

this isn't just food

AD7802 Research & Context

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abstract

A practising commercial photographer casts around for guidance and direction as they begin to embrace the photography of ideas over the capture of simplistic elemental aesthetics.

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fig 1 - James Greenoff-Cairns (2021) An Example of Stock Plus

Faux Office reportage in a staged and borrowed conference room designed to convey pleasant approachability. Single point of focus on client. Intended to look as much like a stock image as possible, featuring the people who staff the company.

Introduction

I've been making pictures for over twenty years, and for the best part of the last decade I've done it professionally. Alongside delivering to client's briefs and documenting my life, I collect cameras, occasionally sell cameras in a retail environment, and I teach photography, (or perhaps more truthfully, I teach camera-operation).

Most of my professional work is delivered to business clients, and exists on the periphery of what Paul Frosh called a 'wallpaper of consumer culture' (Frosh, 2003 p. 1).

His unpacking of the stock photography market place twenty years ago holds true. If anything as result of digital distribution, stock imagery is even more pervasive. What he didn't necessarily foresee is the backlash that the growth of stock photography has led to.

The ubiquity of stock photography has led to a *verfremdungseffekt*, (alienation) or a distancing between photography and viewer. The advert's consumer knows that this particular group of teens depicted is unlikely to ride on the bus the advert is plastered to. The viewer dismisses the photograph as mere window dressing, while a vague feeling of disingenuity remains.

The impersonal nature of stock photography and the distancing that it creates has given birth to what has been termed (at the very least by me), as 'stock plus'. (See *fig 1*).

This is a photography that emulates stock in terms of its visual language, while including the specific assets, locations, and/or staff of a particular client, creating what Barbara Rosenblum calls an "original standard picture" (1978, quoted in Frosh, 2003 p. 51).

The effect is to recreate the stock images that a client might have licensed, to create a more direct connection with the viewer. The irony is that this style is a response to photography that was itself a response to the professional photography that clients no longer had the resources to commission.

Much of my personal work had been informed by this 'Griersonesque'¹ understanding of photography, as has my understanding of the photographers who have inspired me.

The practice I do have, that goes beyond either working for clients, experimenting with technology, or life reportage, is created so rarely, so sporadically and so much at the whim of the world around me, that it can be hard to see it as a practice at all. See *figures 2 & 3*.

Recent themes have been fatherhood, fear of the future, birth and death, (tying in somewhat with concurrent life events), and an ever-present appreciation for Caravaggian lighting.

¹John Grierson famously described documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" (1926, quoted in Franklin, 2016, p 6), a succinct and beguiling if problematic definition.



fig 2 - James Greenoff-Cairns (2022) Some time in the light

A response to seeing the insect confounded by the artificial light, and a half-remembered story about life being the brightness a bird experiences as it flies through a barn, from darkness into light, and then out again.



*fig 3 - James Greenoff-Cairns (2022) *The Son and the World**

A response to seeing my son looking at his illuminated globe. Aside from asking him to remove his pyjama top and hold still, this is unaffected reportage, or a 'creative treatment of actuality'.

I asked him to remove his top, in order to appear more cherubic, tying in to a renaissance visual style. At the time of creation I was thinking about inheritance, and afterwards began to think about privilege.

The result of these many photographs, commercial work, life reportage, technical experimentation, and bursts of something akin to art making, is that I am left with a solid understanding of technique that needs to be pointed at something.

I've talked in the past about my practice being about 'things I wanted you to see,' now perhaps it's time to make work about 'things I want you to think about'.

I'm here because I want to start dealing with ideas, to find out if I can, and to see if I like it.



fig 4 - James Greenoff-Cairns (2022) *Diverse Business Handshake*

An initial experiment, partly in response to Paul Frosh's description of stock photography. Stock photographs appear, without a visual provenance and lacking as much context as possible so that they can be at their most useful for the largest audience.

They are ingredients in modern media, much like the magic tomatoes that appear in our shops, supposedly from Holland, ready to be re-contextualised as whatever we need them to be. Grown for shelf life rather than flavour, they are a shadow of the asset they should be and they leave a bad taste in your mouth.

Aspiration

I ultimately want to make *good* work, that transcends marketing goals and family gatherings. I want to make work that lasts longer than a haircut. I want to make the kind of work that's exhibited in The Photographer's Gallery, or published in a Steidl monograph.

There is a paralysis that comes from trying to move beyond the purely aesthetic, as every decision requires justification, an existential embrace of the questions we ask and answer. I'm continually concerned about the ethics of work I might like to make, about how the act of depiction changes a subject, and find myself constrained by the resulting confusion.

As I've tried to make this next step, I've cast around for guidance. Trying to engage with those who've done it successfully has led me to Sasha Wolf's *Photo Work: Forty Photographers on Process and Practice* a compendium the editor Sasha Wolf (2019p. 9) characterises as a "typology of responses" to a "proust-like questionnaire."

The crux of this work is ostensibly 'be true to yourself'. The book is insightful if not instructive as each of these photographers has a process that differs as much as their photography does.

Each response serves to underline that there are few rules when it comes to establishing a process which, if you're looking for quick answers, teaches that one's process should be borne from the art, as the art is borne from the process.

As such it makes sense to consider many differing approaches, starting with the artists and photographers who are working in the world in which I wish to work.

One of the first exhibitions I saw at the Photographer's Gallery was Edward Burtynsky's *Oil* (2009). It was there as part of the grand reopening back in 2012 and I went, and I loved it.

Oil is a collection of predominantly landscape images, many of which taken from an aerial perspective, either from an aircraft or from a cherrypicker. and all concerned with oil and our relationship with it.

When I saw the exhibition I was struck by the beauty and the scale and scope of the prints. (This was also the first Steidl Monograph I came to own.)

Until recently I'd always read this work as sitting on the margin between documentary and landscape, as a depiction of the world as it is.

Until recently, it simply didn't strike me to mind that his work is beautiful.



fig 5 - Ed Burtynsky (1996) Nickel Tailings #34 - Sudbury, Ontario 1996 - Available at <https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/tailings> (Accessed 16th May 2022)

fig 5 - Ed Burtynsky (1996) Nickel Tailings #34 - Sudbury, Ontario 1996 - Available at <https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/tailings> (Accessed 16th May 2022)

The incongruity of the monochrome moonscape combined with the hot orange of the tailing is beguilingly attractive. The lack of context, and my limited understanding of the processes involved allow me to enjoy this photograph as an amazing aesthetic experience. It's not until you go beyond what is in the picture, or imagine it as a real place that the horror of this level of pollution rears its head.

While the example above is not featured in *Oil*, the text referenced in the body of this essay, I've chosen to include it as it is such a perfect example of the issue I'm exploring.

In his introduction to *Oil*, (2009) Burtynsky describes his work as follows:

When I first started photographing industry it was out of a sense of awe at what we as a species were doing... I began to think about oil itself: as both the source of energy that makes everything possible, and as a source of dread for it's ongoing endangerment of our habitat.

Even if his reading of the landscape has changed, it is his awe that I see in his photographs, indeed as Gerda Cammaer (2009 p 128) describes it,

"Burtynsky, ...definitely goes for beautification, ... large-scale colorful photographic tableaux that make us forget what we are looking at."

The beautification of ecological disaster, while making for impactful photographs places the viewer in a difficult position. By choosing not to offer much in the way of context with these images, they become pure exercises in aesthetics, disconnected with the horror that these disasters represent. We find ourselves in what Cammaer almost describes as being in 'awe of the awful' (paraphrased from Cammaer 2009 p. 121).

Ed Burtynsky is widely respected, his works are included in a number of respected museums and institutions, his books decorate coffee tables all over the world. He is at least partially responsible for my aspirational audience. Is this the kind of success I want?



fig 6: Broomberg & Channarin (2008) *Fig 48*. Available at <https://www.zoltanjokay.de/2011/07/fig-34/> (Accessed 6th May 2022)

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I saw this photo as part of Broomberg & Chanarin's collection *Fig*. The caption reads *Discarded Photographs, Kigale, Rwanda*. While still part of the series, *Fig 48* manages to embody so much of the series for me.

Passport photographs in Rwanda are cut from larger photographs, these are the remnants. The classification of people by tribe as part of the passport process enabled much of the slaughter in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. (paraphrased from *Fig*. Broomberg & Chanarin, 2008)

This image managed to imply the masses missing, and implicate the classification system so simply and perfectly, I am in awe of it.

A more recent discovery has been the work of Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin and it has been key in my burgeoning understanding of both what is possible and could be desirable.

'Fig.' (Broomberg & Chanarin, 2008a), is a collection of still-life images, portraits and landscapes that manages to question the power of taxonomy and classification systems. They manage to explore, according to Gordon Macdonald,

'Genocide, slavery, imperialism, power-mongering, racism, paranoia, jingoism, and all manner of global inequities'

Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008a, Back Pages

This is done by extrapolating out from their experience in a small museum in Brighton.

Broomberg and Chanarin's work is in many ways the antithesis of Ed Burtynsky's. While "Burtynsky makes documentary photos to turn them into art", (Cammaer, 2009 p123). Broomberg & Chanarin work in the opposite direction. (See *fig 6*.)

In their blog post *Unconcerned but not Indifferent*, (Broomberg & Chanarin, 2008b) they detail their experience as judges for the 2008 World Press Photo awards. They're particularly interested in the repetition of subject matter and style, and the unchanging nature of the genre; that many of the images of war that they saw could have been drawn from any conflict of the last fifty years.

Again and again similar images are repeated, with only the actors and settings changing... The twelve strong Jury must endure a barrage of photographic clichés over a period of seven days and nights, in order to locate one single image’.

Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008b

I’m intrigued by the cyclical nature of the awards process. The World Press Photo Awards define what a successful photojournalistic image is and confirm that back to the world, so that photojournalists can emulate it.

This feels very much like a mood board I might receive from a client before a commercial shoot, or again Barbara Rosenblum’s idea of the “original standard photograph’ (1978, quoted in Frosh, 2003 p. 51).

The impression from Broomberg & Chanarin is that the jury of the World Press Photo Awards is also looking for an ‘original standard photograph’ as are the editors of the newspapers that demand supporting imagery.



fig 7 - John Moore, (2007) *Assassination of Benazir Bhutto*. Available at <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/text-unconcerned-but-not-indifferent> (Accessed 15th June 2022)

This picture is remarkable and powerful, it is also scary, but how much does it actually tell us about the event? Is it edifying, or merely terrifying?

Does it eventually become a photo that is concerned with the photographer's bravery, diligence and sacrifice?

The eventual winner of that year's prize was (See *fig 7*) John Moore's *Assassination of Benazir Bhutto*. A photograph that Broomberg & Chanarin describe as

"not really a photograph at all, but a blur, a piece of smudged evidence that testifies to the fact that our journalist was there, as close as he could possibly be to the lethal action".

(Broomberg & Chanarin 2008b)

The implication is that this image is only edifying in its depiction of violence in proximity, while being truthful and documentary it does nothing to improve our understanding of the event.

Soon after this essay was published they embarked on their project *The Day Nobody Died*. They travelled to Afghanistan with a roll of photographic paper. In response to a series of events, events that would normally be witnessed and photographed by a war photographer, they would unroll 'a six-meter section of the paper and expose it to the sun [inside a military vehicle, kitted out as their darkroom] for 20 seconds'. (Source, 2012, 09:38), (See *Fig 8*).



fig 8 - Broomberg & Chanarin (2008) *The Brother's Suicide*, Available at <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/the-day-nobody-died-1-1> (Accessed 15th June 2022)

This section of *The Day Nobody Died* was the part created on June 7, 2008. I chose this section as a counterpoint to Moore's *Assassination of Benazir Bhutto* because of the similar colour palate.

They were debunking the idea of the foreign correspondent, asking "how much do we need to see in order for something to act as evidence" (Source, 2012, 06:58). It makes for some beautiful if abstract images

While Sean O'Hagen of the Guardian thought the exercise was an 'arrogant' 'stunt' (Source, 2012, 13:06), they are asking genuine questions.

Given their similar look, palate and clarity, we have to wonder, is John Moore's *Assassination of Benazir Bhutto* a more edifying image than *The Brother's Suicide*? Is edification what we want from photojournalism, or is being *true* enough?

Is this the kind of work I want to make, interrogating the medium and our responses to it? Making documentary through art rather than art though documentary?



fig 9 - Geyrhalter N. (2005) A screen grab from *Our Daily Bread* (2005) Directed by N. Geyrhalter. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/ourdailybread> (Accessed 06/03/2022)

This image downloaded from https://www.geyrhalterfilm.com/en/our_daily_bread (Accessed 15th June 2022)

The horror of watching the second cow buck and struggle, to see it see the other cow lifted by the hoof and know what is coming is quite something. To be confronted with the reality of slaughter is to be viscerally reminded where meat comes from, something many even diehard carnivores choose not to think about.

A successful piece of work that sits outside my practice but inside my area of interest is Nikolaus Geyrhalter's *Our daily Bread* (2005).

It's a documentary film about the food production landscape. Eschewing fast moving cameras or emotional music, we are treated to a series of moments from a cross-section of the modern European food supply chain.

The stationary camera gives the impression of openness. It is a languid and unforced witness to the events it conveys. Its matter of fact, deadpan or straight style is underlined by the diegetic sound; we hear people chatter as they work, we hear machine noises and weather.

Industrialised food production doesn't look the way I think we wish it did. We collude with producers and marketers to believe the most romantic idealised version of what food production might look like.

The power of the piece is that it also breaks down the distance that exists between us and our food. It shows us the spraying, the poly tunnels, the people, and the work.

Geyrhalter is able to show the importance and power of technology and its importance in the industrialised process, but also how that technology becomes inertia; a machine that needs to be fed.

By not forcing our hand with a subject that could easily have become polemic, Geyrhalter manages to raise genuine questions in his audience. His work is well constructed and the cinematography is often attractive. He has the beauty that Burtynsky reaches for and also asks the questions that Broomberg & Chanarin might ask.

Watching *Our daily Bread* led me to rewatch an old favourite, Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance* (1983).

The film's premise is that modern life, (albeit the modern life of 40 years ago), is out of balance.

Significant use of time-lapse forces the viewer to recapitulate to breathtaking views of the natural world, or to heighten the sense of the ridiculous when focused upon our unbalanced existence. Lone humans change entire landscapes through the power of their technology, before being recast as powerless sausages on a conveyor.

Like *Our Daily Bread* (2005), the film makes significant use of a stationary camera and eschews a narrator or voiceover, opting instead for a powerful but ingenuous score by Philip Glass. Our relationship with technology is questioned but again, like Geyrhalter, Reggio retains the light touch and the ambivalence that leaves the questioning to the viewer.

Upon initial inspection Henk Wildshut's *Food* (2013) feels very much like a still version of *Our Dally Bread* (2005). It's a collection of straight photographs of the food production industry in The Netherlands. Closer inspection reveals Burtynsky's awe and a similar loss of objectivity. Instead of chasing beauty, as Burtynsky does, his collection devolves into a puff piece for the Dutch food processing industry, and is infused with his technological utopianism.



fig 10 - Wildschut H. (2012) *Varkens Innovatie Centrum, Sterksel*, (Pig Innovation Center, Sterksel),
This image downloaded from <http://www.henkwildschut.com/work/food/food-photo/> (Accessed 15th June 2022)

An experimental pig latrine, designed presumably to improve both quality of life, and quality of product. Wildschut shies away from slaughter throughout the work. It's the one thing that his technological utopianism cannot recast as progressive.



fig 11 - James Greenoff-Cairns (2015) Galleria

One of my first colour images made with a large-format camera. I wanted the perfection of the gallery's architecture, and the near centrality of the shadows, I wanted to include the people for scale but I was keen for the people to be blurred through movement. People crisply expressed have a tendency to overpower other elements in photos. Afterwards I began to think about the human timeframe, and the experience of edifice.

Methodology

I have been using my work cameras to create much of the imagery I have produced for my degree so far. This has been a result of both fear and a paucity of time. Concerns about lead times, and the fear of having to reshoot due to a technical issue have kept both of my feet firmly in safety corner.

This means that I'm using the same camera to produce work for clients, work for myself, and work for university. While in itself this is no big deal, I think it reinforces the difficulty I have with compartmentalising my photography.

It is for this and a few other reasons that I want to use a large-format camera to make these new photographs.

A few years ago I fell in love with large-format photography and I did it as much as I could, lugging it up and down hillsides, setting it up in hot Italian piazzas, and waiting under the baking sun for the elements to coalesce into a picture.

The act of setting up a 4x5 camera, particularly one as pretty as my Tachihara, tends to encourage questions from passers by, (particularly Dutch dads). I began to feel as though I was using a large-format camera more for the conversations that the camera was starting than I was for the impact the camera would have on the pictures. With no shortage of less conspicuous cameras to hand, my use of the camera began to feel arch and performative.

After an initial reading of Tim Ingold's *Bodies on the Move* (2010) I was pretty resistant to his ideas concerning animacy and agency. However, the more I've thought about it, and talked about it, the more I recognise the tenets of his argument in the "correspondence" I enter into with my cameras. (Ingold, 2010, p108).

When I became a professional photographer, my film cameras became all the more important. They became the replacement hobby after mine had become my job. They were tools for my personal experimentation and expression.

Given that in most cases, I could have used my work cameras to make the photographs I make for myself, I've often wondered what it is that draws me to use cameras that are in many ways slower and less convenient.

An analog camera differs from a digital camera in a number of key ways. To push the shutter on a digital camera is virtually free from a cash money perspective, whereas film cameras can have a hefty price tag connected to their usage. This, combined with not being able to review images in the moment, forces you to think more before you push the shutter button.

Subject selection becomes more considered, each image has greater value, perfection is sought, and imperfection is forgiven.

After the act of making the photographs is over, there is a difference in the image produced. Digitally captured images can have a hyper-reality to them, which can be unforgiving, punchy and brash. The analog process seems at least to my eyes, to substitute perfection for pathos.

Large-format film cameras add complexity of process, conspicuity of tooling, and even greater cost per exposure to the equation.

The meditative, slow, considered, expensive, process-driven photography that I made with my large-format camera is perfectly unsuited to the fast-paced, in the moment photography that I spend much of my time making.

As Kerry Broucher notes in her essay *Corrupting Photography* (Sternfeld 2012 p 3), having received a Guggenheim Fellowship based upon his street photography, Sternfeld then gives up his fast hand-held Leica and began lugging around a bulky 8x10 view camera. He wanted to change the photography by changing the camera.

It's hard to be discrete with large format. The cameras are big, they have to be on tripods. Observers in a space will be aware and changed by your presence. Not being fast, and not being furtive, forces the user to photograph differently, again the *animus* of the camera shapes the image.

(I'm also intrigued by the possibility of the inclusion of the camera's shadow in the photographs, of underlining for the viewer both its and my presence in the creation of the image.)

All of these factors draw me towards the use of this camera even as the frictions and restrictions shape and affect the image being constructed. This is true of all cameras, the point being that the "correspondence" (Ingold 2010) between myself, a large-format camera and my subject produces different images than I would achieve with another camera.

(When it comes to the performative nature of setting up a large-format camera, I'm forced to wonder, are the Dutch dads my audience, or am I?)

It seems both sensible, and important to get away from the cameras I use for work, and the cameras I use for play, and to use a camera that's very

construction inflects a slower pace upon the photographer. A camera that is the very antithesis of the cameras I use every day.

As such the large-format camera is the perfect tool for making these more considered and constructed photographs.

As a camera it lends itself well to the type of deadpan or straight compositional style that I want to adopt. Drawing on lessons learned from Nicklaus Geyhalter's *Our Daily Bread* (2005) I want to use the view of an un-rushed eye, showing the audience the things that it wants to show us, without explicit rhetoric.

The other benefit is that the images are enormous and highly detailed, and so they lend themselves to large prints and big books.

This isn't just food

I want to explore food and food security as a concept, but I want to do it from a distance.

Food is a core need of the human condition, food drives almost everything we do, as a subject it holds enormous scope for exploration and depiction through a visual experience, and offers the grounds for multiple projects of varying size and scale, multiple approaches, and in multiple styles.

Beyond this, food is something everyone needs, it is commoditised, traded, marketed, desired, consumed, (often unthinkingly) and is something that is taken for granted by all but those who are unable to do so. It is also something I enjoy considering, preparing, and consuming.

The pressures of the global supply chain, massive cost of living increases, ongoing changes to our climate and our relationship with resources, mean that food is going to be at the centre of the political landscape for much discussion in the coming era.

This means that as a subject there is both room to explore and experiment, and a contemporary hook that should help to draw an audience.

Challenges and Inspiration

Given my subject area and the scale and scope that it affords, maintaining tone across the series of images produced could prove difficult.

I can begin to tie the images together through the aforementioned methodology. Similar angles of view and compression will help the images sit alongside one another, as will a deadpan approach to composition.

In terms of tone I want to keep the questioning of Broomberg & Chanarin, and the technical ability of Ed Burtynsky, but I don't want to beautify in the way that Burtynsky does, or necessarily to abstract in the way Broomberg & Chanarin do.

I want to find a tone that sits somewhere in the gap between Joel Sternfeld's *American Prospects* (2012), Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983), and Geyhalter's *Our daily Bread* (2005).

I love Geyhalter's deadpan style, his apparent openness and ability to ask questions of the viewer without utilising a visceral polemic. The questions are all the more powerful if you ask them of yourself.

I want to embrace Koyaanisqatsi's irreverent ability to point out both the grand and the absurd through clever manipulation of time, and to be on a journey of discovery, like Joel Sternfeld, open to photographs, and yet with a trajectory in mind.



fig 12: James Greenoff-Cairns - (2022) Gousto's Headquarters Lit from the South

Another of my early experiments. This time considering the distance that exists between the food we eat and its production. Gousto is a meal subscription service that delivers the individually packaged ingredients for multiple meals in a single box. One doesn't even have to go to a shop to receive one's food.

I couldn't find an interesting way to make an unaffected photo of the box work, until I tried sublimating the box for the company headquarters. Photographed with a tilt-shift lens as I would a building, to emphasise its monumentality and lit from the box's south (after studying the building's orientation in Google Maps).

Possible Photographs

I want to photograph someone who assembles British made farming equipment. The amount of oil, energy and machinery that is required to maintain our standard of living is staggering, and much if not most is imported. Defra figures would initially suggest that the UK's self sufficiency was around the 60% mark in 2007 (Defra 2006 quoted in Barling *et al*, 2010, p66), but these figures fail to include those imported factors that contributed to this production.

The government has estimated that 69 per cent of pesticides and 63 percent of primary energy used in the UK for agriculture were imported...

Barling *et al* (2010 p 67)

I'm particularly interested in gaining access to someone constructing a British made crop-sprayer, as a reference both to our self-sufficiency in manufacturing, and to the phenomenal amount of spraying that goes on in industrialised food production, (*Our Daily Bread*, 2005).

I'm also keen to photograph the use of an electric tractor and a drone based sprayer platform.

Maintaining the right balance of self-sufficiency versus trade dependancy has been key to our economic relationships with our neighbours, while simultaneously leaving our supply chain open to the effects of events beyond our borders.

Debates about the security of the UK's food supply have illuminated the uneasy coexistence at the level of strategic policy formulation of two parallel policy approaches to the role of UK farming and food.

Barling et al (2010 p 27)

As the UK continues to withdraw from Europe, it leaves itself open to all sorts of shortages, including both the food that we import, and the factors we import to produce food here.

I'm keen to explore the supermarket as a place for making photographs. I want to utilise longer shutter speeds and deadpan or straight compositional techniques to photograph the hunter/gatherer in action.

This is where commodity fetishism meets our basic need to feed ourselves. I'm particularly interested in the distance we've created between the way that food is produced and the way that food is purchased and consumed.

The treatment of time through time-lapse and slow-motion in Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983) brings a real humour to some aspects of modern life (albeit modern life nearly 40 years ago) and highlights absurdity. I'd like if I can to see if it's possible to mimic that in a still image.

I'm also keen to photograph the buzzer at my local supermarket. The one you push when you want someone to bring you all the food you like and watch you put it into your car. (Much like the reward buttons used in animal experimentation.)

This could be photographed in parallel with the local food bank. As more and more people struggle with living cost increases, many more people have been forced into using food banks to survive.

In 2007 in Normandy Surrey, a small outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease led to the destruction of a number of healthy animals. It was later discovered, as detailed in Health and Safety Executive, (2007) that the disease had come from a group of local labs that had been studying the disease in order to prevent outbreaks.

I would like to photograph the land upon which the herd were grazing while taking a bearing on the lab that infected them

Beyond this I want to photograph the land used for the burning of culled animals from the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic. There are multiple local sites upon which animals were culled and burned in the hope of stopping the spread of Foot and Mouth disease in 2001. The destruction of healthy viable animals was done in order to protect trade.

My favourite restaurant in Worcester is now on the market because it keeps flooding. After multiple floods in five years, sacrificing their upper bar in order to utilise the furniture downstairs, they have finally thrown in the towel.

I'd like to make portraits of the chef and the owner standing in the space they've vacated ostensibly due to human management of the landscape and climate change.

I'd also like to make portraits of a local micro-baker and juxtapose his portrait with that of a large scale commercial baker at work.

I want to photograph patches of UK land contaminated by the Reactor 4 Explosion at the Chernobyl power-station in 1986, (Agricultural and Rural Economy Directorate, 2021).

I want to do this while taking a bearing on the location of the power-station itself. It is now 36 years since the explosion took place, the ramifications of the disaster continue to this day, and the site promises to be problematic

indefinitely. Pripjat was briefly overrun by Russian forces early this year as part of Russia's invasion of the Ukraine.

The fact that the Ukraine was known as the breadbasket of the USSR, that it was a key producer of food for the whole republic, makes it all the more ironic that an explosion there would go on to poison swathes of European farmland.

(This could offer a more expansive project in time, allowing for photographs of many landscapes affected by the Chernobyl fallout.)

I also want to photograph the nuclear power station at Oldbury, a site in Gloucestershire that generated electricity between 1967 and 2012. ('Oldbury nuclear power station,' 2022)

After 45 years producing power and in the process of being decommissioned, the site is expected to be fully demolished between 2096 and 2101. The site will take significantly longer to clean up than it was usefully producing power. I believe the need for nuclear power is evident, as we are forced to balance society's need for energy with attempts to reduce our dependence upon fossil fuels.

The predominant and well-entrenched strategic policy approach is shaped by a continuing belief in the ability of a liberalizing global food economy to deliver sufficient food for the UK.

Barling *et al* (2010 p 62)

The idea that we can be independent of our global neighbours is ludicrous, as weather, disaster and war and their ramifications cross borders with impunity. Simultaneously economic growth through free trade is key to our current economic model and as such the temptation to focus on that, rather than our ability to feed ourselves, is understandably tempting.

I am not wedded to any of the ideas above. I've learned that it can be a mistake to hang your project on photographs you might not be able to make. A number of these ideas are dependant upon gaining access which is not always forthcoming, others require travel or significant ethical consideration prior to proceeding.

Conclusions

One of the things that has always worried me about my photography is the extent to which I mimic others, either in my personal work or my work for clients; that I have a practice trapped in a persistent state of homage.

There is a drive on the commercial side to actively emulate the work of other photographers, to pursue the 'original standard'. I think it translates to much of modern photography.

Whether it's the mood-board that is the World Press Photo Awards, or the production of stock style images that aren't stock, all photographs are referential.

They reference their subject, but they also reference every photograph the photographer has seen and made and every photograph the viewer has seen and understood. This intertextuality is key to photography, and to try to escape would be both impossible and unfulfilling. This same relational collage of ideas that gives us simple supportive photographs for textural narratives, be they in brochures or newspapers, enables us to include religious iconography in photojournalism, or renaissance imagery in pictures of our children.

It's easy to see why this one was appealing enough to make the final round. Its references to Christian iconography, specifically the crucifixion, is striking.

See fig 13 (Broomberg & Chanarin 2008b)



fig 13: Brett Sturton (2022) *Evacuation of dead Mountain Gorillas* Available at <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/text-unconcerned-but-not-indifferent> (Accessed 15th June 2022)

Included here purely as a visual example.

The idea of trying to encompass or outline a system of photography that comes outside of this is meaningless. I cannot control the images that viewers bring to my work, any more than I can alter the physics that govern my camera's operation.

What I can do is take them into account.

One of the ways my projects have failed to get off the ground in the past has been because I've tried to construct a project that supports the production of a pre-visualised collection of images.

This makes sense from the perspective of a photographer who usually knows what the end product is supposed to look like, but not if one is on an explorative journey.

Humankind has to eat. We cannot continue to do that which we have done in the past. Photographs will likely change nothing, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't get made. I choose to embrace the Man Ray quote that Broomberg & Chanarin used for their essay, I choose to be "Unconcerned but not Indifferent".

I'm aware that this is a somewhat scattershot approach to contextualisation, but the production of this essay has happened alongside a number of personal epiphanies.

My initial experiments, borne out of a wish to have consumable finished artefacts to include in a previous incarnation of this essay, stand as examples of work that I could make, but that don't yet speak to me or reference the work I'd like to make.

I'm convinced that working in the straight style, committing to large-format, and going on a journey feel like the most useful outcomes.

If I can make the unspectacular spectacularly unspectacular then I might have achieved the thing that I'm after.

By focusing on an aspiration, by deciding upon a methodology and a broad scope of enquiry, rather than trying to find a reason to make pictures I've pre-visualised, I find myself enthused, driven even to actually *make* the work.

Annotated Bibliography

Agricultural and Rural Economy Directorate (2021) *Effect of the Chernobyl disaster on Scotland's agriculture, fisheries and rural sector: EIR Release./202100256053*.

Available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202100256053/>
(Accessed: 16th May 2022)

This is a compendium of documents released in 2021 after a freedom of information request. It is concerned with the government's response to the nuclear fallout that fell on Scottish farmland after the explosion of reactor four at the Chernobyl Power Plant in 1986.

Made up for the most part of partially redacted correspondence between government departments and various stakeholders within the affected agricultural communities, it is a collection of partially related primary sources.

The information contained is delivered in the parlance of the industry from whence it came, making some of it hard to understand, however it serves as solid confirmation of the contamination of British soil as a result of a disaster overseas.

While I have no reason to doubt the authenticity of these documents, they cover a small part of what must have been an enormous exercise and, while it hints at the areas that were worst affected, it only goes so far in narrowing down where the farmland is.

I would need to do significant further research before making photographs, and need to bear in mind that the people affected by this disaster, may not wish to be reminded of it, or have their land once again associated with the issue of Russian radiation.

Barling, D. Lang, T. Sharpe, R. (2010) 'The Re-emergence of National Food Security on the United Kingdom's Strategic Policy Agenda: Sustainability Challenges and the Politics of Food Supply' in Lawrence, G. Lyons, K. Wallington, T. (ed.) *Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainability*. London: Earthscan, pp. 61-78

The authors and editors of this heavily referenced chapter are a mix of academics, writers and government advisors.

It is a dissection of the policies surrounding national food security rather than the issues themselves, but it remains a useful primer on the complexity of the subject. Its focus on policy precludes it from making recommendations about a solution, but it does identify 'policy tensions' (Barling, Lang, and Sharpe, 2010, p. 76) in the policies themselves.

While the foot and mouth outbreak of 2001 and the fuel blockade of 2000 could stand in for the post-brexit shortage of food and the ramifications of Covid-19, a more recent analysis would likely be useful.

The conclusions drawn are based on government statistics, which can often be misleading or obfuscatory, but time is taken to unpick some of the statistics provided.

Thirdly, the self-sufficiency statistics mask the extent to which goods ... produced in the UK depend on imported inputs,

(Barling, Lang, and Sharpe, 2010, p. 67)

Balancing trade, self-sufficiency, environmental impact, consumer need (and consumer desire) with desired outcomes in the face of increased pressure from climate change and population growth will only have become more complex in the years since this book's publication.

**Broomberg, A. and Chanarin, O, (2008a) *Fig.*. Göttingen: Steidl.
Brighton: Photoworks**

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin are respected and widely exhibited artists as well as being Professors of Creative Photography at HFBK Hamburg.

In *Fig.* they create what at first appears to be a witty and staccato narrative through a collection of deadpan images. As one progresses however, themes begin to emerge.

The overarching theme is that of classification, the initial feeling is tongue-in-cheek, before the broader scope asks us to consider what Julian Stallabras describes as the 'misapplication of control and classification systems [which] regularly produce graver consequences' (Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Opening Essay p. 1)

The deadpan, 'straight' and beguilingly proficient photographs are windows through which we see objects, exactly like museum artefacts for our consideration. Yet through the collection as a whole according to Gordon Macdonald we explore themes around 'Genocide, slavery, imperialism, power-mongering, racism, paranoia, jingoism, and all manner of global inequities' (Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Back Pages).

It's hard to envision *Fig.* in its pre-constructed state, or to imagine the process of its inception. It feels simultaneously whimsical and yet fully formed and complete, as if it had been born whole.

Fig. is brilliant, remarkable, somehow concise, and is the antithesis of both the work I do, and the work that inspires me. I am both in awe of it, and convinced that I have not yet understood it completely, which is both pleasant and unnerving.

Broomberg, A. and Chanarin, O, (2008b) 'Unconcerned but not Indifferent', *Foto8*, 4th March,
Available at: <https://www.foto8.com/live/unconcerned-but-not-indifferent/>.
(Accessed 22/06/2022)

In this essay respected artists and educators, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin discuss their time as judges for the 2008 *World Press Photo Awards*.

They give us a glimpse behind the curtain, outlining how the judging process takes place. We find out for example that submitted images are initially reviewed without their captions, missing much of their context, and are judged on their visual strength alone.

I was really struck by their suggestion that the awards have simultaneously gained influence and lost relevancy.

After outlining the ways in which, mostly due to cellphone cameras, modern photojournalism has lost its wider relevancy and describing the genre as being in 'in crisis', they then describe how the reach of the awards means that their power to shape future submissions "cannot be underestimated." (Broomberg and Chanarin 2008b).

It reminds me of the popular sessions Frosh (2003, p58) describes at a photo expo: 'Secrets to Success in Stock Production', 'How Great Ads Got That Way', 'Stock Photography: Best Sellers and Why'. If something is laudable or successful it is likely to be repeated.

I don't disagree with what they're saying, but their tone in this essay is very much borne out of where their work was and their ongoing questioning of modern photojournalism. It makes sense that they would feel the way they feel about this exercise after they'd made *Chicago*, and before they'd made *The Day Nobody Died*. (See the entry *Source Photographic Review*, 2012).

Burtynsky, E. (2012) *Oil*. Göttingen: Steidl

Oil is a collection of predominantly landscape images. They are all concerned with oil. The collection is subdivided into *Extraction and Refinement*, *Transportation and Motor Culture* and *The End of Oil*.

The pictures have heft to them even when they are printed in a book. He used large-format cameras for much of this work and the detail and depth to the pictures is remarkable. (I've seen very large prints in person too, and they don't disappoint.) He often uses aircraft or cherry-pickers to get some height upon his subjects,

The pictures are beautiful, and yet they are of unpleasant things. Exhausted and destroyed landscapes torn apart by the drive to get at what's underneath are rendered as awe-inspiring achievements, as a record of humankind's power and strength.

Burtynsky is a renowned photographer with work in collections all over the world. His photographs, once they become art, are expensive. His work has technical strength and his composition and framing are strong. I enjoy his work as an aesthetic experience. I do wonder whether there is something almost prurient about the pictures though, like watching a disaster movie, or a child's fascination with destruction, or war photography perhaps.

Some of Don McCullin's horrific war photographs were similarly beautiful.

Cammaer, G. (2009) "Edward Burtynsky's Manufactured Landscapes: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Creating Moving Still Images and Stilling Moving Images of Ecological Disasters," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture,* 3(1), pp. 121-130.

This text is Gerda Cammaer's review of Jennifer Baichwal's brilliant documentary *Manufactured Landscapes* from 2006, which is, on the surface at least, an artist profile of Ed Burtynsky. As such it is of finite use, but I wanted a respectable academic source that could confirm my new understanding of Ed Burtynsky's work.

The essay was published in Routledge's *Environmental Communication Journal* and says enough about the over-arching criticism of Burtynsky's work to support my thesis in this essay.

No doubt there are better sources available but this would suffice.

Cammaer's analysis of the interplay between Baichwal's footage Burtynsky's stills serves to underline the differences in approach and apparent levels of social commentary. This text supports and informs my view that Burtynsky's work is beautiful and above all beguiling. He's really very good at making this kind of imagery. He doesn't seem to care about the things he photographs beyond their visual impact on the photograph.

I get a sense that the people in his photographs are merely visual elements in his composition, that he thinks of them as much as he does the rocks in the quarry.

He makes art from destruction in a lucrative way. Social commentary rarely commands such a value in a gallery.

Franklin, S. (2016) *The Documentary Impulse*. London/New York: Phaidon

This book is renowned Magnum Photographer Stuart Franklin's personal exploration of what he terms 'the documentary impulse' as a part of the human desire to record.

As such his investigation goes beyond asking what the nature of documentary photography is, and first asks what it is to document and why people do it. From this foundation he moves into the history (and the legacy of that history), grounding current experience and projecting forward into the future.

When he discusses the making of his 'tank man' photograph (Franklin, S. (2016), on pp 121-127) he initially fails to grasp the power of the image he's created, believing the relevant scales and distance coproduced a lessening of impact rather than an amplification.

While it's hard to go back and view that photograph outside of its modern iconic status, it seems unthinkable that one could not see the power and importance of that image.

This suggests that his viewpoint is more closely tied to his field of photojournalism, than it might be to documentary photography. While it is meticulously referenced and well-argued, this book is a journey of personal discovery. He is perhaps exploring the photojournalistic impulse, rather than a documentary impulse per se.

Frosh, P. (2003) *The Image Factory, Consumer Culture, Photography and the Visual Content Industry*. Oxford: Berg.

Paul Frosh is Associate Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a widely published author, teacher and researcher.

In this extensively referenced, well researched and well argued book, he unpicks the culture, the production, dissemination and reception of stock photography, and the reflexive effect of the relationships created. In it he reestablishes stock photography as a 'wallpaper of consumer culture' (Frosh, 2003 p. 1), one so ubiquitous as to be invisible.

In the twenty years since this book was published, there has been significant evolution in the technology that powers this ecosystem, and thus the ecosystem itself.

Just as digital production has not yet become the dominant technology for taking photographs, so digital delivery systems still only account for a minority of images distributed...

(Frosh 2003, p. 182)

A more recent work would provide a current picture of the stock photography landscape, even as Frosh's work retains its relevance, (and he has the foresight to see the change coming).

This work makes for an interesting foundation to the practice that I wish to eschew. Much of my commercial work was intended to be part of the 'unremarkable but enveloping environment' Frosh discusses, (Frosh, 2003, p. 147).

Health and Safety Executive (2007) *Final report on potential breaches of biosecurity at the Pirbright site 2007*.

Available at:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20080727014838/https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/archive/07aug/finalreport.pdf>

(Accessed 07/06/2022)

This document covers the investigation in to the 2007 outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in Surrey. It does so in significant detail, more detail than I actually need.

This outbreak is of primary interest, as in this case the disease is believed to have come from one of a number of labs that were studying it in order to prevent further outbreaks. This report supports this hypothesis and confirms how the investigation was completed.

This is currently only an idea for a photograph, which would require further research before anything could be made. However this document serves to uphold the idea, and I'm reasonably confident that it can be trusted as a source.

Ingold, T. (2010) 'Bodies on the Run' in Ingold, T. *Making : Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, London : Routledge. pp 91-108

Tim Ingold is the Chair of Social Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, and a respected author. This text comes from his Routledge Published Book, and was required reading for the module.

I'm not going to pretend I have a complete understanding of this text. I've found it jarring and difficult since I first read it and, though I have tried to burrow further into it, it remains a challenging text.

What I have been able to garner has come from our subsequent class conversations, which did prove very useful. While it's likely that my current understanding of this text is watered down, the ideas are both interesting and recognisable in my practice.

My understanding of the text is that the camera has more power in the creation of the photograph than I have hitherto given it credit for. My ability to use it, my knowledge and understanding of its capabilities don't negate the fact that its *animacy* alongside mine and that of the light come together in the camera to make images.

In his terms (perhaps), the camera becomes the kite, the light becomes the wind beneath it, and I am the runner. The theory holds true for the act of *making* the photograph, but not for *viewing* the photograph. The resultant image may bear the hallmarks of this collaboration, but the correspondence of which he speaks is in the making not the viewing.

I think this is what made me defensive, I don't like to think of my photographs as dead, not least because when I look at them, I travel back to when I made them.

***Koyaanisqatsi: Life out of Balance* (1983) Directed by G. Reggio,
[Blu-ray] Europe: Hollywood Classics Ltd**

Described alternatively as a tone poem, an experiential documentary, and as non-narrative cinema, the respected and revered *Koyaanisqatsi* is possibly best described as a selection of moving stills.

Using a predominantly stationary camera, (so much so that it is jarring when one actually moves), Reggio explores, and illustrates modern life and humankind's relationship with technology.

Much like Geyrhalter's *Our Daily Bread*, there is no fervent polemic, no rhetoric driven voiceover to explain how we should feel about the things we're being shown. In the place of Geyrhalter's diegetic sound we have a fantastic score written by Philip Glass, and we are asked to make up our own minds.

By playing with time through slow-motion and time-lapse photography, (a rarity at the time), he manages to both illustrate the impact technology has allowed us to have on our environment, and the inverse: the power we have allowed our technological environment to have over us.

The film is challenged a little now by its age, the modern life that it is throwing into sharp relief is forty years old, the film was also shot entirely within US borders, suggesting that the life that is out of balance is an American one.

Koyaanisqatsi gave birth to a new genre, or reinvigorated one that hadn't found the mainstream yet. Either way it's important to remember that much of what we see in the film would have been very new to those seeing it at the time.

'Oldbury nuclear power station' (2022) *Wikipedia*.
Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oldbury_nuclear_power_station
(Accessed 17th June 2022)

This is a Wikipedia entry covering the history of the of the Nuclear Power Plant at Oldbury on Severn in South Gloucestershire. Wiki entries can be unreliable, but this article is heavily referenced, and for my purposes, serves really only as a potted history of the site.

I was looking for some dates, descriptions and wide-band background information that would serve as a basis for broader research. I'm not wholly convinced of my original idea featuring this site and drew the line with regard the research here.

The article did introduce me to the site's silt lagoons and their status as a roost for migratory birds. It feels like there is a photo here, underlining the irony of the fecundity of nature against the background of an artificial poison. This feels like it might be a photo for a different project.

This article does link to a number of interesting sources that would offer further reading should I persist with the idea.

Our Daily Bread - Unser Tglich Brot (2005) Directed by N. Geyrhalter.
Available at: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/ourdailybread>
(Accessed 06/03/2022)

This award winning documentary appears on the surface to be non-judgemental, unromantic and deadpan. Using diegetic sound rather than music or voiceover and a mostly stationary camera, we're left to confront the way our food is produced and our feelings about it with little guidance from the filmmaker (beyond their subject selection).

The film rejects an abject rhetoric in favour of propping a camera in front of reality. Little of what features in the film is a surprise in terms of its *having to happen* in order for products to exist, and yet the relationship between product and process is one that society often chooses to disassociate, the horror the viewer feels, if they feel it, is their own.

This film manages to encompass the cost of feeding Europe in human, animal and environmental terms.

There is a horror in the mundanity of food production, and irony too. Squeaking chicks fly off conveyors and are handled perfunctorily while dead apples bob serenely towards gloved staff. Again this irony is amplified by the film's deadpan delivery.

This film was made overtly, with the blessing of the manufacturers, and with credits to those filmed. While it might feel like an expos , it is our ignorant complicity that is exposed as we watch that which is done in the service of our appetites.

SOURCE Photographic Review (2012) *What is Conceptual Photography? (Part 3)* 18th September 2012.

Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TvpXG9fLqo> (Accessed 12 May 2022)

(Part one can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mc-BQZ8SvRw>. Part two can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8DQdWHqRvY>).

This is part three of a series of films released by Source Photographic Review, (the youtube account for Source Magazine) concerning the nature of conceptual photography. Source Magazine is a respected quarterly publication with roots firmly planted in the art world.

I've chosen to note part three in particular because it introduced me to Broomberg & Chanarin's *The Day Nobody Died*, (a piece which holds specific interest for me) but the series as a whole uses the question: "What is Conceptual Photography?" as a way to explore it.

The tone of the film is open, with professionals working in the arts world sharing their personal thoughts and feelings about the type of work that is sometimes classed as conceptual.

It's clear that there is some reverence for Broomberg & Chanarin, Sean O'Hagen notes that Source are "huge fans" (13:06) even as he seems to be less enthralled, at least to their project *The Day Nobody Died*.

This film is a useful and enjoyable starting point to explore conceptual photography with valuable input from multiple sources. I do wonder how these arguments have evolved over the last decade. For the purposes of my research, its primary benefit is that it introduced me to *The Day Nobody Died* and the broader discussion that surrounds it.

Sternfeld, J. (2012). *American Prospects*. 4th edn. Göttingen: Steidl

American Prospects has been exerting pressure upon my work since I first saw the pictures about ten years ago. It is a collection of predominantly landscape images made by Joel Sternfeld as he travelled across the US in the seventies and eighties.

Anne Tucker, in her essay *American Beauty in Atypical Places*, (Sternfeld, 2012, final essay), describes how he captured both the changes as you cross the country, but also the gradual homogenisation that industrialisation and commercialisation brings about. This is not something I picked up on at the time. I was in love with his framing and colour, and his ability to make anything spectacular, real and worth your consideration.

I have a blind spot for Americana, and much of the America he photographs is the America that I grew up with in movies and on television. This, combined with the age of the photographs, means that for me they have ceased to be a window and become travel in time and space. Also, when something becomes canon, it can be hard to see it in the light in which it was made.

That being said, if I can preserve the sense of travel and adventure in my project that Sternfeld holds on to throughout his, I'll be happy.

It's important to be available for the pictures.

The Chicken of Tomorrow (1948). Directed by The National Chicken-of-Tomorrow Committee.
Available at: <https://youtu.be/Yjq9alo5G3E>
(Accessed 01/03/2022)

The short documentary film *The Chicken of Tomorrow* explains that pre-war chicken meat was a by-product of the egg industry, and that a post-war desire for 'better meat type chickens' (*The Chicken of Tomorrow*, 1948, 00:59) gave rise to a breeding competition to create such a bird.

The film spends much of its run-time outlining the process and the mechanics of the competition, its goals and processes.

Designed to inform the public about the things the authors wanted the public to know, the welfare of live-stock features highly while downplaying its inevitable slaughter.

It reinforces all of the stereotypes of the time, older white men judge things, people of colour move things around, and women sort, cook and suffer a predictable 'pretty chicks' innuendo, (*The Chicken of Tomorrow*, 1948, 07:50).

It's noteworthy that the competition was sponsored by the A&P Foodstores 'the nation's largest poultry retailers', (*The Chicken of Tomorrow*, 1948, 01:29), meaning that it was the mediator, (in this case a retailer), that pushed for this development, rather than the consumer or producer, and that they constructed a wax maquette, putting the corpse before the chicken. (*The Chicken of Tomorrow*, 1948, 01:41)

Wildschut, H. (2013) *Food*. Rotterdam: Post-Editions.

Wildshut's photo essay at first appears to be a deadpan look at the modern food production landscape. It features pictures of enormous green houses, chicks being debeaked, chips being chopped and frozen and pigs in their enclosures. It also features showers, offices, labs and changing rooms.

The photography is proficient and feels suitably sparse, in keeping with the unfiltered look that is expected of this kind of work.

There are things missing however. Slaughter is key to livestock farming, and to not include it feels like a nod to the viewer's sensibilities. Even with his focus on 'farmers and entrepreneurs who were looking for innovation' (Wildschut, H. 2013. Inside rear cover), one cannot yet make bacon without killing pigs.

Commissioned by the Rijksmuseum through Document Nederland it is the Dutch food industry we're exploring and gradually, particularly in the captions in the image index, a shift almost into advertorial seems to take place.

Suddenly it is the hardworking, technologically advanced, and entrepreneurial Dutch who are the focus of this work and not the food production itself, to the extent that some of the captions read like press releases.

The work is strong, it hangs together perfectly adequately even if it feels a bit stilted. It's hard not to compare it to Geyrhalter's *Our Daily Bread*, (2005), which manages to be both deadpan and aesthetic and seems less in awe of the industry its been embedded with. In comparison, *Food* feels more like *The Chicken of Tomorrow*.

Wolf, W. (2019) *Photo Work: Forty Photographers on Process and Practice*. New York: Aperture

Aperture is a respected arts and photography publisher with a notable history and impressive reputation. (They would be one of my acceptable publishers, alongside Steidl).

This book consists of forty photographer's responses to the same questionnaire. Care has been taken to ensure that the cohort of photographers is diverse to some degree, and though I don't know them all well enough, they appear to have very differing practices. (Side note: I really like that there are no photos in this book, just the ideas).

This is the kind of book I buy when I'm sad and frustrated with my practice; a quick fix manual that I think is geared towards precisely that bracket in the marketplace. Wolf mentions the lament of "countless young photographers" who are "adrift in their own practices". (Wolf, p9)

The fact is that forty mentors is too many, and the book serves to underline that one has to find one's own practice. It is therefore insightful but not instructive.