical situation, a crisis, a turning point, thus, as much as home is associated with comfort, safety and intimacy, it is also associated with 'trauma, misrecognition and wounding' (2003:[sp]). Theodor Adorno (2005:38) challenges Bachelard's somewhat nostalgic version of home suggesting that the home in late capitalism, for all the comfort and shelter it may offer, stifles individuality.²¹ Deleuze and Guattari (in Cho & Lewis 2006:83) take this one step further suggesting that the home is essentially fascist and thus repressive.

My suburban childhood home is both Bachelard's homely sheltering version and Richards' intolerable and uncomfortable space. The suburban model was no doubt the perfect vehicle for the entrenchment of racial segregation. This was the space I, along with the large majority of white South Africans, grew up in during the apartheid years. Here, there was little understanding of what was actually happening in the rest of the country. As Lewis Mumford²² (1961:494), writes:

In the suburb one might live and die without marring the image of an innocent world, except when some shadow of evil fell over a column in the newspaper. Thus the suburb served as an asylum for the preservation of illusion.

Suburbia is considered as 'a space of mediocrity, passivity and homogeneity that in its repetitious routines can sap the vitality and creativity of its inhabitants, a place, above all, to escape from' (Giles in Corcoran, Gray & Peillon 2010:7). It is also characterised as a dystopic place based on principles of exclusion and segregation, where people live in 'simmering despair' (Fishman 1987:04). The suburban trope, although frequently reiterated by writers and artists, is also being challenged: despite the banality of suburban life, large numbers of people choose to live there. Theorists suggest that in the postmodern globalised world, suburbs enable a sense of connectedness to place (Corcoran et al. 2010:85). Sociologist Rupa Huq (2009:[sp]) comments 'after years of having derision heaped on it, suddenly suburbia is all the rage'.

²⁰ This essay, by the late artist and theorist Colin Richards, was written in conjunction with the exhibition *Show me home* (JAG 2003).

²¹ Adorno, a German philosopher from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, expressed this point of view in the essay 'Refuge for the Homeless' in *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (1951), written during and in the aftermath of World War II in response to his deep concern for humanity's apparent lack of humanity. Adorno is primarily known for the book he co-authored with Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), which was one of the first critiques of the Enlightenment (Fagan [sa][sp]).

²² Lewis Mumford, American philosopher, humanist and theoretician of cities, was critical of society's move away from diverse communities toward the uniformity of the modern city, its suburbs and industrial areas (Hill 1985:415).



Figures 23-24: John Divola, *San Fernando Valley*, 1971-1973. Gelatin silver prints.

A number of photographers have explored the utopia/dystopia of suburbia. According to photographer Gary Winogrand (cited in Schuman 2006:77) Robert Frank's photographic essay, *The Americans* (1958), has one serious omission – the suburbs. A number of photographers, during the 70s and subsequently, have addressed this lack. One such photographer is John Divola, who, between 1970 and 1973, photographed his own suburban neighbourhood. Figures 23 and 24 present two examples of the apparently unposed quotidian subjects of Divola's black and white oeuvre. His work was interpreted as being critical of the conformity and materialism of suburbia. However, Divola (cited in Durant 2015:[sp]) maintained that he was 'not making value judgements about the subjects, the banality of the environment or about how silly people looked', instead he was simply creating an index of the landscape he was living in.



How can I worry about the
damned dishes when there are
children dying in Vietnam.

Figure 25: Bill Owens, *Suburbia*, 1972. Gelatin silver print.

Another photographer to address this lack was Bill Owens, a news photographer who, over a period of one year (1972), spent every Saturday documenting the residents in the newly developed suburb of Livemore, California (Figure 25). As captions for his ‘documentary’ photographs he used quotes from the residents, comments that often suggest they are not as vacuous as suburban residents are often made out to be. In what could be read as a parody of the ‘American Dream’, this series of photographs – depicting suburbanites in the kitchen, at the dinner table, having a barbecue, or children playing in the streets – in fact suggests that the residents find authentic satisfaction in the lifestyle offered by the suburbs (Guimond 1991:262). Photographer Larry Sultan (2001:2) describes Owens’s photographs as images of ‘nonevents’.

The fact that Owens was ‘attentive and crazy enough to think that this was the stuff of photographs’ (2001:2) astonished Sultan. However, inspired by Owens, Sultan himself went on to photograph middle class suburbia. His series *Pictures from Home* (1982–1992) examines the so-called American Dream: the nuclear family with its rigidly defined gender roles, the ideal of a house with a garden in the suburbs, financial security, and retirement at 60. But which includes, Sultan suggests, a certain lacking quality in life lived under late capitalism in the United States of America (cited in Geftner 2014:19-20).



Figure 26: Eric Fischl, *Bad Boy*, 1981.
Oil on canvas. 66 x 96 inches.



Figure 27: Eric Fischl, *Barbecue*, 1981.
Oil on canvas. 65 x 100 inches.

Sultan cites the seminal novelist of suburbia, Raymond Carver (1938–1988), and painter of suburbia, Eric Fischl (b.1948), as being important influences on his photographic practice (Sultan [sa]:[sp]). Carver, in his writings that evoke the dark inverse of the American Dream, portrays characters and events that one would not think of as being suitable for artistic expression – the ordinary and the everyday (Amir 2012:xii). In the ordinariness of the everyday

lies its strangeness, its tragedy. Fischl invokes a similar twist on the homogeny of middle-class normality: on discovering the painting *Bad Boy* (1981) by Fischl, Sultan ([sa]:[sp]) writes:

I...felt that powerful combination of shock and recognition. I had never seen an image like this before – one that was so transgressive and yet thoroughly mundane...This painting (among others he has painted) is one of a set of signals that, for the past 20 years, allowed me to wander back to the suburbs where I grew up to poke around again in my parent's and other's bedrooms, in backyards, living rooms, and over fences; to make pictures that hopefully portray the complex and often dark and bewildering world of suburban life.



Figure 28: Larry Sultan, *LA; Early Evening*, 1986. C-print, 36 x 30 inches.

In Sultan's photograph *LA; Early Evening* (Figure 28) the figure of a man (Sultan's father) seems diminutive and alone as he stands looking out of a window surveying his garden, enveloped by the trappings of middle-class suburbia. The ladder and debris from the pruned bougainvillea allude to unfinished domestic chores and the perpetual routine of life. While Sultan acknowledges that his work serves as an exposé on the failed utopia of suburbia, he also challenges that stereotype, proposing that the suburban home may be a richer field of phenomenological inquiry (Waldie 2014:[sp]).²³

A discussion of photographs of suburbia is incomplete without mention of the photographic series and book by the pre-eminent South African photographer David Goldblatt: *In Boksburg*

²³ This same point of view is expressed by Donald J. Waldie (1996:27,172&215) in *Holy Land: A Suburban memoir*: 'It is as if each house on your block stood on its own enchanted island, fifty feet wide by one hundred feet long...But the island is remote...The critics of suburbs say that you and I live narrow lives. I agree. My life is narrow. From one perspective or another, all our lives are narrow. Only when lives are placed side by side do they seem larger...The grid limited our choices, exactly as urban planners said it would. But the limits weren't paralyzing. The design of this suburb compelled a conviviality that people got used to and made into a substitute for choices, including not choosing at all'.

(1982). Lehan (2010:[sp]) compares and contrasts Goldblatt's *In Boksburg* to Owens' documentation of the 'creeping homogeneity' in *Suburbia* (1973). In his depiction of mundane daily life, Goldblatt's series reiterates the characterisation of suburbia as expressed by Owens, while additionally making a political statement against white complacency within the context of apartheid. In describing what prompted him to undertake his photographic investigation of Boksburg, Goldblatt (2010:[sp]) states: 'I felt the need to explore something of my own background in the life and values of middle class, white, urban society'.



Figure 29: David Goldblatt, *On the stoep: a girl in her new tutu*, 1979/80. Gelatin silver print. 50 x 60 cm.

On the stoep: a girl in her new tutu (1979/80), portrays a young teenage girl in a classical ballet relevé, framed by the architecture and accoutrements of South African suburbia. She poses on the tiled veranda of her home, between two windows with burglar bars and terylene curtains. A white painted wrought iron table and chairs edge into the bottom right of the frame. A latticework of shadow and light extends the picture plane behind the girl creating the impression of a stage set, and evoking the constrained environment of suburbia. Concerning this image, Goldblatt (cited in Lehan 2010: [sp]) writes: 'I consider this a tragic photograph. She is smiling as she was taught to smile. She will never escape the middle-class world that confines her'. Despite his critique of white middle-class suburbia this statement makes it apparent that there

is an element of empathy for those he portrays. This photograph suggests the tragedy to be found in the banality of everyday life.²⁴

Goldblatt's work indicated a clear shift in South African photography, which had, until then, been focused on 'straight' reportage of political bloodshed, exemplified by the photographers collective Afrapix. The African National Congress disapproved of Goldblatt's photography considering it to be 'insufficiently weapon-like to further the struggle' (Krantz 2008:295). However, Goldblatt believed that by investigating the everyday world he inhabited he could shed light on the 'underlying values and structures' of life in South Africa during apartheid (Krantz 2008:293). Santu Mofokeng, too, became increasingly disillusioned by the limiting nature of struggle photography. His work shifted towards a poetic and intimate portrayal of the everyday lived reality of the majority of disenfranchised South Africans (Godby 2014:[sp]). A more nuanced representation of the violence of apartheid is also present in the work of photographer Jo Ractliffe, whether in her earlier bodies of work such as *Shooting Diana* (1990-1995), or her more recent bodies of work investigating the aftermath of war.²⁵ Curator and critic Okwui Enwezor (2006:39) describes Ractliffe's photography as 'little dramas in which the subjectivity of the artist is fully registered in the resulting work'.²⁶



Figure 30: Jo Ractliffe, *doll's head*.



Figure 31: Jo Ractliffe *cattle truck*.



Figure 32: Jo Ractliffe *gun boy*.

From *Shooting Diana*. 1990-1995. Black & white pigment prints on cotton paper. 35 x 35 cm.

²⁴ This photograph by Goldblatt brings to mind Hannah Arendt's notion of the banality of evil, the subtitle of her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). The banality of evil Arendt speaks of was evident amongst a large proportion of white South Africans during apartheid who went about their daily lives barely conscious of the violently oppressive society they were living in (or choosing not to think about it).

²⁵ In *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* (2010) Ractliffe focuses on landscapes in Southern Angola where the apartheid state waged the border war against African liberation movements: a war in which many young white South African boys were obliged to fight, with the only other option being exile, jail or a mental institution.

²⁶ This quote by Enwezor could equally be applied to Ractliffe's latest series *Everything is Everything* (2017). She defines these photographs, which span over thirty years, as 'photograph[s] without purpose' (in Stevenson 2017:[sp]) They comprise outtakes from various bodies of work as well as more personal photographs of her everyday life. They may be 'without purpose' but taken as a whole, the series, which contains both humorous and tragic photographs, embodies a life experience.

These photographers, amongst others, broke with the documentary tradition of representing tragedy and suffering in an overt photojournalistic manner and legitimised a more diaristic or intimate lens of the personal, the quotidian, and the home, as in Figure 33 by Santu Mofokeng. This photograph of daily life in apartheid South Africa is reminiscent of Robert Frank's *The Americans*, where he documented his personal experience utilising the awkward framing and candid style of the snapshot aesthetic. This is a typical family scene, although it is not a typical family photograph. The viewer is immediately drawn to the slim, attractive figure of Mrs Nhlapo going about her domestic chores. A disturbing element is introduced by the boy's head and arms, which appear in the bottom left corner of the frame. His disgruntled expression, enhanced by the white in his eyes, suggests a less harmonious aspect of home life. Considering the year this photograph was taken, the viewer is aware of the racial oppression suffered by black South Africans during this period. Yet, despite the struggle, people lived an everyday life.



Figure 33: Santu Mofokeng, *Mrs Nhlapo*, 1987. Gelatin silver print.

Encountering Windrift (2012–2017), a series of photographs of my suburban childhood home and my family, attempts to capture the ‘crossroads’ (Richards, 2003:[sp]) implicit in the notion of home, and the dichotomy of public banality and conformity versus private individuality implicit in suburbia. In line with Bachelard’s (1994:xxxv) notion of ‘topoanalysis’, at home, I am comfortably embodied in the *heimlich*²⁷ ‘familiar’ space. This space holds formative memories and family mementoes carry the presence of past generations (Bachelard 1994:6&68). *Here I belong*. On the other hand, this home represents a place of conformity and repression, where in order to fit in, individuality is stunted – a place I frequently struggle to belong to.

²⁷ Freud (1919:1&2) defines *heimlich* as ‘meaning “familiar,” “native,” “belonging to the home”’ in contrast to *unheimlich*, which ‘undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible – to all that arouses dread and creeping horror’.



Figure 34: Natalie Payne, *12 August 2013*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 39 x 39 cm

12 August 2013 (Figure 34) is a photograph of a pruned poplar tree growing through the roof of my childhood home. This is a key image from the series in that it symbolises the social constriction of the suburban home. *The tree both protects and threatens*. The tree represents the punctum of the image and possibly of the series as a whole. It needs to be continuously pruned from the top and its roots severed from below so that it doesn't grow too large. It needs to fit in or it will be cut down. In this photograph, the picture plane is divided diagonally. On the lower right-hand side there is the ranch style house ubiquitous of 1960s suburbia. The large bedroom window with sheer curtains enables, during the day, a view out of but not into the room, while at night the opposite occurs. The lower part of the image consists of a great deal of greenery. The neat lawn and the pot plants give one a sense of the prevailing order of a home in suburbia. The upper left-hand side of the image consists of ominous grey clouds. The pruned tree almost lurches, branches outstretched, aiming for the open sky. In the photograph there is evidence of a wind blowing, with the trees and the bushes leaning to the left. The tree, while it protects the house from the elements, also threatens to pull the roof off the house – it was a continuous source of both fun and family disputes. The tree is a metaphor in my mind for suburbia and the manner in which something that protects us may be the very thing that threatens us.

The photographs and photographic series I have referenced in this chapter indicate the role of the photographer as a participant and an observer in the domestic and suburban habitat. Family is integral to personal identity: as such photographing family is, in a sense, self-portraiture. A photographer who is a participant in the events portrayed becomes the subject of the photographs. The personal nature of the photographs facilitates an ‘affective transaction’ (Bennett 2005:7). In this manner the notion of an embodied encounter is heightened. The viewer of my photographs, while never able to access what I actually feel, is able to experience something of my vision, hopefully to empathise with it, while sensing the contradictory atmosphere of comfort, safety and homeliness, and strangeness, loss and threat.

Chapter 3: All the World's a Stage

The imperative of a contemporary nostalgic is to be homesick and sick of home – occasionally at the same time – Svetlana Boym (2007:18).



Figure 35: Nigel Payne, 'Windrift', 1970. C-print.

In the previous chapter I discuss various autobiographical modes of photographic practice and their possible relationship to philosophies of embodiment and their affects. I examine the way in which a number of photographers employ an informal mode of personal photography in order to create photographs that transmit an affective, embodied experience to the viewer. This chapter consists of an intertwined analysis of images from my body of work and two other photographic series that may offer some parallels in content and meaning to my own work – Larry Sultan's *Pictures from Home* (1982–1992), and Lydia Goldblatt's *Still Here* (2010–2012). While each series consists of images of the photographer's ageing parents in their suburban home, the process, as well as the effect of the images, is quite different. Sultans' photographs serve as an uneasy evocation of suburbia through his representation of the rather gaudy context of West Coast American middle-class life. In contrast, Goldblatt's photographs are a far quieter, poetic meditation on the transience of life. What is significant about the work of Sultan and Goldblatt is that both photographers, in their use of family photography and

through their deployment of particular themes such as nostalgia, love and loss, capture aspects of the suburban everyday that resonate with my own practice.¹

In the series of photographs, *Encountering Windrift*, I aim to evoke certain embodied qualities of everyday life in a middle-class suburb in post-apartheid South Africa. As mentioned, I began this series of photographs of my family in my childhood home after my mother had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. I photographed my family as we dealt with the trauma of my mother's pending death. Through my initial investigation of the family archive I became increasingly intrigued by what family photographs *don't* say.² On my visits home after the passing of my mother, I continued photographing as my father, my sister and I went through the process of grieving and readjusting to the 'new normal' of the situation. For a number of years after my mother's death I was unable to look at the photographs I had made of my family and the home. When I was finally able to confront them, I realised that these extremely personal photographs were far more evocative of the notion of the embodied encounter than the series of photographs I was then working on towards the fulfilment of the practical section of my master's degree.³ While *Encountering Windrift* portrays a family dealing with grief and loss, it is also about the ongoing moment, where we are simply being, between major life events. The photographs are of moments observed – 'the ordinary days [that] form a forgettable continuum' (Langford 2007:5). These are moments that if they had not been photographed, would most likely not have been remembered.

The scope of this dissertation will not permit an in-depth examination of all three bodies of work mentioned above. I therefore focus on selected photographs by Sultan, Goldblatt and myself in order to elucidate the theory developed in the first two chapters. I further my inquiry into the notion of the chiasm by linking specific photographs to 'crossroad' notions of absorption and theatricality (tableau as a particular environment that recreates a chiasmic

¹ In line with Hélène Cixous's (1979:878-879) embodied form of *écriture féminine* 'feminine writing' I have consciously assumed an autobiographical tone in the discussion of my photographs and their relation to my personal history. I have deliberately done so in order to counteract the privileging of the masculine in language and the construction of meaning, termed 'phallogocentrism' by Derrida (Felluga 2015:217). This more masculine form of expression has tended to dominate photographic discourse as well as the medium of photography itself.

² This initial phase of practical research included obsessively reading my mother's diaries and notebooks, photographing them, page by page. I went through all the family photographs, a process that began on the eve of my mother's wake when we found the early photographs that my father pasted onto the lounge doorway (Figure 1). I re-photographed the family photographs – all the smiling faces from years gone by. I zoomed in onto individual faces – the people on the edges of the frame who were unaware of being photographed. These images, where people were caught off guard, frequently betray a less ideal reality than that typically portrayed by traditional family photographs.

³ I am referring to the photographic portraits of pre-teens and adolescents in their bedrooms, discussed in chapter one.

encounter), poetics and indexicality, demand and offer images, and open and complex forms.⁴ Each series consists of snapshot style and/or staged photographs of people going about their daily life in their suburban homes. In each series there are posed portraits as well as what appear to be candid photographs. There are both close-up portraits and wide views where the person or people portrayed either engage with the photographer, and thus the viewer, or are presented in an absorbed mode, seemingly unaware of the photographer/viewer. Each series includes still lifes, interior views and photographs of the facade or exterior of the home. Goldblatt's series also includes extreme close-up details where the referent becomes indeterminate. In all three series the photographer is a subject in the drama depicted.



Figure 36: Natalie Payne, *12 December 2012*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.

12 December 2012 (Figure 36) is the earliest photograph of my series.⁵ It was taken shortly after my mother had been diagnosed and was one of the first photographs I took of her with the knowledge that she would not be with us for that much longer. This photograph (as do many in the series) takes me back to a time when I was apprehending the loss of my mother.⁶

⁴ Each of these notions will be defined in this chapter where applicable.

⁵ These images can also be found in Appendix 1, which consists of high-resolution reproductions of all the photographs from the series that were included in the exhibition.

⁶ Barthes (1981:96) highlights the fact that not only is a photograph a realisation of loss in the present but also enables us to apprehend future loss.

Every evening after cooking dinner she would sit at her dressing table to get herself ready for my father's return from work. I had never before documented these daily rituals but suddenly felt the urgency to do so. In this photograph, my mother appears to be self-consciously posing as she looks at herself in the mirror. Normally she would smile for the camera but here I asked her not to look at me, which makes her seem uncomfortable and self-conscious – she is 'neither subject nor object but a subject who feels she is becoming an object' (Barthes 1981:14). She too, is aware of her immanent death. She knows I am taking this photograph in an attempt to hold onto her. This for me, personally, constitutes the punctum of the image. Barthes (1981:95) in reference to the photograph of 'a handsome young man', Lewis Payne, on death row (the studium of the photograph) describes the punctum as being the fact that he (Lewis Payne) 'is dead and...is going to die'. For Barthes (1981:96), in addition to the punctum as the detail that pricks or wounds, there exists 'another punctum' which is '[t]ime, the lacerating emphasis of the noeme ("that-has-been")'.⁷ I am aware that I cannot deduce a viewer's affective reaction to any of my photographs and that the punctum, according to Barthes's definition, can only be entirely personal. However, through various signifiers as well as extensive use of light and dark in many of my photographs I aim to elicit or heighten specific effects. In Figure 36, the late afternoon light streams through the sheer curtains, falling onto my mother's hands and the dressing table. The use of chiaroscuro adds a sense of depth to the picture plane, drawing the viewer into the space depicted and enhancing a sense of physical embodiment. But, due to the back lighting, my mother's figure is silhouetted. Since one cannot discern a particular face, the viewer may either project herself or someone specific onto the silhouetted form. Chiaroscuro is reminiscent of seventeenth century Dutch painting, 1920s German Expressionism and 1940s American film noir, where, through the use of dramatic lighting, the environment becomes a key character (Anthes 2011:121). This idea is important for my series where the house 'Windrift' becomes a character in the narrative. Chiaroscuro has also been extensively used in the painterly tableau photographs discussed below: it stages and dramatises.

The term 'tableau' refers to large-scale photographs – associated with postmodern photographic artists such as Jeff Wall, Tina Barney, Philip-Lorca diCorcia and Sarah Jones – in which the pictorial narrative is condensed into single stand-alone images (Cotton 2009:48). Tableau photography frequently references figurative painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and is described by modernist art critic and art historian Michael Fried as being 'anti-theatrical'.

⁷ Barthes (1981:96) writes: 'This will be and this has been; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake'.

He applies the notion of the ‘anti-theatrical’ to the way in which mid-eighteenth century painters portrayed people deeply engrossed in what they are doing, thus seemingly oblivious of the gaze of the painter and thus the beholder (2008:2,26).⁸ He further develops this notion in relation to the tableau form of photography.



Figure 37: Édouard Manet, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, Oil on canvas, 208 x 264.5 cm.



Figure 38: Jeff Wall, *The Storyteller*, 1986. Silver dye bleach 1863. transparency in lightbox. 229 x 437 cm.

Jeff Wall's large-scale backlit transparencies, which offer the viewer an immersive, embodied experience, are frequently cited as exemplifying this mode (Cotton 2009:49). Fried (2008:143) considers tableau photography as the most ‘decisive development’ in contemporary art photography.⁹ Art critic Thierry de Duve (2009:28) designates Wall's *The Storyteller* (1986) as his most accomplished work, particularly in its reference to the art historical canon via Édouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* ‘Luncheon on the Grass’ (1863).¹⁰ As de Duve (2009:28) discusses, Wall's allusion to Manet's painting is evident in the way in which the pose of the man in the centre of the small group, pictured to the left of the photograph, mirrors the composition and pose of the naked woman in Manet's painting. Wall's reference to Manet's painting, which in turn references specific Renaissance artworks,¹¹ alludes to the postmodern notion of the impossibility of originality (see Crimp 1980). As is exemplified by Wall's

⁸ In *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (2008) Fried references an earlier book he wrote: *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder* (1980) where he describes the notions of ‘absorption’ and ‘anti-theatricality’.

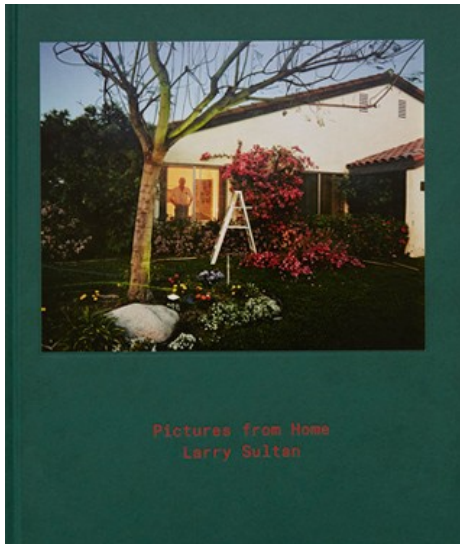
⁹ According to Costello and Iversen (2013:10), in *Photography After Conceptual Art*, Fried claims that tableau is the most ambitious recent photographic art as it ‘asserts its own status as art in ways that renew the anti-theatrical claims of high modernist painting’. Fried argues that conceptual art, which constitutes itself as art by ‘calling into question artistic autonomy, authorial agency and medium specificity’, is not worthy of serious consideration as art (2010:11). Fried has been rebuked by a number of theorists writing on contemporary photography for his ‘appropriation’ of Wall's photographic oeuvre to illustrate his own theoretical stance (2010:7). Many of the essays in *Photography After Conceptual Art* challenge Fried's assumptions while also rejecting the ‘countervailing postmodern perception of photography as the anti-aesthetic medium par excellence, in virtue of its mechanical nature and causal basis’ (2013:10). Costello and Iversen describe photography after conceptual art as a hybrid condition that combines aspects of conceptual, pictorial and aesthetic modes (2010:1).

¹⁰ *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* marks the beginning of modernist painting (de Duve 2009:28).

¹¹ *Judgment of Paris* (ca. 1510–20) designed by Raphael, as well as *The Pastoral Concert* (ca. 1510) by Titian (Online).

The Storyteller (1986), tableau photography is highly constructed and staged: composition is formal; lighting is cinematic and at times artificial. However, the illusion of reality is important (Fried 2008:47). The people featured in Wall's photographs are frequently hired models. They are choreographed into specific poses, often in a mode of 'absorption', which Fried describes as 'anti-theatrical'. He argues that despite their apparent 'anti-theatricality' such photographs have an intrinsic 'to-be-seenness' about them (2008:41). They are not candid photographs but pictorial constructions. The very fact of staging is a marker of theatricality (2008:10). However, Wall's tableaux, in recomposing moments observed in everyday life are constructed to emulate snapshots (Chevrier 2002:114). These photographs, in terms of their formal composition and aesthetic intent, indicate a return to the tenets of modernism, however, in the constructed manner in which they 'set the scene' for a mode of absorption, they are postmodern.

The preceding statement could similarly be applied to Larry Sultan's photographs from the series *Pictures from Home*, Lydia Goldblatt's *Still Here*, and, to a degree, to my series *Encountering Windrift*. I situate the photographs in each of these bodies of work between the tableau mode introduced above and the snapshot aesthetic associated with Billingham and Goldin discussed in chapter two. Each series is an intimate portrayal of the artist's family, yet they subvert the notion of the family photograph in that the tropes normally associated with the genre are not adhered to. The photographs are a documentation of everyday life taken by someone who is intimate with those photographed and who is thus an active participant in the unfolding drama. However, they are more considered than is usually associated with that mode. The photographs display some of the conventions of tableau photography, such as formal composition and cinematic lighting. Yet the staged quality is kept in tension with the immediacy apparent in family and diaristic photography. Despite the apparent distance created by a more formal photographic approach, it is unlikely that these photographs could have been taken by anyone not intimately connected to the subjects. Even the unstaged photographs in my series are, in a sense, staged tableaux. They may be candid photographs in that the photographic subjects were often not aware of being photographed. However, since I am in my family home, in a place I know intimately, I know the routines and rituals that are performed on a daily basis, and thus I am able to document them as they occur, as expected. In these expected moments, the unexpected frequently occurs.



Figures 39 and 40: Larry Sultan, *Pictures From Home*, 2017.

Larry Sultan (1946–2009) grew up in the middle-class suburbs of California (Gefter 2014:15). It is this geographical, socio-economic and emotional landscape that is portrayed in his various bodies of work, a context that in some ways reflects white middle-class suburbia in South Africa during the 80s. The body of work and photo-book¹² *Pictures from Home* (1992) (Figure 39 and 40) include Sultan's contemporary photographs of his ageing parents going about their daily life in their suburban home. Combined with these are film stills from his family's home movies, old family photographs, conversations with his parents, and his own writings discussing his photographic process. Larry Sultan's series initially drew my attention because of the subject matter, as well as the strength of the images as art objects in the modernist sense: sharp focus, emphasis on formal qualities, and aesthetic appeal.¹³ Through researching his work I became interested in both his questioning of the medium of photography as well as his investigation of family archives, which form part of his practice. In his interrogation of the way in which photographs construct identity, and photography's pervasive role in contemporary Western society, he is a thoroughly postmodern artist. In the execution, his photographs may be categorised as tableau: they are cinematic in that they contain a large amount of seductively staged visual information (Gefter 2014:22). However, due to their autobiographical subject matter, as well as the fact that Sultan considers himself as 'a subject in the drama rather than a witness' (in Gefter 2014:19), they fall into the diaristic mode of snapshot photography.

¹² Martin Parr and Geoffrey Badger (in MACK 2017:[sp]) describe *Pictures from Home* (1992) as 'one of the most significant American photo-books of the 1990s'. This book has been out of print but was republished by MACK books in 2017.

¹³ The Guardian photo critic Sean O'Hagan (2017 [sp]) describes Sultan's 80s portraits of his parents as 'artful and authentic', reiterating Soutter's (2013:70) notion of authenticity in contemporary photography.

This is accentuated by Sultan's use of off-kilter framing reminiscent of 'badly' composed family photographs. *Pictures from Home* is at times a scathing critique of suburbia and middle-class values, however with his 'bitterly affectionate' (Campany 2017:[sp]) photographs he portrays his parents with love and compassion.



Figure 41: Lydia Goldblatt, *Father*, [sn].
C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.



Figure 42: Lydia Goldblatt, *Bee*, [sn].
C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.

Lydia Goldblatt's series *Still Here*, consisting of photographs taken between 2010 and 2012, documents everyday moments in the lives of her ailing father and elderly mother in their home in Hampstead, London (Traff 2014:[sp]). Intermingled with these moments are abstract details of her father's ageing body, the still lives of objects and shadows of her body falling on the walls of their suburban home. Goldblatt's series may be thematically similar to Sultan's, and she too is telling her own story. However, her photographic style, as well as the execution and impression of her photographs, is entirely different. In Sultan's photographs, he maintains a critical distance between himself and his parents as subjects of his art. While this distance may infrequently slip in his series, Goldblatt's photographs seem extremely close, almost overly intimate. It is this honest exposure of her and her parents' vulnerability that drew me to her work. The photographs in her series veer from stark, formally composed, tableaux with extended depth of field and cinematic side lighting (Figure 41), to blurry abstract compositions and extreme close-ups where picture planes are starkly differentiated by focal shifts (Figure 42). The wide-angle photographs and some of the still lives, with Goldblatt's use of chiaroscuro, are reminiscent of seventeenth century Dutch portrait and still life painting: the environment is

thus significant. In the close-up images, the physical proximity of photographer and referent is emphasised. These images appear more ‘diaristic,’ in a manner reminiscent of visual diaries one may find on Instagram or Tumblr where photography is frequently used to metaphorically evoke states of mind. The form of the curled up dead bee in Figure 42 reflects Goldblatt’s father’s pose in Figure 41, as he sits hunched over his finished dinner, drawing attention to the inevitability of death in the cycle of life. This image, with the darkness appearing to enfold her father’s highlighted form, is reminiscent of Caravaggio’s expressive ‘tenebrism’¹⁴. In her artist statement, Goldblatt (Online) writes of the ‘potential of photographs to open up the realm of experience via their poetic as well as indexical reality’. Poetics and indexicality are important for their link to the blend of subjectivity and objectivity inherent in a photograph. Photographing, she states ‘has always been a means of inhabiting and interpreting the world in which I exist’ ([sa]:[sp]). For Goldblatt, photography is thus an embodied act that serves to reinforce her being-in-the-world.

Each of the above-mentioned series contains both ‘demand’ and ‘offer’ images. Both forms lead to a chiasmic intertwining of sitter, photographer and viewer. A ‘demand’ image is one in which the person portrayed makes eye contact with the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:117). The eye contact leads to an imaginary relation between sitter and viewer.¹⁵ The nature of this relationship is determined by the sitter’s expression. The viewer becomes the object of the sitter’s look. Where the person portrayed is depicted in a state of absorption (as discussed on pages 59–60), Kress and van Leeuwen call an ‘offer’ image (2006:120). In such images the photographed subject becomes an object of contemplation for the viewer.

In my photographs, there are only two portraits in the strict sense of the word – *6 April 2015* (Figure 43) and *8 July 2015* (Figure 44).¹⁶ And in only one of the portraits the person portrayed is looking directly at the photographer and thus at the viewer – the portrait of my father (Figure 43). My father gazes out of the frame with a look of dazed bewilderment that indicates a denial, a disbelief in the realness of the loss of his wife. The following quote by John Berger

¹⁴ Caravaggio, the seventeenth century Italian painter, shocked conventional society of the time with paintings that represented religious scenes in terms of daily life (Hartt 1977:215). He employed a hard, clear, naturalistic style combined with an extremely dramatic use of darkness and light in order to express the inner psyche (1977:218). Tenebrism is differentiated from chiaroscuro in that the former contains more darkness in its light-dark contrast while the latter contains more light.

¹⁵ Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:117) suggest that contact is established via vector lines formed between the sitter’s and the viewer’s eyes.

¹⁶ By this I mean a posed portrait, where the sitter fills a large proportion of the frame.

(in Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:151), concerning Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* (1661), could be applied to my father – 'He is an old man now. All has gone, except a sense of the question of existence, of existence as a question'. Since this is a 'demand' image the viewer too is asked an existential question. This portrait serves to anchor my series of photographs. Indeed all the images were made in the house my father built.



Figure 43: Natalie Payne, 6 April 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper. 27 x 27 cm.

The portrait of my sister (Figure 44) is another key image in the series. It is a classical portrait reminiscent of seventeenth century Dutch oil painting in the angle of the gaze, the pose, the domestic setting, and the resemblance of the towel wrap to the headdress of the period.¹⁷ With her blank gaze and her slightly slumped pose, which intimates her grief, she 'offers' herself to be looked at by the viewer. Both of the above portraits have been photographed at what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:124) term 'close personal distance'.¹⁸ In the suggestion of an intimacy between photographer and subject, as well as the fact that the viewer can easily discern the

¹⁷ In particular in its allusion to Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1665), an iconic painting that has been referenced or appropriated by many artists, filmmakers and photographers.

¹⁸ Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:124) describe 'close personal distance' as the distance at which one can touch another person thus indicating an intimate relationship.

sitter's expression, 'close personal distance', like the direct gaze, incites an emotional relationship between the subject and the viewer. The horizontal point of view of both portraits enables what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:133-135) term 'involvement'. Here the viewer is incorporated into the image because, in terms of Renaissance laws of perspective, the vanishing point lies inside the vertical boundaries of the image. They differentiate between these sort of images and images with an oblique view, where the vanishing point is situated outside the frame, which suggest 'detachment'. Although my sister's gaze does not implicate the viewer, the point of view does. It is my father's and my sister's current emotional state that is being depicted; however, they are, in a sense, self-portraits, in that they convey my own feelings.



Figure 44: Natalie Payne, 8 July 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper. 27 x 27 cm.

Both my portraits and Sultan's portrait of his father sitting on his bed (Figure 45), are examples of the chiasmic intertwining of self and other, to different ends. In his various bodies of work Sultan investigates the complex encounter between photographer, referent and viewer that a photograph elicits. In interrogating his motives for making *Pictures from Home*, he asks: 'Is that why I've come here? To find myself by photographing them?' (Sultan in Sandbye 2013:253). He questions whom it is that he is actually portraying when he photographs his parents. Sultan's father, on viewing the portrait of himself sitting on the bed (Figure 45), says to Larry, 'let's make it very explicit that is you sitting on the bed' (in Sultan 2014:106).



Figure 45: Larry Sultan, *Dad on Bed*, 1984. C-print. 36 x 30 inches.

This notion of portraiture has been expressed by many photographers and possibly relates to the fact that we can only ever see others from our own point of view. David Goldblatt states that '[i]n reality, all we photographers photograph is ourselves in the other...all the time' (in Garb 2011:[sp]).¹⁹ In each of the bodies of work discussed in this chapter, the viewers of the photographs assume the point of view of the photographers, who are photographing their intimate lives, even at times, themselves, which, again, evinces the notion of a chiasmic intertwining. The viewer of the photograph may not necessarily project her/himself onto the sitter, however, through commonalities we share in experience, we are able to recognise and relate to certain affective states. In each of the portraits discussed above, the sombre atmosphere created by the flat lighting and the blank expressions of the sitters embodies an affect of emptiness, possibly even despair. In the portrait of my sister this is enhanced by the beige tones and the blandness of the environment. The portrait of Larry Sultan's father similarly exudes a beige blandness. His father's posture and expression convey a sense of resignation. The decor and the backdrop of dated wallpaper, like the curtaining behind my father, evoke a sense of loss

¹⁹ Goldblatt, in discussion with Tamar Garb (2011:271) concerning the 'othering' inherent in much photography, replies 'I have to say I have become very impatient with this attempt to load you with guilt because you choose to look at the other. We're looking at the other all the time...if I look at you to photograph you, you are the other. There's no question'.

and nostalgia due to their reference to a bygone era. In the portrait of my father, with his back to the light and his body appearing to blend into the darkness, the disconsolate mood evinced by the photograph is enhanced.



Figure 46: Natalie Payne, *21 August 2013 I*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.

Sultan's portrait of his father on the bed is a wide-angle photograph. The greater distance between photographer and sitter implies a degree of objective detachment. In my series I have a number of portraits taken from a similar distance, particularly those of my mother as she edges closer to death. During this period, she became increasingly distant and detached from us, and from the world around her. *21 August 2013 I* (Figure 46) was taken a few days before she died. Here she is writing a list: along with her diary entries, it was something she did every day. The very last photograph I took of my mother, later on the same day, *21 August 2013 II* (Figure 48, page 69), like the very first photograph taken in the series, *12 December 2012* (Figure 47, page 69), is once again a photograph of her sitting at her dressing table. In the earlier photograph, which I discuss on pages 58-59 of this chapter, the rays of direct sunlight add a somewhat lighter tone. In the later photograph the darkness of the silhouetted form, and eerie reflection in the television set conjure a melancholic, confined atmosphere laden with the presence of impending death and loss: here my mother is becoming 'a spectre' (Barthes 1981:14).



Figure 47: Natalie Payne, 12 December 2012.
Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.



Figure 48: Natalie Payne, 21 August 2013.
Pigment print on cotton paper. 21 x 21 cm.

The referent of both photographs is the same: my mother sitting in front of her dressing table at the end of the day. However, the angle of view, the lighting, and the time of year are different. This alludes to the passing of time. Christiane Pratsch Monarchi's essay 'The Ongoing Memory' (2013), on Goldblatt's series *Still Here*, explores the sense of time's passage slowing down due to the heightened perception of waiting. Monarchi (2013:81) discusses Henri Bergson's notion of 'pure duration' where the present seamlessly slips into the past. She introduces Deleuze's notion of the 'meanwhile' of the event as a period of becoming.²⁰ In order to illustrate this notion, she references Yve Lomax's text 'Thinking Stillness' (2006) where Lomax contests the idea of a photograph freezing the movement of time. Lomax (2006:55-56) writes that when the present moment is interrupted, as in a still photograph, time simultaneously splits in the directions of that which is 'no longer' and of that which is 'not yet'. The splitting of the moment again relates to the notion of the chiasm. This notion is particularly applicable to the photographs of my mother made just prior to her passing, as well as to Goldblatt's portraits of her dying father.

Lydia Goldblatt's portraits in the series *Still Here* fluctuate between a distanced view of the subject and extreme intimacy. Looking at Goldblatt's photographs reproduces the embodied sensation of perception. The viewer is forced to stand back, to observe her parents from a distance, then drawn in close, sometimes so close as to render the subject unidentifiable.

²⁰ According to Deleuze (in Lowry and Green 2006:59) the event is 'always and at the same time something that has just happened and something about to happen; never something that is happening'.

In *Mother in the Garden* (Figure 49), photographed using a wide-angle lens, her mother stands with her back to the viewer, lost in contemplation and dwarfed by the textured mass of her garden, which threatens to engulf her frail form. With its evocation of early nineteenth century romantic painting, the photograph expresses questions concerning individual subjectivity, humanity's place in the world and the inevitable cycle of life. The use of extended depth of field, resulting in a hyper-focal plane, along with the depiction of her mother in an absorbed mode, references tableau photography.



Figure 49: Lydia Goldblatt, *Mother in the Garden*, [sa].
C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.

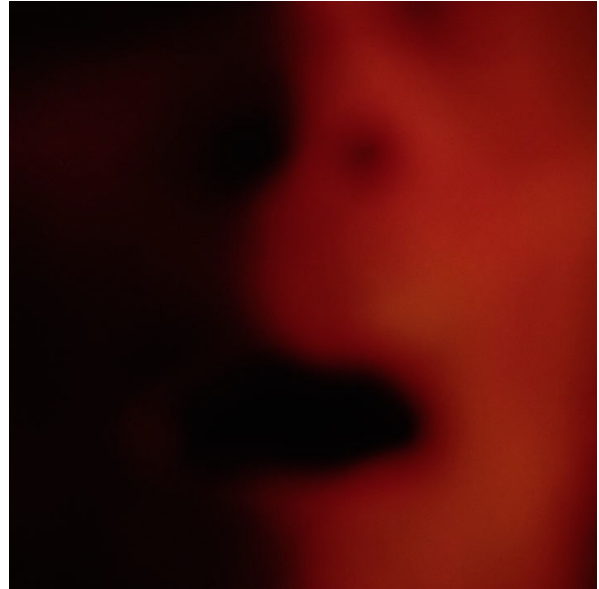


Figure 50: Lydia Goldblatt, *Breath*, [sa].
C-type hand print, 16 x 16 inches.

In the photograph *Breath* (Figure 50) Goldblatt is so close to her father that his face dissolves into a red-hued blur, yet a trace of him remains. This photograph replicates the actual phenomenological experience of viewing something from extremely close-up where the eyes are unable to focus at all. This image would be what Natasha Christopher²¹ (2005:42) terms an 'open form'. The notion of open form implies an image that, although still retaining a likeness to its referent, has been 'eroded, reduced and abstracted to some degree' (2005:42). The open form allows the viewer to project personal meaning onto the work. Such photographs, Christopher (2005:52) suggests, are expressive, evoking an emotional response in the viewer. She draws a comparison between 'open' and 'complex forms', as neither closes the reading of the image. A 'complex form', such as Figure 49, refers to an image where there is extreme

²¹ Wits senior lecturer and artist Natasha Christopher (2005:5), in her master's dissertation, describes the importance of photography as a register of subjective experience. She writes: 'I use photography for its capacity as an objective trace of subjective feelings.' This notion is of interest to me in that it alludes to the chiasmic intertwining of subjectivity and objectivity implicit in photography. The chiasmic intertwining exists both within the photographic frame (as per Christopher's definition above), as well as in the viewer's subjective response to that which is represented in the photograph. Thus the act of viewing a photograph gives rise to a chiasmic intertwining of photographer and viewer.

detail and every element in the image is rendered equally. Because there is no single point of focus the viewer's gaze does not know where to settle and the meaning of the image is never 'closed' or determined.



Figure 51: Larry Sultan, *Across The Divide*, 1984. C-print. 36 x 30 inches.

Larry Sultan's photograph *Across the Divide* (1984) (Figure 51) would similarly be considered a 'complex form'. All of his photographs in *Pictures from Home* were made with a large format camera²² using extended depth of field. This results in highly detailed, crisp images, with everything equally in focus. The viewer's eyes move about the picture plane, constantly searching for a resting point but finding none. In this photograph his suntanned mother and father sit in their living room. The room is garishly decorated in matching tones of bright green – green walls, green patterned wallpaper that matches the patterned couch, and a painting of green grasses. In that they hark back to a bygone era of American middle-class consumption and popular culture, the blend of modern and kitsch furnishings and the dated mid-century light stands and ornaments evoke the nostalgia inherent in the American Dream. In the image, Sultan's parents are separated from one another by a swathe of lurid green carpet as well as the parallel lines that divide the picture plane. His mother is leaning over the back of the couch in an attempt to communicate with her husband who appears distant and distracted. Due to the size of the living room, which is enhanced by the use of a wide-angle lens, his parents appear small, somewhat lost amidst the furnishings and objects that surround them – almost as if they

²² Large format cameras utilise far larger negatives than 35 mm film cameras, usually 4 x 5 inches in size, sometimes even larger. They are heavy and bulky, which makes them difficult to hand hold, consequently they are generally used fixed to a tripod. The process of photographing is laborious and slow. This slowness either leads to the sitters appearing stilted or becoming bored and appearing to no longer be aware of the photographer. They have gone back to daily life, so to speak.

have been overshadowed by a material overload of dated decoration.²³ The living room is at once homely and un-homely, insinuating the failure of the American Dream. This image, with the overabundance of green as well as the busyness of the décor, feels suffocating. This feeling is amplified by the distortion of parallel lines due to the use of a wide-angle lens.²⁴ The excessive focus, detail and saturated colour suggest a Baudrillardian ‘hyperreality’.²⁵ The lurid green and the distortion evoke a distressing feeling of nausea. Sultan’s photographs bring to mind the lavishly coloured paintings of domestic interiors by French post-impressionist Édouard Vuillard. Mary Gordon (1990:[sp]) writes of the ‘silent drama in Vuillard’s rooms’ where the people (generally women) ‘neither ask for, nor return, our gaze’. The composition in Sultan’s *Across the Divide* reflects the snapshot aesthetic while the cinematic use of lighting, the extended depth of field, and the garish *mise-en-scène* result in the living room taking on a stage-like setting, upon which his parents appear as actors; an aesthetic more in line with the tableau modality. Sultan’s photographs, writes Gefter (2014:22) ‘allude to the spontaneous moments they are staged to emulate...while the moment is not spontaneous, the circumstances are authentic’. In the uncanny convergence of the spontaneous and the staged, the banal and the extraordinary, we encounter the chiasm.

Sultan, in considering the intimacy of his photographs, refers to Barthes punctum²⁶: ‘There’s always a photograph that will wound us still, that will...make us feel something painful or embarrassing’ (in Liu 1990:52). This wounding is apparent in the photograph from my series, *12 August 2015* (Figure 52), which shows the bar in the lounge with the slightly skewed stool. This photograph is deeply laden with my own personal associations and projections. The soft lighting and warm tones inside the house lend a sense of nostalgia and evoke the comfort and safety of home. My mother would sit at the bar every evening, with her glass of wine and cigarette. Her presence, as well as her absence, is embodied in the photograph. The barstool

²³ Kress and van Leeuwen label the distance created by the use of a wide-angle lens as ‘public distance’ which is suggestive of the ‘distance between people who are and are to remain strangers’ (2006:125).

²⁴ Large format cameras, besides their large sized negatives, have tilt and shift lenses, which enable a photographer to straighten converging lines. When using a large format camera in architectural photography, as well as much tableau photography, it is general practice to photograph from a mid-level horizontal axis. This creates a very formal composition, with perfectly perpendicular and horizontal lines. Sultan’s viewpoint is from slightly higher, his horizon line is skew and the lines, especially those closer to the edge of the frame, converge.

²⁵ Jean Baudrillard’s concept of ‘hyperreality’ suggests that such artificial imaginary but depleted worlds, as seen on television sitcoms, appear more real than the real world. Baudrillard, as does Sultan in his photographic practice, draws attention to the ‘commodified and mediated nature of contemporary life’ (Sim 2009:241).

²⁶ What is important for Barthes is that the ‘punctum’, in some way, disrupts or moves the spectator. I consider the ‘punctum’, which describes the ‘affective transaction’ (Bennett 2005:7) engendered by a photograph, as the potentially embodied site of the chiasm.

been left askew: because of the soft indirect light that hits it, the stool becomes the focal point of the image. It alludes to someone who has just left the picture frame but who will reappear shortly. The meaning of the image is open. One's eyes, after alighting upon the barstool, move about the picture plane, from the objects on the bar to those on the windowsill, out through the window, and then back in again. The sense of loss is encoded in the image through the absence of actual presence, coupled with the implied presence of desire and affect in those who lay out these spaces.



Figure 52: Natalie Payne, *12 August 2015*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 31 x 31 cm

In accordance with Bachelard's (1985:8) notion of 'topoanalysis'²⁷ and Bill Brown's 'Thing Theory'²⁸ (2001) objects and spaces within the home take on a deeper significance due to the emotional value we accord them. Brown (2001:5) defines 'things' as what is excessive in objects – 'their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems'. The thing names a subject-object relation. Things we hold dear become fetish objects, standing in for people we have lost (Brown 2001:5).

²⁷ Bachelard's notion of topoanalysis is defined in chapter two on page 46.

²⁸ Bill Brown begins his essay titled 'Thing Theory' with a quote by French philosopher Michel Serres '*Le sujet nait de l'objet*' – 'the subject arises from the object'. This essay attempts to define a thing as distinct from an object. According to Brown the 'human subject and its material objects constitute one another' (in Highmore 2011:78).

Thing theory indicates an intertwining of human and thing, and is thus of interest to me in relation to the idea of embodiment. My photograph *12 August 2015* depicts many such ‘things’ as does Sultan’s photograph, *Nightstand* (1984).



Figure 53: Larry Sultan, *Nightstand*, 1984. C-print. 36 x 30 inches.

In *Nightstand* (Figure 53) we are presented with other people’s things. As such they do not carry the ‘presence’ of our own fetish or totem objects, they are simply objects. However, with the inclusion of the photograph of the couple, the viewer is able to associate these objects with specific individuals. The objects on the bedside table, such as the reading glasses and a blood pressure cuff, suggest that this is the bedroom of the elderly couple depicted in the framed photograph. In this manner these objects gain the presence of a ‘thing’. From the contents of the drawer and the book on the bedside table we gather that this is Sultan’s mother’s side of the bed. The intimacy of the image, the act of looking at Sultan’s parents’ personal things and peering into semi-closed drawers incites a sense of voyeurism. Sultan addresses the issue of photography’s unavoidable voyeuristic nature. He states that if he had gone into someone else’s house in suburbia, he would have gone in as a voyeur, however,

...what is crucial here is that this is my family, these are my parents, and I care deeply for them. I have an enormous argument with their culture (perhaps it’s my culture as well), but I have something else, too, compassion (in Liu 1990:52).

Compassion takes his work beyond mere critique. This blend of compassion, identification and critique is an important aspect of his photography. The viewer experiences an embodied encounter with Sultan’s work in that the images, through their representation of vulgarity and

nostalgia embedded in middle-class suburbia and a capitalist consumer society, affect the viewer with both familiarity and repulsion. This, in turn, leads to identification with and rejection of the middle-class everyday lived reality depicted in these images. My personal embodied reaction to these photographs arouses my own disjunctive feelings towards suburbia, a place that is familiar, comfortable and homely while simultaneously laden with feelings of anxiety, solitude, frustration and discomfort.



Figure 54: Natalie Payne, *19 May 2015*. Pigment print on display paper. 90 x 60 cm.

Through the representation of a simple object (a ‘thing’), my photograph, *19 May 2015* (Figure 54), evokes a disquieting aspect of suburbia. It is a photograph of an ordinary white plastic chair found in many middle-class South African suburban gardens. In this image the lush greenery that fills three quarters of the frame contrasts with the white plastic chair and the darkness behind it. The chair is situated in the far corner of our garden, out of view. My mother used to come and sit here to smoke a cigarette. In the photograph the chair stands uncomfortably close to the edge of the frame. The unbalanced composition elicits a sense of uneasiness in the viewer. This, along with the isolation of the chair forgotten at the edge of the garden (outdoor chairs are usually grouped in a social setting, such as on a patio or around a table), evokes a feeling of loneliness. With its extended depth of field this is a ‘complex form’²⁹ image onto which the viewer may project personal meaning.

As is the case with most of my photographs from this series, I consider Figures 54 and 55, on the next page, to be quiet and understated photographs. Concerning what he terms the ‘quiet’

²⁹ As per definition on pages 70-71.

photograph, writer and curator of photography Gerry Badger (2010:210) suggests that ‘the photographer’s voice is not of the hectoring kind’. He adds that such photographs, which focus on modest subjects, do not lack ‘opinion, voice or emotional engagement’ but require work on the part of the viewer to appreciate their subtleties (2010:219).³⁰ The most remarkable thing about the time between my mother’s diagnosis and death was the quietness and apparent ordinariness of everyday life. Everything was the same yet everything had changed. The photograph *9 January 2013* (Figure 55), taken during this period, is a candid snapshot of my sister in the garden, cutting her toenails. It is the end of the day with the elongated shadows caused by the late afternoon light enveloping the green grass and flowers. This photograph alludes to the many non-events of daily life: the space between. The viewer is required to do some work (as per Badger’s definition of the quiet photograph) in order to recognise the cultural connotations. The neatly trimmed lawn, the well-kept flowerbeds of agapanthus and hydrangeas, the birdbath and the ubiquitous metal sculptures of wild animals indicate that this is most likely a South African suburban garden. On the lawn, there are two cups of tea. The extra cup alludes to the absence of someone who was there just before. The everydayness and intimacy of the domestic scene, along with the extra teacup, invites the viewer into the frame, to experience the banality of someone else’s life. The banality of the photograph induces, in the viewer, a familiar sense of ennui.

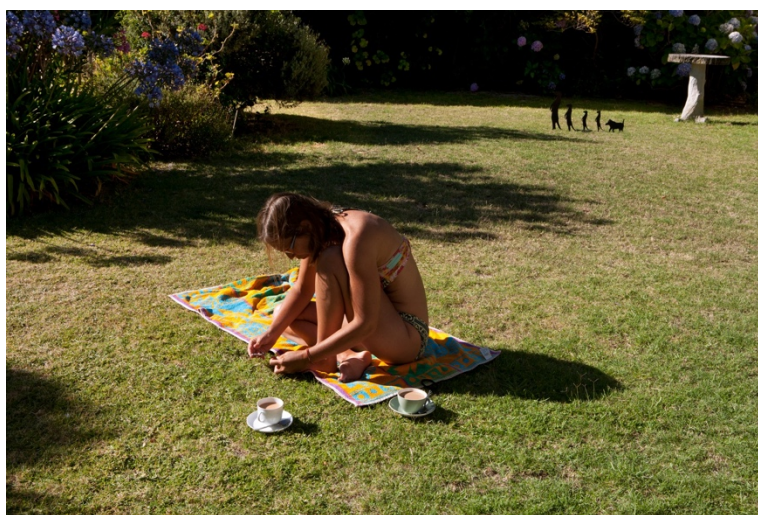


Figure 55: Natalie Payne, *9 January 2013*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 31.5 x 21 cm.

The everyday experience of suburbia is frequently linked to notions of banality, boredom and ennui. Eugenie Shinkle (2004:167), in an essay discussing what she terms the ‘aesthetic of the

³⁰ ‘Without Author or Art: The Quiet Photograph’ is an essay by Gerry Badger in his book *The Pleasures of Good Photography* (2010). He suggests that ‘quiet photography’ has been ‘largely disregarded, and certainly little remarked upon’. An example of a quiet photographer for him would be Stephen Shore. He describes the quiet photograph as ‘an amalgam of mirror and window, an ineffable struggle between subjectivity and objectivity’ (2010:216).

banal,' describes photographs that are concerned with the unspectacular representation of the mundane facts of life as 'banal'. Banal photographs, she says, do not capture decisive moments³¹ but rather indecisive moments: 'a world of unrelenting monotony where the everyday is rarely allowed to rise above its own insignificance' (Shinkle 2004:167). According to Henri Lefebvre (in Seigworth 2000:141) despite the inherent monotony and banality, the 'contradiction at the heart of everydayness' is that, in fact, 'everything changes'. Seigworth³² (citing Deleuze 2000:253) contends that banality is intimately intertwined with meaninglessness and insignificance, but that in its everydayness lies its very significance – 'Everything is ordinary!' and 'Everything is unique!' The above statements, which suggest the significance of the insignificant and change in what appears unchanging, may be thus considered as iterations of the chiasm.



Figure 56: Natalie Payne, *27 June 2015*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 31.5 x 21 cm.

In my series, the banality of everyday life represented in the photographs is accompanied by a sense of loss and loneliness. All, except one, *30 December 2015* (Figure 57), depict a single person at a time, and even in this one image where there are two people, there is no contact between them. This serves to reinforce the impression of the isolation of individuals suspended in a moment of grief and mourning. It also alludes to the frequent seclusion of life in suburbia. The photograph *27 June 2015* (Figure 56) is taken from inside my childhood bedroom looking out through a window onto the back garden, where there is a slightly stooped indeterminate figure walking past. As in the silhouetted images of my mother, the viewer is able to project

³¹ In his book, *The Decisive Moment* (1952), the pre-eminent French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson writes: 'Photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression' (in Hirsch 2009:254).

³² Gregory J. Seigworth (2000:229), in an extended essay that discusses the relevance of the notion of banality to cultural studies – which he terms a 'productive banality' – turns to the work of various theorists and philosophers who consider that meaning can be found in the banality of the everyday (such as Lefebvre, de Certeau, Deleuze and Guattari).

whoever they wish onto the figure. This photograph of my father walking past my bedroom window, as he has done almost daily since 1967, alludes to the repetitive and ritualistic nature of daily life. It encapsulates my own grief as I watch him repeat his daily rituals without my mother. While the viewer would not be aware of my personal associations and projections, there are signifiers in the image that may provoke an affective response. A figure seen through a window is a commonly used trope in the history of art (Racz 2015:31), with the framed glass pane of the window symbolising the ‘spiritual meeting point between one state of existence and another’ (2015:34). Cold tones of green and blue dominate the image, with fragments of colour here and there. The window blind has been lifted, as evidenced by the cord dangling from the top of the frame, however the view into the garden is obscured by mist on the windowpane. In the top left-hand corner of the frame, the mist is clearing. The misty window frame, here, keeps the photographer hidden from the person photographed adding to the viewer’s sense of voyeuristically watching someone go about their daily routine.

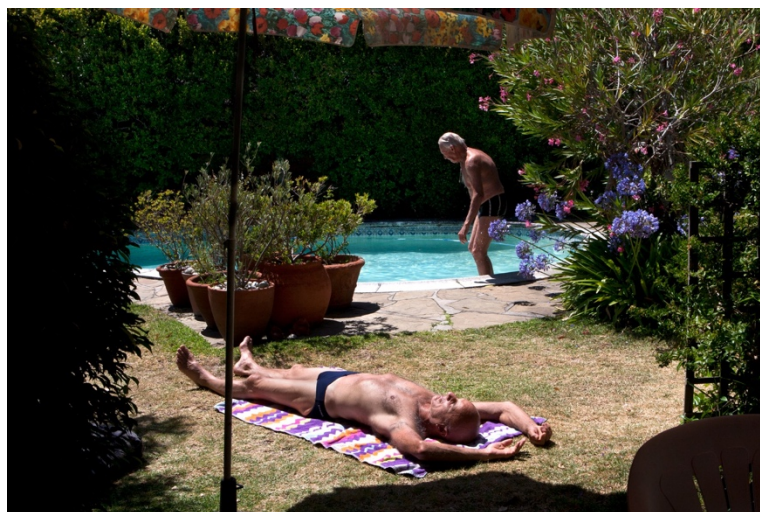


Figure 57: Natalie Payne *30 December 2015*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 31.5 x 21 cm.

Figure 57, too, embodies my personal grief in that it relates to the way that, after a traumatic experience, life simply continues. Again, it is through signifiers in the image that a specific disconcerting feeling may be incited in the viewer. The two figures, almost seeming to be doubles of one another, are framed by the oppressive darkness of the shaded areas. The image appears to be staged, particularly because of the position of the photographer, who is in the darkness as if looking out onto a stage set watching a performance. Something should be going on here, but nothing really is. This is the everyday.

The monotony of everyday life, its ‘everydayness’ is explicit in Larry Sultan’s, Lydia Goldblatt’s and my own photographs of our suburban homes. It is also evident in Billingham’s photographs of his parent’s in their council flat, in David Goldblatt’s photographs of

middle-class white South Africa during apartheid, in Mofokeng's imaging of daily life for black South Africans during apartheid, and even in Nan Goldin's photographs of people doing their debauched utmost to escape the banality of everyday life. It is the inescapable banality of the everyday, and the transience and mutability of life that links us as humans. It is these photographs' 'everydayness' that enables viewers from different walks of life to identify with them. The everyday is not only a subject in these photographs, it also serves to heighten a notion of embodiment: Billingham's photographs highlight the corpulent lethargy of life in council flats, Goldin the failure of escape, David Goldblatt and Sultan indicate our entrapment within a specific socio-cultural identity, Mofokeng's photographs demonstrate that even during extraordinary or tragic times, everyday life continues, and Lydia Goldblatt evokes the ephemerality of existence. All photography is 'the everyday', at times that everyday is more spectacular, or more dramatic, or more interesting, but mostly it is simply the rather banal inescapable cycle of life. Benjamin (2007:203) suggests that Marcel Proust's genius lay in his ability to evoke the 'everyday hour,' wherein anyone can find his own existence.³³ In addition to evoking the 'everyday hour', all of these series of photographs illustrate the notion of the chiasm in that they demonstrate the blurring of subject and object. The photographers are depicting their own lives, they become the subjects of their own photographs thus they too become objectified.



Figure 58 & 59: Natalie Payne, *Encountering Windrift* exhibition installation photographs, The Point of Order, 2017.³⁴

I conclude this chapter with a description of my exhibition, *Encountering Windrift*, at The Point of Order Gallery in Braamfontein, June 2017. In order to highlight the disjuncture caused by

³³ Walter Benjamin (2007:203), in the essay 'The Image of Proust' defines Proust's 'everyday hour' as the description of 'the undisturbed unfolding of the most banal, most fleeting, most sentimental, weakest hour in the life of one to whom they pertain'.

³⁴ See Appendix 2 for high-resolution exhibition installation photographs.

viewing highly personal work in a public space, I decided to use the traditional gallery space of the white cube.³⁵ The Point of Order positions itself as an experimental space within which to challenge the white cube. For my body of work, however, I felt that the white cube serves as an iteration of the nuclear family home that only gives access to those invited in. It also serves as a reflection of the clean, ordered and rather sterile space of middle-class suburbia.³⁶ This feeling was enhanced by the cloying smell of the freshly painted space. The work is furthermore traditionally framed and hung at eye-level in the space. The purpose of the minimal layout was to amplify the feelings of loneliness and quietness that pervade the photographs, as well as to elicit in the viewer a sense of listlessness and inertia. The Point of Order is most usually a quiet, somewhat lonely space. This is further heightened by the continual activity outside the gallery, which, during my exhibition, was reflected in the glass of the framed photographs.



Figure 60: Natalie Payne, *Encountering Windrift* exhibition installation photograph, The Point of Order, 2017.

Since my body of work is the accumulation of ‘many non-moments spent waiting, existing...’ (Monarchi 2013:82), for the exhibition installation I deliberately chose not to lay the work out according to a chronological sequence. The titles consist simply of the dates the photographs were taken. This alludes to the way in which memory is not a chronologically linear experience and gives expression to Bergson’s (in Monarchi 2013:81) notion of duration, where the past seamlessly interweaves with the present. The ordinariness of the photographs, and their suggestion of something one would encounter again and again, convey the monotony of life in suburbia. The exhibition layout reinforces the repetitive and ritualistic nature of the everyday.

³⁵ Brian O’Doherty (1999:15), in his three-part essay, *Inside the white cube: the ideology of the gallery space*, describes the artificial and sterile space of the white cube as having a disembodied effect on the viewer.

³⁶ According to Sheikh (2009:[sp]) ‘gallery spaces...are still white cubes, and their ideology remains one of commodity fetishism and eternal value(s)’.

This is heightened through the use of repeat motifs – the pruned tree that changes with the seasons, looking in or out of windows and people performing mundane chores. Through varying the distances between the photographs in the gallery, thus creating empty spaces of differing width, I aimed to convey the embodied experience of time. Time is not perceived as a constant: sometimes it contracts, while, during periods of waiting, sadness or grieving, it appears to stretch.

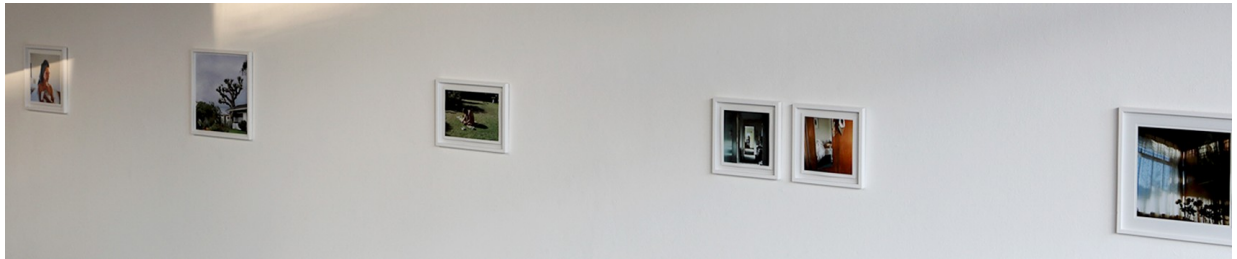


Figure 61: Natalie Payne, *Encountering Windrift* exhibition installation photograph, The Point of Order, 2017.

The photographs in the exhibition range in print size with some printed on archival art paper and framed, and others printed on wallpaper and mounted directly to the wall.³⁷ In reference to the tiny scale of Johannes Vermeer's³⁸ paintings of daily life, the photographs that contain people engaged in routine activities are printed the smallest. The smaller scale reflects the experience of looking at family photographs displayed in the home. It encourages the viewer to go up close, reinforcing the experience of intimacy. In addition to being traditionally framed, they are furthermore float-mounted³⁹, so as to enhance their value as precious objects – ordinary everyday rituals become valued as important moments. The interiors, still lives and images of the exterior of the house are larger, and traditionally mounted and framed. They serve as the physical backdrop for daily life, while conveying the psychological atmosphere of the home.⁴⁰

³⁷ In the layout of the work and varying print sizes I borrow Wolfgang Tillman's idea: 'If one thing matters everything matters.' With this title of his 2003 Tate Britain show Tillmans does not suggest that everything is equally important but rather that any object, person or place has the potential be a worthy subject (Smyth 2016:[sp]). Tillmans has been labelled as an early practitioner of the so-called 'snapshot aesthetic'. He explains his 'artless' technique as a way of approximating what his eyes see and states that 'photography allows me to make very expressive things but keep them still related to and grounded in reality' (in Smyth 2016:[sp]).

³⁸ Vermeer, a seventeenth Dutch painter, is renowned for his relatively small-scale paintings of middle-class domestic scenes.

³⁹ Float mounting, where the image is raised off the mount board by a foam board of a smaller size, creates the impression that the artwork is floating in space. This is a somewhat costlier method of framing than conventionally mounted images.

⁴⁰ I describe the following examples of these medium sized images: Figure 1: *4 July 2015 I* (page 1), Figure 34: *12 August 2013* (page 54), Figure 52: *12 August 2015* (page 73) and Figure 64: *12 January 2016* (page 85).

The largest three images, unframed and un-mounted, were attached directly onto the wall, in the manner of posters in a childhood bedroom. Each of these three seemingly banal photographs are for me, highly evocative images.⁴¹



Figure 62: Natalie Payne, *4 July 2015 III*. Pigment print on display paper. 90 x 60 cm.

4 July 2015 III (Figure 62) is a straightforward and unambiguous depiction of the front façade of the house. In reality, ‘Windrift’ appears to have turned its back on the world as there are no large windows facing the street: besides the front door, the only openings to the front garden are these three windows as well as another two equally small windows. This effect is underscored by the framing of the photograph. The hydrangeas (a remnant of the traditional English garden) are struggling to survive in the dry sandy soil. The hose is tattered and worn. My father is at the window, waving. This rather prosaic photograph, through its stark frontal composition, brings to mind the Dusseldorf School’s ‘deadpan’ style. The starkness of this image, along with its subject matter, alludes to a pervasive feeling of barrenness and loneliness in middle-class suburbia, as well as to my father’s struggle to continue alone.

Through reference to photographs from the three bodies of work: *Pictures from Home*, *Still Here* and *Encountering Windrift*, I have described the way in which each, in their own manner, serves to demonstrate the notion of the photograph as an embodied encounter. Both the distance and intimacy of the photography in the various series calls the viewer into the position of the photographer, where differing individual experiences converge at the photographic chiasm. Furthermore, an encounter with the chiasm is incited through the use of both demand and offer images (defined on pages 64-66) where the viewer is incorporated into the photographic encounter, via, in the case of the former, the sitter’s or, in the case of the latter, their own

⁴¹ See Figure 54: *19 May 2015* (page 75), Figure 62: *4 July 2015 III* (page 82) and Figure 63: *31 August 2013* (page 84).

gaze. This encounter with the chiasm is also brought into being through the use of either open or complex forms (defined on page 70-71), as well as the use of framing devices that draw attention to the photographer's position behind the lens. The framing of the photographs through windows, doors or passageways, or from dark underexposed areas accentuates the photographer's view as an observer of a scene.⁴² Thus the position of the photographer is indexical to the affect of image. The formal framing, and the cinematic use of light and shadow of many of the images bring to mind tableau photography, while the candid, un-posed photographs conform to the mode of family 'snapshot' photography. Both modes set a certain staging where the viewer him/herself could be the one to walk into the space.

In discussing *Pictures from Home*, Sultan (in Helfand 2017) states that this series of photographs involved 'taking the construction of the domestic and looking at it as a theatrical subject'. Sultan's photographs have a certain postmodern dispassionate indifference and critical distance to them. This is heightened by the conceptual and technical rigour of his work. However, through his use of material from the family archive as well as the extreme ordinariness of his photographs, what the viewer is presented with is acutely and almost aching familiar. In this regard, the viewer experiences an affective embodied response. On a personal level, I experience discomfit looking at Sultan's photographs as they take me back to white middle-class suburbia of the 80s. Goldblatt's photographs, on the other hand, are so extremely personal and close that at times they slip into the sentimental. The awkwardness of experiencing someone else's sentimental self-exposure is in part responsible for the effectiveness of her photographs in that the sense of embarrassment is itself an embodied affective sensation. To see Goldblatt's photographs, because of their intimacy and the representation her own family's trauma, is to be 'stricken with affect' (Bennett 2006:29), which, in turn, enables 'empathic vision' (Bennett 2006). Larry Sultan's series speaks more to my own confrontation with my childhood home in suburbia, while Lydia Goldblatt's series evokes the feelings and emotions associated with experiencing illness and death of a close family member. Because I myself was engaged with similar issues to those represented in the two bodies of work, they most likely affected me on a deeper level than if I had viewed them under different circumstances. These images, to borrow from Barthes (1981:27) 'bruise me' – are poignant to me.⁴³

⁴² See Figures 56: 27 June 2015 (page 77) and 57: 30 December 2015 (page 78).

⁴³ Despite the fact that Barthes's notion of the punctum has been somewhat overused I feel it perfectly expresses the ineffable quality of certain photographs that affect one on a phenomenological level, giving rise to an embodied encounter.



Figure 63: Natalie Payne, *31 August 2013*. Pigment print on display paper. 90 x 60 cm.

31 August 2013 (Figure 63), another seemingly banal photograph, was taken on the day of my mother's funeral from her side of the bed – a view I had never before taken cognisance of. This photograph serves as an instance of the intertwining of poetics and indexicality, a set of terms, which illuminate the chiasm as embodied. It represents the notions of embodiment and the chiasm in that the camera is literally positioned in the place my mother would have lain. Here, I am looking out of the home 'as' my mother, thus as the photographer I am taking on my mother's point of view: stepping into her 'view' on the world. The photograph embodies my mother's gaze, which the viewer is then able to access. Onto this image I project my own personal feelings of grief, loss, and the awareness of the inevitable cycle of life. However, the photograph suggests this in and of itself with the view through the shroud of sheer curtains onto the darkening garden, towards an electricity pole reminiscent of a cross on the horizon. The last rays of the late afternoon sun illuminate the clouds in the sky, and the tree and the curtains in the top left-hand corner of the frame, creating a dramatic aura. These photographs may be a trace of the real but through their connotative expression within the context of the body of work that is *Encountering Windrift* they gesture towards the invisible in the visible, leading to the possibility of an affective chiasmic encounter between my experience and others.

Conclusion

The solitude of the artwork is a false solitude: it is a knot or a twist of sensations just as the cry of a human body is. And a human collective is a knot and twist of sensations in the same way – Rancière (2008:[sp]).



Figure 64: Natalie Payne, *12 January 2016*. Pigment print on cotton paper. 31 x 31 cm.

12 January 2016 (Figure 63) is a photograph of the front door of my childhood home, viewed from the inside: a simple wooden double door with its triple locking system. The entrance is guarded by a totem object – a porcelain dog inherited from my grandmother, who inherited it from her mother. Indexicality here triggers a whole range of associations, particularly poeticised by the presence of the totem-dog, and the composition of the image. The front door acts as the ‘physical and symbolic demarcation’ between the private and the public world (Racz 2015:32). It protects the home from the outside world, yet also allows access into the private space. Children’s drawings of the home frequently resemble a face with the front door representing the mouth, and two windows representing the eyes (Garber in Briganti & Mezei 2012:123). This suggests the deep connection between the home, and both the body and the psyche. Bachelard (1994:7) writes of our first home protecting us, housing our memories and forming

our future selves. Mary Douglas (in Briganti & Mezei 2012:53) speaks of the ‘tyranny of the home’, describing home as a place that children want to leave but frequently end up reproducing. When I look at this door I am flooded with memories of people passing through it. I hear my father’s whistle as he comes in through the front door after a day at work, I see my mother’s smile as she enters with her shopping bags. I see the day my sister pushed my mother to the ground as she anxiously fled the home. I see my father storming out in anger after a fight with one of us. I hear the sound of the doorbell. I see my first friend, Gail, asking if she can come and play. All the ins and outs of a life. The front door – the boundary between one world and another (Racz 2015:48), offering separation and connection, a crossing over of public and private – a chiasmic space.

My series of photographs, as exhibited at The Point of Order, began with an image of an open door (Figure 1), described on page 1, inviting the viewer into the private space of the home. In the photograph above (Figure 63) the door is shut, the outside world is excluded. Bachelard defines the door as a primal image, a symbol of ‘hesitation, temptation, desire, security, welcome and respect’ (1994:224). He suggests that if one was to speak of all the doors one has closed or opened, or would like to have opened, or should not have opened, ‘one would have to tell the story of one’s entire life’ (1994:224). In the above photograph the dog marks the door poetically. The photograph has been taken from a child’s point of view, which makes the door appear gargantuan in relation to the diminutive size of the porcelain dog. The dog could be considered as the punctum of the photograph in its suggestion of a middle-class suburban upbringing and the associated values, aspirations, desires and fears – a small ‘dead’ dog and the large door, keeping the world at bay.

I consider the autobiographical photograph as offering the potential to provide a chiasmic space – an intertwining of self, other and the world. I posit such a photograph as the embodiment of an encounter between those involved in both the production and reception of photography – the photographer, the photographic referent and the viewers. In so doing I provide a framework for the reception of my body of work *Encountering Windrift*, submitted in partial fulfilment for my master’s degree. The model of photography I present offers a potential solution to my concerns pertaining to the acts of ‘othering’, voyeurism and objectification inherent in both the making/taking and viewing of photographs. This is predicated on Merleau-Ponty’s (1968:130) notions of embodiment and ‘the intertwining – the chiasm’, and the consequent idea that subjectivity is formed through an entangled encounter with others, things, and our situated being-in-the-world. In support for the model of photography I propose, I utilise the notion of

affect in that it implies a form of intertwined relationality. Photography, in this manner, creates a ‘citizenry of photography’¹ (Azoulay 2008:93). In this ‘citizenry of photography’, according to Azoulay (2008:13), no single person creates the photograph nor determines its meaning – both the creation and meaning arise out of the encounter between photographer, referent and viewer.

In chapter one I have utilised the notions of embodiment, and more specifically the chiasm and affect, to challenge the binary thinking implicit in modernist/postmodernist theory. I apply this to the practice of photography in particular. All photographs may be construed as the embodiment of an encounter, even photographs that, for me personally, contain only the studium. Whether it is the journalistic documentation of war or a celebrity portrait for a magazine, the notion still holds that what is embodied in the photograph is the specific encounter between photographer and referent. The viewer’s subsequent encounter with the photograph may provoke an embodied reaction. What I have argued for, in chapter two, is that photographs taken by a photographer directly implicated in the events portrayed may, through affective transaction, *enhance* the experience of the embodied encounter. What gives rise to affect is the punctum of the photograph: its ability to move others.

In viewing the autobiographical photographs of family, home and suburbia, discussed in chapter two and chapter three, we encounter the lived experience of the photographers. Bennett (2005:7) defines this as the ‘transactive’ nature of art, whereby, through affect we are able to engage empathically with others’ experiences. She states ‘feeling is both imagined and regenerated through an encounter with the artwork’ (2005:41). Affect is integral to both the composition and the viewing of the artwork. Photography may be a primarily visual medium, but through eliciting the viewers’ personal memories and emotions, physical sensations are conjured up, which in turn ‘produces an encounter in the present’ (Bennett 2005:28). In Sultan’s images I can feel the soft carpet under my feet, I smell the recently mown lawn, I can taste the roast turkey and I can hear the sound of the game broadcast on the television. Looking at his images I am mentally transported back to my suburban childhood home, with all the implicit associations, both positive and negative. Goldblatt’s images, in their quietness and stillness, immediately evoke my parents’ home during the time between my mother’s diagnosis and her passing. I hear the familiar voices and sounds – the clock ticking, the radio, doors opening and

¹ ‘The members of the community of photography are... anyone and everyone who bears any relationship whatsoever to photographs – as a photographer, a viewer of photographs, or a photographed person... “the citizenry of photography”’ (Azoulay 2008:93).

closing, the hum of the fridge and the howling of the wind. Goldblatt's images call forth my own memories and feelings of a specific time and place.

Representations of domesticity, with their sentimental and kitsch associations, have been marginalised in the modern art context (Perry 2013:15). According to Griselda Pollock (cited in Perry 2013:16) this is due to the fact that the private domestic sphere of home, in opposition to the more masculine sphere of public spaces, is associated with middle-class femininity and has consequently remained invisible and irrelevant. Baudelaire's 'painter of modern life' certainly did not engage with domesticity and family life (Racz 2015:8). Domesticity is simply not sexy and suburbia is certainly not edgy. In the South African context, middle-class suburbia evokes not only class division, but also the racial segregation of the apartheid era. Yet from the time of the Renaissance, when artists were freed from depicting only religious and mythological scenes or the ruling class, they have investigated daily life and the domestic realm². Since the 60s artists have increasingly been critically exploring the home, challenging the notion of it being a space of comfortable domesticity, highlighting instead, the home as a space where gender roles and power relations are being questioned (see Perry 2013 and Racz 2015).

My own photographs of the domestic space of my childhood suburban home were motivated, initially, by the impending loss of my mother. As mentioned in the introduction, I wanted to hold on to my mother and so I photographed her in the spaces of the home I was used to seeing her in, and from where she would soon be absent. After the passing of my mother, through my investigations of the family archive – the family photographs and my mother's diaries in particular – I realised the limitations of family photographs: their one-sided representation of the ideal family. As opposed to the traditional family photographs, the photographs I made, in their portrayal of the monotony of everyday life as well as everyday trauma, reveal the unedited banality of family life. The photographs serve as an expression of my contradictory feelings towards my childhood home, family life and suburbia, and the notion that the very thing that protects us also confines or threatens us. The very things I ran from, I am now afraid to lose.

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the photographic act as well as the viewers' engagement with photographs is a phenomenological, embodied experience. In previous chapters I have expressed my concern with photography's frequently voyeuristic and objectifying nature. Many of the photographs in my series, particularly those of my father, are

² Notable examples of painters of domestic interiors would be Johannes Vermeer in the seventeenth century, Édouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard – post-impressionists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, American realist painter Edward Hopper, and, of course, the more contemporary painter of suburbia, Eric Fischl.

taken from a low angle. These photographs, which represent my position as a child in the home, are illustrative of an embodied rather than an objectifying gaze. The viewer experiences and sees the home, as child or sibling, from the inside out. I would define this as an embodied encounter. By encountering my body of work, the viewer bears witness to a quiet domestic tragedy: the tragedy of ageing, death and loss. The fact that my photographs depict a white middle-class family going about their daily life is of concern to me. I questioned the relevance of this work within the tense and exciting space and time of the 2016 and 2017 student unrest and discourse around decolonisation.³ What surprised me, however, was the way in which people engaged with the photographs at the exhibition, especially younger people who I thought would have difficulty in identifying with work that clearly depicts the psychological processing of a white, middle-aged woman's personal trauma. Perhaps the fact that we all share the lived reality of familial and personal mortality is a leveller, a common ground that surpasses the politics of difference, enabling empathy and transactive affect.

The research involved in constructing a theoretical and conceptual framework for my photographic process has led to a broader understanding of photography in relation to art history as well as to philosophical and theoretical considerations. This practice-based research has, in turn, served to affect and consolidate my photographic process. Creating a body of photographic work is in and of itself an embodied process – a chiasmic intertwining of intellectual and creative processes, as well as of self, others and the world.

³ I am referring to the *Fees Must Fall* movement, which calls for free decolonised education in South Africa.

REFERENCE LIST:

- Adams, T. 2016. Richard Billingham: 'I just hated growing up in that tower block', in *The Guardian*.
[Online]. Available: <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/mar/13/richard-billingham-tower-block-white-dee-rays-a-laugh-liz>>
Accessed: 2017/10/24.
- Adorno, T. W. 2005 [1951]. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Translated from German by Jephcott, EFN. London; New York: Verso.
- Anthes, B & Modrack, R. 2011. *Reframing Photography: Theory and Practice*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Arendt, H. 2006 [1963]. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Penguin.
- Ayala, A. 2012 [2010]. *The Visual Poetics of Raymond Carver*. Lanham; Boulder; New York; Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Azoulay, A. 2008. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone.
- Baldwin, T. (ed) 2004. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Bachelard, G. 1994. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*. Translated from French by Jolas, M. Boston: Beacon.
- Badger, G. 2010. *The Pleasures of Good Photographs*. New York: Aperture.
- Bailly, L. 2009. *Lacan: A Beginners Guide*. London: One World.
- Barthes, R. 1981 [1980]. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated from French by Howard, R. New York. Hill & Wang.
- Benjamin, W. 1980 [1931]. A Short History of Photography, in *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by Trachtenberg, A. Translated from German by Patton, P. New Haven: Leete's Island:199-218.
- Benjamin, W. and Arendt, H. 2007. (eds). *Illuminations*. Translated from German by Zohn, H. New York: Schocken.
- Bennett, J. 2005. *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Best, S. 2011. *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-garde*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Bester, R. & Enwezor, O. (eds). 2013. *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life*. International Centre of Photography New York. Munich; London; New York: Prestel.
- Billingham, R. *Untitled*, 1995. Colour photograph. Available:
<<http://www.americansuburbx.com/2010/04/theory-reinterpreting-unconventional.html>>
Accessed: 2017/01/11.
- Bolton, R. (ed). 1992 [1989]. *The Context of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*. Cambridge; London: The MIT Press.
- Borggreen, G, & Gade, R. (eds). 2013. *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1990. [1965]. *Photography, A Middle-brow Art*. Translated from French by Whiteside, S. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Boym, S. 2007. Nostalgia and Its Discontents, in *Hedgehog Review*. 9(2):7-18. [Online]. Available:
<http://www.uib.no/sites/w3.uib.no/files/attachments/_nostalgia_and_its_discontents.pdf>
Accessed: 2017/07/26.
- Brennan, T. 2004. *The Transmission of Affect*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Briganti, C. & Mezei, K. 2012. (eds). *The Domestic Space Reader*. Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press.
- Brilliant, R. 1991. *Portraiture*. London: Reaktion.
- Brown, B. 2001. Thing Theory, in *Critical Inquiry: Things*, 28(1). The University of Chicago Press. [Online]. Available: <<http://jstor.org/stable/1344258>>
Accessed: 2017/07/23.

- Brown, EH. & Phu, T. (eds). 2014. *Feeling Photography*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Burgin, V. 1982. *Thinking Photography*. Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire; London: MacMillan.
- Burke, P & Van der Veken, J. (eds). 1993. *Merleau-Ponty in Contemporary Perspective*. Springer.
- Butler, J. 2015. *Senses of the Subject*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Butler, J. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning*. London; New York: Verso.
- Bystrom, K. 2016. *Democracy at Home in South Africa: Family Fictions and Transitional Culture*. Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bystrom, K & Nuttall, S. 2013. Introduction: Private lives and public cultures in South Africa, in *Cultural Studies*, 27:3:307-332. doi:10.1080/09502386.2013.777295.
- Cadava, E. Connor, P. & Nancy, J. (eds) 1991. *Who Comes After the Subject*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Cadoza, S. 2012. Kodak Colorama: "World's Largest Photographs" Return to Grand Central Terminal, in *City Guides - New York*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.justluxe.com/travel/new-york-news_1808243.php> Accessed: 2015/10/07.
- Caputo, JD. 2016 [2013]. *Truth: The Search for Wisdom in the Postmodern Age*. Penguin.
- Carmen, T and Hansen, MBN. (eds). 2005. *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chaplin, AD. 2005. Art and Embodiment: Biological and Phenomenological Contributions to Understanding Beauty and the Aesthetic, in: *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 3:[sp]. [Online]. Available: <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu>> Accessed: 2014/04/15.
- Cho, D & Lewis, T. 2006. Home Is Where the Neurosis Is: A Topography of the Spatial Unconscious, in *Cultural Critique*, 64:69-91. University of Minnesota Press. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4489258>> Accessed: 2016/01/30.
- Christopher, N. 2005. The Photographic Document as Subjective Register in Contemporary South African Visual Culture. Research report. University of Witwatersrand.
- Cixous, H. The Laugh of the Medusa, in *Signs*, 1:4. The University of Chicago Press:875-893. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239>> Accessed: 2018/01/31.
- Clark, NL and Worger, WH. 2011 [2004]. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, Oxon, New York: Routledge.
- Cole, E. *House of Bondage*, 1967. Gelatin silver print. Ernest Cole Family Trust /Courtesy the Hasselblad Foundation. Available: <<http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/2014/9/ernest-cole-photographerofapartheid.html>> Accessed: 2017/11/24.
- Connerton, P. 2009. *How Modernity Forgets*. Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Copjec, J. 1996. The Strut of Vision: Seeing's Somatic Support, in *Qui Parle*, 9(2):1-30. University of Nebraska Press. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20686045>> Accessed: 2014/04/15.
- Corcoran, M, Gray, J, & Peillon, M. 2010. *Suburban Affiliations: Social Relations in the Greater Dublin Area*, Syracuse; New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Costello, D. 2007. Greenberg's Kant and the fate of aesthetics in contemporary art theory, in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Wiley. 65(2):217-228. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4622225>> Accessed: 2014/05/11.
- Cotton, C. 2009 [2004]. *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*. London; New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Cox, D. 2009. Sally Mann, in *American Suburb X*. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.americansuburbx.com/2009/11/theory-sally-mann-by-dana-cox.html>> Accessed: 2014/05/11.

- Crimp, D. 1980. The Photographic Condition of Postmodernism, in *October*. 15:91-101. [Online]. Available: <<http://0-www.jstor.org.innopac.wits.ac.za/stable/pdf/778455.pdf>> Accessed: 2013/06/12.
- De Certeau, M. 1988 [1984]. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press.
- de Duve, T, Chevrier, JF, Pelenc, A & Groys, B. 009. *Jeff Wall: The Complete Edition*. London; New York: Phaidon.
- de Duve, T 1996. The Mainstream and the Crooked Path, in 2009. *Jeff Wall: The Complete Edition*. London; New York: Phaidon:10-32.
- Deleuze, G. 2008. [1964]. *Proust and Signs*. London; New York: Continuum.
- Deleuze, G & Guattari, F. 2003 [1991]. *What is Philosophy*. Translated from French by Tomlinson, H and Burchell, G. Fifth edition. London; New York: Verso.
- Divola, J. *San Fernando Valley*, 1971-1973. Photograph, gelatin silver print. Available: <<http://www.nazraeli.com/complete-catalogue/john-divola-san-fernando-valley>> Accessed: 2015/07/03.
- Doyle, J. 2013. *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.
- Duncan, P. 2016. *The Emotional Life of Postmodern Film: Affect Theory's Other*. New York, Oxford: Routledge.
- Durant, M. A. 2015 John Divola, in *Saint Lucy*. [Online]. Available: <<https://saint-lucy.com/conversations/john-divola/>> Accessed: 2016/07/14.
- Durden, M. 2014. *Photography Now*. London; New York: Phaidon.
- Durden, M. 2013. *Fifty Key Writers on Photography*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Durden, M & Richardson, C. (eds) 2000. *Face On: Photography as Social Exchange*. London: Black Dog.
- Eggleston, W. *Untitled (Memphis)*, 1970. Colour photograph, Dye-transfer. 16 x 20 inches. © Eggleston Artistic Trust. Courtesy Cheim & Read, New York. Available: <<https://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/19056-william-eggleston?tab=PROFILE>> Accessed: 2016/02/23.
- Eisinger, J. 1995. *Trace and Transformation: American Criticism of Photography in the Modernist Period*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press.
- Elkins, J. 2011. *What Photography Is*. London: Routledge.
- Ettinger, BL. 2006. *The Matrixial Border Space*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Evans, J & Hall, S. 2005. [1999]. *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London; Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.
- Fagan, A. [sa]. Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/adorno/>> Accessed: 2016/09/12.
- Falzan, C, O'Leary, T & Sawicki, J. 2013. *A Companion to Foucault*. Malden; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Felluga, DF. 2015. *Critical Theory: The Key Concepts*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Ferraris, M & Tarabozetti-Segre, A. 1988. Postmodernism and the Deconstruction of Modernism, in *Design Issues, Designing the Immaterial Society*. The MIT Press. 4(1/2):12-24. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1511383>> Accessed: 2017/09/25.
- Fischl, E. *Bad Boy*, 1981. Oil on canvas. 66 x 96 inches. Private collection, Zurich. Available: <<http://www.ericfischl.com/early-interiors-1/>> Accessed: 2015/08/22.
- Fischl, E. *Barbecue*, 1982. Oil on canvas. 65 x 100 inches. Collection of Steve Martin. Available: <<http://www.ericfischl.com/backyard/>> Accessed: 2015/08/22.
- Fishman, R. 1987. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise And Fall Of Suburbia*. New York: Basic Books.

- Foster, H, Krauss, R, Bois, Y & Buchloh, B. (eds). 2004. *Art since 1900: Modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism*. Thames and Hudson.
- Foster, H. 1983. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Washington: Bay Press.
- Foster, H. 1988. *Vision and Visuality*. Seattle: Bay View Press.
- Frank, R. *Ranch Market, Hollywood, 1955-1956*; printed 1977. Gelatin silver photograph. 20.8 cm x 31.75 cm. Collection SFMOMA. Available: <<https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/94.401/>> Accessed: 2017/08/14.
- Frazier, LR. LaToya Ruby Frazier, in *Artforum 500 Words*. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.artforum.com/words/id=49924>> Accessed: 2017/08/12.
- Frazier, LR. 2005. *Me and Mom's Boyfriend Mr Art*. 2015. Gelatin silver print. 38.5 x 48.6 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, gift of Angela Lorenz in honour of curator emeritus Davis Pratt. Available: <<https://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/326445?position=0>> Accessed: 2017/02/9.
- Fried, M. 2008. *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Fried, M. 2005. Barthes's Punctum, in *Critical Inquiry*. 31(3):539-574. The University of Chicago Press. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/430984>> Accessed 2013/07/29.
- Freud, S. 1919. *The Uncanny*. First published in *Imago*, Bd. V., 1919; reprinted in *Sammlung, Fünfte Folge*. Translated from German by Alix Strachey. [Online]. Available: <<http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf>> Accessed 2015/09/28.
- Galassi, P. 1991. The Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort, *The Museum of Modern Art Press Release*. [Online]. Available: <https://moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/6955/releases/MOMA_1991_0084_63.pdf> Accessed: 2016/04/23.
- Garb, T. 2011. *Figures & Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography*, Gottingen: Steidl and V&A Publishing.
- Gardiner, ME. 2011. Phenomenology and its Shadow: Visuality in the Late Work of Merleau-Ponty, in Heywood, I & Sandywell, B. *The Handbook of Visual Culture* London; Oxford; New York; New Dehli; Sydney: Bloomesbury:115-130.
- Gefter, P. 2015. Whose American Dream? (Somewhere between Pretext and Subtext), in Morse, R. (ed) *Larry Sultan, Here and Home*. Munich; London; New York, Los Angeles: Prestel:12-25.
- Gilmore, J. 2005. Chapter 11: Between Philosophy and Art, in Carmen, T and Hansen, M. B. N. (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press:291-397
- Godby, M. 2014. Thinking South African Photography, in *Safundi*, 15:2/3:149-154. doi:10.1080/17533171.2014.925646.
- Goldblatt, D. [sa]. [1982]. *In Boksburg*. Books on Books series. New York: Errata Editions.
- Goldblatt, D. 1979/80. *On the stoep: a girl in her new tutu*. Gelatin silver photograph. 50 x 60cm. Available: <http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/goldblatt/boksburg/2_29388.htm> Accessed: 2017/03/24.
- Goldblatt, L. 2013. *Still Here*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.
- Goodman Gallery website. 2011. *David Goldblatt Portraits*. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.goodman-gallery.com/exhibitions/233>> Accessed: 2013/10/04.
- Goldblatt, L. Artist Statement. [Online]. Available: <http://www.c4fap.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Goldblatt_statement-and-bio.pdf> Accessed: 2015/07/02.
- Goldblatt, L. Untitled photographs from *Still Here*, 2012-2013. C-type hand prints, 16 x 16 inches. Available: <<http://www.lydiagoldblatt.com/projects/still-here/>> Accessed: 2015/08/17.

- Goldin, N. *Twisting at my birthday party, New York City*. 1980. Cibachrome print. 9 x 13 3/4 inches. Available: <<http://www.featureshoot.com/2015/10/nan-goldin-revisits-the-ballad-of-sexual-dependency-30-years-later/>> Accessed: 2017/01/11.
- Goldin, N. *Jimmy Paulette and Tabboo! In the bathroom*, NYC, 1991. Cibachrome print. 50.5 x 61 cm. Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Fund for Photography. Available: <<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/jimmy-paulette-and-tabboo-in-the-bathroom-nyc-526926>> Accessed: 2016/02/23.
- Gordon, M. 1990. The Silent Drama In Vuillard's Rooms, in *The New York Times Arts*. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/05/13/arts/the-silent-drama-in-vuillard-s-rooms.html?pagewanted=all>> Accessed: 2018/01/26.
- Green, D & Lowry, J. 2006. *Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image*. Photoworks.
- Greenberg, C. 1960. Modernist Painting, in *Forum Lectures*. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/modernism.html>> Accessed 2017/07/21.
- Gregg, M & Seigworth, G. J. 2010. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.
- Grundberg, A. 1990. *The Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography, 1974-1989*. Aperture.
- Guimond, J. 1991. *American Photography and the American Dream*. Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Gutting, G. 2005. *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hartt, F. 1977. *ART: A History of Painting, Sculpture & Architecture, Volume II*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Hayes, P. 2017. Photographic Publics and Photographic Desires in 1980s South Africa, in *Photographies*. doi:10.1080/17540763.2017.1340736.
- Hayes, P. 2007. Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography, in *Kronos*. 33:139-162. University of Western Cape. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41056585>> Accessed: 2014/01/31.
- Heartney, E. 2013 [2008]. *Art & Today*. London; New York: Phaidon.
- Helfand, G. 2017. Larry Sultan's California Home Theater, in *Aperture*. [Online]. Available: <<https://aperture.org/blog/larry-sultans-california/>> Accessed: 2017/11/09.
- Heywood, I & Sandywell, B. 2011. *The Handbook of Visual Culture* London; Oxford; New York; New Dehli; Sydney: Bloomesbury.
- Highmore, B. 2011. *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Hill, DR. 1985. Lewis Mumford's Ideas on the City, in *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 51:4, 407-421. doi:10.1080/01944368508976830.
- Hirsch, M. 1999. *The Familial Gaze*. Hanover; London: University Press of New England.
- Hirsch, M. 1997. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press.
- Hirsch, R. 2009. *Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Holquist, M. (ed) 2008 [1981]. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Translated by Emerson, C and Holquist, M. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Huq, R. 2009. Suburbia – The New Utopia, in *The Guardian*. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/nov/16/suburbia>> Accessed: 2015/08/11.
- Jameson, F. 2003 [1991]. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Jay, M. 1994 [1993] *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Jones, A. 2006. *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*. Malden; Oxford; Carlton: Blackwell.
- Kaplan, L. 2005. *American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kelly, MGE. 2013. Foucault, Subjectivity, and Technologies of the Self, in Falzon, C, O'Leary, T & Sawicki, J. (eds). *A Companion to Foucault*. Malden; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell:510-525.
- Kerr, N. 1965. *Family by the Fireplace*, Kodak Colorama. Available:
<<http://www.yellowkorner.com/us-en/artists/colorama-COL.html>>
Accessed: 2016/04/12.
- Kganye, L. *Setupung sa kwana hae II*, 2012. Inkjet print on cotton rag paper. 42 × 29.7 cm. Afronova Gallery.
Available: <<http://www.afronova.com/artists/lebohang-kganye/>>
Accessed: 2016/10/04.
- Kinsella, T. 2015. Subjectivity as Affective Encounter: Reconsidering Ontolgy with Judith Butler, Lauren Berlant and Bracha Ettinger in *Reconsidering Ontology*, Waterford Institute of Technology. [Online].
Available:< https://www.academia.edu/12206204/INVITED_LECTURE_Subjectivity_as_Affective_Encounter_Rethinking_Ontology_with_Judith_Butler_Lauren_Berlant_and_Bracha_Ettinger_Sociology_Society_Waterford_Institute_of_Technology_2015_>
Accessed: 2015/09/09.
- Krantz, DH. 2008. Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa, *History of Photography*. 3(4).
doi:10.1080/03087290802334885.
- Kress, G & van Leeuwen, T. 2006 [1996]. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Krug, N. 2015. My critics 'were in some measure correct,' Sally Mann admits in memoir, in *The Washington Post*. [Online].
Available: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/my-critics-were-in-some-measure-correct-sally-mann-admits-in-memoir/2015/05/08/0b3738f2-f584-11e4-bcc4-e8141e5eb0c9_story.html?utm_term=.ed2f2aa2385a>
Accessed: 11/02/2018.
- Lacan, J. 1998. [1973]. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI*. Miller, JA. (ed). Translated from French by Sheridan, A. New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Landes, D.A. 2013. *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*. London; New York: Bloomesbury Press.
- Langford, M. 2007. *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art*. Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Lebogang Khanye, in *Art Africa*. [Online]. Available: <<https://artafricamagazine.org/march-2016-lebohang-kganye/>>
Accessed: 2016/10/04.
- Lehan, J. [sa]. On Boksburg, Basskap, and Poetry, in Goldblatt, D. *In Boksburg*. Books on Books series. New York: Errata:[sp].
- Lefebvre, H. 1991 [1947]. *The Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 1: Introduction*. Translated by John Moore. London, New York: Verso.
- Lefebvre, H. 1987. The Everyday and Everydayness, in *Yale French Studies: Everyday Life*. 73:7-11.
[Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2930193>>
Accessed: 2017/13/12.
- Levine, SZ. 2008. *Lacan Reframed: Interpreting Key Thinkers for the Arts*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Leys, R. 2011. The Turn to Affect: A Critique, in *Critical Inquiry* 37:3. The University of Chicago:434-472.
[Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/659353>>
Accessed: 2017/11/17.
- Liu, C. & Sultan, L. 1990. Larry Sultan, in *BOMB*. 31:50-57. [Online]. Available:
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40424771>>
Accessed: 31/01/2016.
- Lomax, Y. 2006. Thinking Stillness, in Green, D & Lowry, J. *Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image*. Photoworks:55-64.

- Lowry, J. 2000. Negotiating Power, in Durden, M & Richardson, C. (eds). *Face On: Photography as Social Exchange*. London: Black Dog:11-25.
- Lyotard, JF. 1984 [1979]. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated from the French by Bennington, G. & Massumi, B. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- MACK. 2017. Pictures from Home, Larry Sultan. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.mackbooks.co.uk/books/1164-Pictures-From-Home.html>> Accessed: 2017/11/09.
- Manet, E. *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe* 'Luncheon on the Grass', 1863. Oil on canvas. 208 x 264.5 cm. © RMN - GrandPalais (Musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski. Available: <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/index.php?id=851&L=1&tx_commentaire_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=7123> Accessed: 2017/09/27.
- Mann, S. *Jessie at 5*, 1987. Gelatin silver print. 49.85 cm x 60.33 cm. Collection SFMOMA. Available: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/sally-mann/jessie-at-5-L4Q3gSR_HGTe_A1IXG51Tg2> Accessed: 2017/01/09.
- Mann, S. *Hangnail*, 1989. Gelatin silver contact print. 47.6 x 57.8 cm. Available: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/sally-mann/hangnail-zXb4wrmfh6X9b1Au_vQT9g2> Accessed: 2017/01/09.
- Mann, S. *Hot Dog*, 1989. Gelatin silver print. 25.1 x 20.3 cm. Available: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/sally-mann/the-hot-dog-IVhUiKvU_a9TpEVJrKIL9g2> Accessed: 2017/01/09.
- Matthews, E. 2010 [2006]. *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London; New York: Continuum.
- Matthews, E. 2002. *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964. [1960]. *Signs*. Translated from the French by McCleary, R. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968. [1964]. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated from French by Evanston, Los Angeles. Northwestern University Press.
- Miller, K. 2009. *SHOOT: Photography of the Moment*. New York. Rizzoli.
- Mofokeng, S. 1987. *Mrs Nhlapo, Rockville*. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy: The Walther Collection and Lunetta Bartz/MAKER, Johannesburg. Available: <<http://artdaily.com/news/76094/-Santu-Mofokeng--A-Metaphorical-Biography--opens-at-The-Walther-Collection-Project-Space#.WmyjHFNuZYg>> Accessed: 2017/12/01.
- Monarchi, C. 2013. The Ongoing Memory, in Goldblatt, L. *Still Here*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag:81-84.
- Morgan, M. 2006. Regarding Beauty, in Jones A. (ed). *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*. Malden; Oxford; Carlton: Blackwell:164-187.
- Morse, R. (ed) 2014. *Larry Sultan: Here and Home*. Munich; London; New York, Los Angeles: Prestel.
- Morvar, C. 2006. The Writerly Artist: Beautiful, Boring, and Blue, in Jones, A. (ed). *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*. Malden; Oxford; Carlton: Blackwell:279-295.
- Mumford, L. 1961. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jonanovich.
- Mulvey, L. 2005. [1975]. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, in Evans, J & Hall, S. *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London; Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.
- Nancy, JL. 2008. *Corpus*. Translated from French by Rand, RA. Fordham University Press.
- Nicolaides, B & Wiese, A. (eds) *The Suburb Reader*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Nuttall, S. 2009. *Entanglements: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- October. The MIT Press Journals. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/octo>> Accessed: 2017/09/25.

- O'Doherty, B. 1999 [1976]. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- O' Hagan, S. 2014. Nan Goldin: 'I wanted to get high from a really early age', in *The Guardian*. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/nan-goldin-photographer-wanted-get-high-early-age>> Accessed: 2015/09/09.
- O' Hagan, S. 2017. Pictures from Home by Larry Sultan review – 'when Mom and Dad lived the dream', in *The Guardian*. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/02/larry-sultan-pictures-from-home-review>> Accessed: 2017/11/09.
- Owens, B. *Suburbia*, 1972. Gelatin silver prints. Available: <http://www.carriagetrade.org/spip.php?page=exhibition_images&id_article=89&id_document=1145/> Accessed: 2015/07/09.
- Parry, JD. 2011. *Art and Phenomenology*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Parsons, KC, & Schuyler, D. (eds). 2002. *From Garden City to Green City: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard*. Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Payne, N. *Cynthia*, c. 1962; *Erf 3299, 13 Montagu Way, Pinelands*, 1965; 'Windrift', *13 Montagu Way, Pinelands*, 1967. Gelatin silver prints. Private collection.
- Payne, N. 'Windrift', 1970. Colour photograph. Private collection.
- Perry, G. 2013. *Playing at Home: The House in Contemporary Art*. London: Reaktion.
- Phillips, C. 1982. The Judgement Seat of Photography, in Bolton, R (ed). 1992 [1989]. *The Context of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*. Cambridge; London: The MIT Press:15-47.
- Phillips, SS. Migrations: Larry Sultan and California, in Morse, R. (ed) *Larry Sultan, Here and Home*. Munich; London; New York, Los Angeles: Prestel:170-183.
- Pollock, G. 2006. 'Introduction – Femininity: Aporia or Sexual Difference' in Ettinger, BL. *The Matrixial Border Space*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota:1-40.
- Potenza, R. 2017. Truth Telling and High Fashion, in *Platform Africa, Aperture* 227:65-67.
- Racz, I. 2015. *Art and the Home: Comfort, Alienation and the Everyday*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Rancière, J. 2008. Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art 1, in *Art & Research*. 2:1. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1/pdfs/ranciere.pdf>> Accessed: 2017/07/11.
- Ractliffe, J. *doll's head*, 1994; *cattle truck*, 2004; *gun boy* 2004, from *Reshooting Diana*. Black & white photographs, pigment print on cotton paper. 35 x 35 cm. Stevenson. Available: <http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/ractliffe/index_diana.html> Accessed: 2015/05/08.
- Ractliffe, J. *Everything is Everything*. Stevenson. [Online]. Available: <<http://stevenson.info/exhibition/1869>> Accessed: 2018/02/12.
- Richards, C. 2003. The Crossroads of Home, *Show Me Home*, Johannesburg Art Gallery:[sp].
- Roelvink, G & Zolkos, M. 2015 Affective Ontologies: Post-humanist perspectives on the self, feeling and intersubjectivity, in *Emotion, Space and Society*. 14:47-49. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264709695>> Accessed: 19/08/2016.
- Rosler, M. 1981. In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography), in Bolton, R. (ed). *The Context of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*. Cambridge, London: The MIT Press:303-341.
- Sandbye, M. 2013. Performing and deforming the family archive, in Borggreen, G, & Gade, R. (eds). *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press:238-256.
- Sartre, JP. 1984 [1943]. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Translated from French by Barnes, HE. New York; London; Toronto, Sydney: Washington Square Press.

- Schmidt, J. 1985. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Between Phenomenology and Structuralism*. Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan.
- Schuman, A. 2006. Lewis Baltz: The tract houses/the prototype works/the new industrial parks near Irvine, California, in *Aperture*.183:77-78. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24473089>>Accessed: 23-04-2016> Accessed: 2015/08/23.
- Scruton, R. 2002 [1981]. *A Short History of Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Wittgenstein*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Seigworth, GJ. 2000. Banality for Cultural Studies, in *Cultural Studies*.14/2:227-268 Taylor & Francis. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/routledge/09S02386.html>> Accessed: 2016/06/08.
- Sekula, A. 1982. On the Invention of Photographic Meaning, in Burgin, V. (ed). *Thinking Photography*. Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire; London: MacMillan.
- Sheikh, N. 2006. Postmodernism, in Warren, L.(ed). *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Sheikh, S. 2009. Positively White Cube Revisited, in *E-flux Journal*. 03. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68545/positively-white-cube-revisited/>> Accessed: 2017/07/29.
- Sherman, C. *Untitled film still #10*, 1978. Gelatin silver print. 18.6 x 24 cm. MOMA. Acquired through the generosity of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder. <<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/56555>> Accessed: 2016/06/08.
- Shinkle, E. 2004. Boredom, Repetition, Inertia: Contemporary Photography and the Aesthetics of the Banal, in *Mosaic* 37/4. [Online]. Available: <https://www.academia.edu/3111338/Boredom_Repetition_Inertia_Contemporary_Photography_and_the_Aesthetics_of_the_Banal> Accessed: 2017/07/06.
- Shore, S. 2009. Forward, in Miller, K. *SHOOT: Photography of the Moment*. New York. Rizzoli.
- Shore, S. *American Surfaces*, 1972. Colour photographs. Available: <<http://issuemagazine.com/a-ground-neutral-and-replete/#/>> Accessed: 2017/07/29.
- Silverman, K. 2015. *The Miracle of Analogy or The History of Photography, Part I*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Sim, S. (ed). 2009 [1998]. *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge.
- Sontag, S. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Sontag, S. 2008 [1977]. *On Photography*, London: Penguin Books.
- Soutter, L. 2013. *Why Art Photography?* London; New York: Routledge.
- Soutter, L. 2012. Conceptual Photography, in *Source*:71 [Online]. Available: <http://www.lucysoutter.com/writings_text/conceptual_photography.pdf>. Accessed: 2015/10/08.
- Smith, MR. 2012. Relational Viewing: Affect, Trauma and the Viewer in Contemporary Autobiographical Art. Thesis. The University of Western Ontario. [Online]. Available: <<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/787>> Accessed: 2016/04/23.
- Smith, P & Wilde, C. *A Companion to Art Theory*. Oxford; Malden: Blackwell.
- Smyth, D. 2016. Wolfgang Tillmans – an interview from the BJP archives, in *The British Journal of Photography*. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.bjp-online.com/2016/11/wolfgang-tillmans-an-interview-from-the-bjp-archives/>> Accessed: 2017/09/13.
- Solomon-Godeau, A. 2003 [1984]. Winning the game when the rules have been changed: Art photography and postmodernism, in Wells, L. (ed). *The Photography Reader*. New York: Routledge:152-163.

- Spencer, L. 2009 [1998]. Postmodernism, Modernity and the Tradition of Dissent, in Sim, S. (ed). *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge:143-152.
- Struth, T. *Museo Del Prado 8-3, Madrid*, 2005. C-print mounted on UV plexiglass. 140 x 176 cm. Available: <http://archive.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/2007-04-04_thomas-struth/#/images/8/> Accessed: 2017/11/27.
- Sultan, L. 2017 [1992]. *Pictures from Home*. MACK.
- Sultan, L. *Pictures from Home*, 1992. Photographs, C-prints. Available: <<http://larrysultan.com/gallery/pictures-from-home/>> Accessed: 2015/05/07.
- Sultan, L. Bad Boy Eric Fischl, in *Larry Sultan Website* [Online]. Available: <http://larrysultan.com/archive/wpcontent/uploads/2013/SULTAN_Bad_Boy_By_Eric_Fischl.pdf> Accessed: 2016/07/21.
- Sultan, S. 2001. Bill Owens, in *BOMB*. New Art Publications. 77:2-3. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40426608>> Accessed: 2016/04/23.
- Szarkowski, J. 2002 [1976]. Introduction, in *William Eggleston's Guide*. Museum of Modern Art. [Online]. Available: <http://www.egglestontrust.com/guide_intro.html> Accessed: 02/02/2017.
- Szarkowski, J. 1978. Moma Press release, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/5624/releases/MOMA_1978_0060_56.pdf> Accessed 03/01/17.
- Taylor, C. 1991. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press.
- Trachtenberg, A. 1980 [1977]. *Classic Essays on Photography*. Translated from German by Patton, P. New Haven: Leete's Island Books.
- Toadvine, T. 2016. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. [Online]. Available: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/merleau-ponty/>> Accessed: 2017/04/7.
- Traff, T. 2014. Lydia Goldblatt's Still Here, in *The New Yorker Photo Booth*. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/lydia-goldblatts-still>> Accessed: 2015/06/10.
- Trombley, S. 2012. *Fifty Thinkers Who Shaped the Modern World*. London. Atlantic Books.
- Townsend, C. 2008. *Art & Death*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Waldie, DJ. 1996. *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*. New York; London: W.W Norton & Company.
- Waldie, DJ. 2014. Larry Sultan: Desire at the End of the Cul-de-sac, in *History and Society*. [Online]. Available: <<https://www.kcet.org/history-society/larry-sultan-desire-at-the-end-of-the-cul-de-sac>> Accessed: 2016/05/22.
- Wall, J. *The Storyteller*, 1986. Silver dye bleach transparency in lightbox. 229 x 437 cm. Purchase, Charlene and David Howe, Henry Nias Foundation Inc., Jennifer Saul, Robert Yaffa, Harriet Ames Charitable Trust, and Gary and Sarah Wolkowitz Gifts, 2006. Available: <<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2006.91/>> Accessed: 2017/09/27.
- Warren, L. 2006. *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Wells, L.(ed). 2009 [1996]. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Wells, L. (ed). 2003. *The Photography Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Weston, E. 2003. [1964]. Seeing Photographically, in Wells, L. (ed). *The Photography Reader*. New York: Routledge:104-108.

Appendix 1: *Encountering Windrift* (2012 –2017)

All photographs © Natalie Payne¹



4 July 2015 I. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31 cm x 31 cm. Edition: 1/3 + 1AP

1. For ease of reference I have presented the images in the order of their appearance in the text, followed by those that do not appear in the text but formed part of the exhibition at The Point of Order.



12 August 2013 I. Pigment print on cotton paper, 39 cm x 39 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



12 December 2012. Pigment print on cotton paper, 21 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



21 August 2013 II. Pigment print on cotton paper, 21 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP

2. This image was not included in the exhibition; however, it remains a key image of the series. I curated this image and the previous image to be next to each other but it felt too sensitive to exhibit them as such in the show.



6 April 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 27 cm x 27 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



8 July 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 27 cm x 27 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



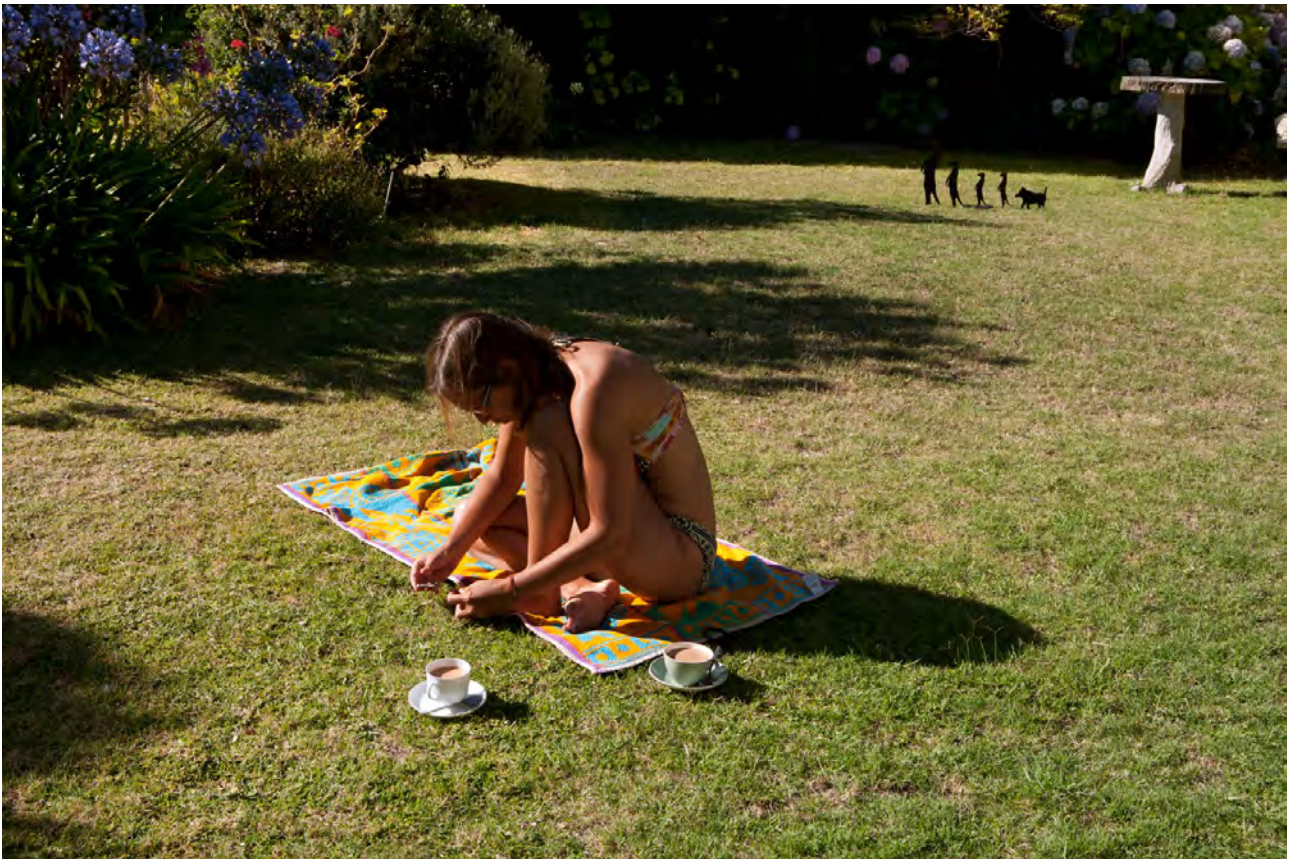
21 August 2013 I. Pigment print on cotton paper, 21 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



12 August 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31 cm x 31 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



19 May 2015. Pigment print on display paper, 90cm x 60 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



9 January 2013. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31.5 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



27 June 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31.5 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



30 December 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31.5 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



4 July 2015 III. Pigment print on display paper, 90 cm x 60 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



31 August 2013. Pigment print on display paper, 90 cm x 60 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



12 January 2016. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31 cm x 31 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



11 February 2017. Pigment print on cotton paper, 39 cm x 39 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



30 May 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 21 cm



1 January 2017. Pigment print on cotton paper, 21 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



27 March 2016. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31 cm x 31 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



10 March 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 39 cm x 39 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



4 July 2015 II. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31 cm x 31 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



May 2013. Pigment print on cotton paper, 21 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



13 January 2016 III. Pigment print on cotton paper, 21 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



15 March 2015. Pigment print on cotton paper, 39 cm x 39 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



13 January 2016. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31 cm x 31 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



8 January 2013 II. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31.5 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



8 January 2013 I. Pigment print on cotton paper, 31.5 cm x 21 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP



12 August 2013 II. Pigment print on cotton paper, 39 cm x 39 cm. Edition 1/3 + 1AP

Appendix 2: *Encountering Windrift*

Exhibition installation photographs.

The Point of Order, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, June 2017.

