

ARTIGOS





CONSIDERING APPARITIONS: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY METHODOLOGY¹

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Abstract – This text aims at systematizing and analysing a photography production methodology observed from practices situated within the Photography Department in the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, in The Netherlands. The theoretical reasoning and practical applications of the referred working method parts from a specific visuality characterized by an engagement and estrangement towards the photographic subject (DEXTER, 2003), using as main reference the catalogue 'Cruel and Tender: The Real in the Twentieth-Century Photograph! Contemporary publications on this topic have also been used for this analysis, along with interviews with key photographers of the art academy in The Netherlands. The research investigated how procedural steps can dramatically influence a project or work of art, not only for educational purposes, but also as a tool for creating new ways of retrieving knowledge over images and their connection to world experience. The proposed photography methodology works as an instrument to potentialize revelations regarding fascinations and interests of a photographer towards his or her topic, still largely based on the actual experience of visualizing a subject matter, facilitating conscious aesthetic choices.

Keywords: Visual arts. Photography. Methodology. Art education. Visualization.

PREAMBLE

This article is divided in three parts. The first part consists of an introduction to the theoretical framework in which the systematization of the photography method was based on.

1 - This article is one of many by products of an undergraduate research project financed by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Fapesp), supervised by Prof. Dr. Maurício Farina from State University of Campinas (UNICAMP). Partnerships established during field research led to a collaboration between the authors.

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Secondly, the structured method itself formatted in steps that guided the practical analysis. Lastly, an analytical discussion from practical application, combined with how the approach as a photographer underlines visual narratives followed by some conclusions about this topic.

INTRODUCTION

In a letter to his nephew, Sergio Larrain (Chile, 1931-2012) dealt about a certain method of working with photography. Considered to be one of the most important latin american photographers of the 20th century, his deeply emotional pictorial images connect in many ways to his way of working described in the document:

When you get back home, develop, print and start looking at what you've done, all of the fish you've caught. Print your photos and tape them to a wall. Look at them. Play around with the L, cropping and framing, and you will learn about composition and geometry. Enlarge what you frame and leave it on the wall. By looking, you will learn to see. *When you agree that a photograph is not good, throw it out* [our highlight]. Tape the best ones higher on the wall, and eventually look at those only (...) Save the good ones, but throw everything else away, because the psyche retains everything you keep (LARRAIN, 2012).

Discovery, as part of the actual experience of making photos, is one of the cornerstones of this letter written in 1982. Apparitions, as he described, are visual encounters with something that is known to him, a pleasant acquisition of acquaintance through photographs. However, a simple definition of what is aesthetically satisfying for the eyes of the photographer as a way of editing, cries for a deeper analysis of what constitutes the reflection process and how a method of working can define what to put in and what to leave out of a project, particularly when thinking about the role images play in giving meaning to contemporary existence.

Some have dealt with the production dynamics of art projects, specially regarding the conditions that influence their development. The field of design, established with a focus towards industry and cosmetic utility, has contributed with important systems on a project based practice of creative products, for example the Experimental Methodology on Design (BONSIEPE, 1986). When dealing with these dynamics in the field of documentary photography, it was possible to observe⁴ different matrixes of actions to follow in order to improve aesthetic awareness and professionalize photographers practice.

4 - In Art Schools in Latin America and Europe: Arts Institute at State University of Campinas, Ulster University and others, especially the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague.

The study of the history of photography, especially in Latin America, has for years been directed by aestheticizing approaches, leaving aside (or even untouched) the method of production of images as a professional and commercial activity (KOSSOY, 2009, p. 138)⁵. It is from this perspective that this text intends to shed light over a methodological contribution of photography production and reflection, observed from practices situated within the Photography Department in the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, in The Netherlands, that seeks to add to a better training of photographers, artists and thinkers of the field image. This method was developed over many years of practice, by one of the authors of this text, Corinne Noordenbos, both as a photographer and educator.

Confronted by the idea of 'learning' photography as contemporary art, along with its historical documentary value, this research parted from the difficulty of conceptualizing how procedural steps could decisively influence a project or work of art, not only for educational purposes, but as a tool for creating new ways of retrieving knowledge over images and their connection to world experience. The consideration over such "apparitions", regarding aesthetic choices – such as the visual organisation of details that surround the photographic subject, the exploration of technological resources and the election of a certain aspect of reality, resides over the factors that configure the practice of a photographer as a "cultural filter" (KOSSOY, 2009). The paradigm established for the working method is, then, of one that can be "known, made transferable and learned" (NOORDENBOS; SORGEDRAGER; TEIJMANT, 2005) and account anyone, not only talented artists, to produce insights about their subjective experience through photography.

In order to systematize this way of working, interviews were conducted with three key photographers within the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. The interviews were based in conversations regarding multiple topics surrounding the development of a photographic project. Thus, working in class with students and observing how their expectations and interests were confronted by reality was another way of gathering data related to the practical application of the suggested method. Lastly, the theoretical method was taken into practice by one of the authors in developing a series of photographs about sectarianism in Belfast⁶, during a project week with second year students. All these sources and experiments were comprised, recorded and translated into a structured version of the way of working, accompanied by a visual model entitled "Zeeuwse Bolus"⁷.

5 - Boris Kossoy is a brazilian photographer, researcher, historian and professor at University of São Paulo. He is most known for the historical recovery of researches that states the parallel isolated discovery of photography by Hercules Florence in 1832 in Brazil.

6 - The series was called 'Common places' and was made during the last week of March 2015. Please refer to page 6 for image.

7 - A Zeeuwse bolus is a sweet pastry in a spiral shape from the Dutch province of Zeeland. This name was given referring to the spiral shape of the visual method. Please refer to page 18.

The method enables practitioners to get acquainted with some research tools that can bring substance to their hypotheses and assumptions. In that way, research works as an instrument to convey personal experience into something that is socially relevant, furthermore, universal. By gathering and analysing news articles, statistics, interviews and visual references, all of this combined with the act of taking pictures, stories grounded in reality work as a bridge between the *cri de coeur*⁸ and the "world as it is". From this perspective, the "Zeeuwse Bolus" model establishes a connection between the practice of Documentary Photography and Sociology, particularly some basic principles of qualitative analysis from Grounded Theory Approach.

Image 1 – "Common Places", Mat Guzzo. Belfast, 2015



Grounded Theory Approach (GTM) is widely used in generating or constructing theories through research made by reiteration process based on empirical data (GLASER; STRAUSS, 1967). The researcher (or in this case, photographer) raises data from the field, from visual references and from his or her own observations, reflections and analysis. According to Konecki (2011, p. 132) citing Glaser and Straus (1967), "having analysed a batch of data, the researcher returns to the field for more data, traced with the insights provided by previous analyses. Data are coded, conceptual labels honed and theoretical categories constructed". On the words of Barney Glaser (2010):

Grounded theory is the study of a concept. It is not a descriptive study of a descriptive problem. [...] And that's why we need to get off the tiny topic level or the descriptive level and get to the concept. And the concept names a pattern. [...]

8 - In french, 'cry from the heart' means speaking of things which are close to one's feelings and emotions.

Production of knowledge through images, in this sense, is crafted by induction, taking individual perceptions or assumptions (here defined as "Sensitizing Concepts"), as starting point to work with visual experimentation, as a way of testing hypotheses and sharpening ideas in the course of the research process. It relates to an "emic" procedure, by trying to penetrate a phenomenon observed in reality in order to describe it more adequately, although still deeply connected with personal experience and subjectivity (NOORDENBOS; SORGEDRAGER; TEIJMANT, 2005).

Fitted within the suggested structured method, especially when regarded the step of situating the whole research process as well as contact sheets and prints on the wall (as seen on image 3, p. 20), this GTM qualitative analysis doesn't seek, in this case, to be used for canonical interpretations of reality, but rather as an instrument to ground views and insights on actual events. Contact sheets work as a way of retrieving information about what the photographer is looking at, how he or she approached the subject and what kind of strategy is taking place to connect the spotted story to the actual use of the camera over time. In this way, photos taken and photographer become a source for his or her own development inside a project, alongside other research conducted.

Robert Frank synthesizes this paradigm. Considered to be the first European to be accepted in the Guggenheim Fellowship, he wrote some methodological observations on how his project would be conducted in his application. Referring to a certain elasticity that develops itself on the go, as the photographer experiences world and subject by taking photographs, the project shapes itself as it proceeds:

To photograph freely throughout the United States, using the miniature camera exclusively. The making of a broad, voluminous picture record of things American, past and present [...] I speak of the things that are there, anywhere and everywhere—easily found, not easily selected and interpreted (NOORDENBOS; SORGEDRAGER; TEIJMANT, 2005, p. 3-5).

Working mainly with series or the photographic essay, as it addresses Brecht's anxiety to depict the reality of reification of human relations⁹, is to admit that a single image can tell a limited story and "the extended essay creates a stretched-out linear collage of images that presents a more complex picture of a particular society or location" (DEXTER, 2003, p. 18). But it is the approach as a photographer that can work with many subject related questions through visualisation.

9 – Brecht addresses the situation as "complicated because less than the simple reproduction of reality can say something about reality itself". He argues that pictures from Krupp or AEG almost doesn't say anything about those institutions. So he says that is necessary to create something artificial or fabricated to try to deal with the reification of human relations, as reality has become functional (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 106).

The approach of the photographer is translated by aesthetic parameters of images that define a visual strategy. Susan Sontag (1977) exemplifies this relationship through the case of the Farm Security Administration project, in which the conscience and taste of every photographer had constant influence over the depiction of reality:

The immensely gifted members of the Farm Security Administration photographic project of the late 1930's (among them Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, Russell Lee) would take dozens of frontal pictures of one of their sharecropper subjects until satisfied that they had gotten just the right look on film – *the precise expression on the subject's face that supported their own notions about poverty, light, dignity, texture, exploitation, and geometry [our underline]*. In deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects (SONTAG, 1977, p. 6).

These standards would correlate the photographer's views on reality with the way it experiences the subject. The conceptualization of a visual strategy, after dozens of pictures, would agree upon a "precise expression, light, texture, geometry", that of which consists a key-image (GUZZO; NOORDENBOS, 2015).

This production system takes the election of a key-image as an important step in considering which aesthetic aspects will guide the photographic act. Apparitions are a result out of a process of photographing freely, but their immediate consideration leads to the narrowing down of possibilities, to a more guided approach on reality and, ultimately, to the conceptualization of the work. A key-image is, therefore, not a product of a strategy, but a strategy in itself. It is not designed by the photographers visual imagination – as Bonsiepe (2011, p. 22) regards as manipulation and design in the production of appearance, but it is crafted through the actual process of taking pictures in the outside world. This is a refinement process, comprising research and subjectivity through what Dubois (1999) called an "image-act", which depicts not only the subject but how the photographer approached it and has narrowed down the story to his view of the essence of it.

As the project develops, there is a need for a balance between paradoxical oscillation between full engagement of the artist and a necessary distance from the subject photographed. The catalog "Cruel and Tender: The Real in the Twentieth-Century Photograph" (DEXTER; WESKI, 2003), held by the Tate Modern museum in London and Museum Ludwig in Cologne, 5 June until September 7, 2003, offers an reference of this paradoxical oscillation. Cruel and Tender reveals a trend of careful record of everyday aspects of human society which, according to the photographer Phillip-Lorca diCorcia, were never actually hidden, but are rarely noticed. The real in photography offers a breach of discursive possibilities. This is key for understanding an aesthetic position of the photographer in relation to the subject,

which is not limited in producing the specific realistic tradition that is the body of the Cruel and Tender catalogue. Rather, it gains from the underlying of what conceptual documentary photography methodology entails fundamentally, as denoted by Paul Graham (2015):

I'm a firm believer in working in the world as-it-is, and arriving at your ideas through that. It has to be a balance between the conscious mind struggling to rationalise, to make sense of it all, and the world itself, which doesn't give a flying fig for your ideas concerning it. Too much of the former, and you end up with dry didactic work, illustrating an idea with no life. Too much of the latter and you end up with random snapshots that have no redeeming interest or substance. You gotta seek out the sweet spot (BRITISH JOURNAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY, 2015).

STRUCTURED METHOD

The following structured method is based on annotations and experiences within the Photography Department of the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, compared and nourished with the content from the interviews, field research and practical applications. The scheme developed provides a good scope of how projects are conducted and organized as a professional photography standard according to collected information of the Dutch art academy.

The sequence proposed usually does not require a specific order to be followed, as all steps nurture themselves dialectically during the whole process, also between one phase and another (as shown in the "Zeeuwse Bolus" Model, p. 18). But as it departs from the idea of narrowing down an approach towards a subject or theme, it offers a swirly model. The development of a series is a process of sharpening the photographer's approach as various research- and reflection related steps are taken. It is understood as a guideline to develop the content described in pre-production and preparation (1), decision making (2), production and creation (3) and editing and presentation (4) cyclically, conditioned by the framework and scale of each project (comparable to what Bonsiepe offers in his Circular Model in the *Experimental Methodology on Design of 1986*, p. 35-37).

Framework is also an underlying factor of how this method is to be applied. It is supposed to be elastic, in which steps can be comprised in projects from a week, until a – 4 month to ten – year period. Still, the structure remains the same. Starting point is in the Formation of Topics (0), having an overview, clarifying the subject, experimenting with visual language (1), analysing and reflection towards defining a visual strategy (2), sharpening the series (3) and doing a final selection (4)¹⁰.

10 - Refer to the "Zeeuwse Bolus" Model, p. 19.

Formation of topics

The first or ground step is called formation of topics. This stage situates and brings to light objective and subjective conditions of the starting point of the photographer in the project. It is taken into account that most aspects surround his or her existence to better formulate which are the topics that come up by the analysis of the common world. From social and historical context, personal background, interests, fascinations till his or her own meandering experience as human being. This is all brought up when picking up a subject one wants to refer visually and tell a story about. It's a preparation in making a thought abstraction concrete by association with other things that are going on.

- *Organizing interests and fascinations:* Working visually on the wall is a good way of making associations when choosing a subject. Thus, making mind maps related to personal interests can contribute in forming groups that connect to each other, making it easier to relate to new topics and conclusions. Another way of organizing the references suggested by the KABK curriculum is keeping up a dairy or a folder with clippings, news articles, exhibitions attend etc.
- *Taking down notes:* "Don't let any thought pass you by and guide your notebook as strict as the Tourism Authority registry" said Walter Benjamin (1991). This process helps on making associations and coming down to conclusions related to these thoughts and memories that relate to current and past experiences.
- *Spotting a problem:* Noticing that there's something that can be investigated could be a starting point for a topic for photographing. From here, an investigation starts to determine why is it a problem, how does it relate to personal fascinations, how can it be approached photographically.

Pre-production and preparation

Situated within the daily practice of photography (through technical control, artistic experimentation, social and cultural background), the preparation for a project with a minimal narrative direction comprises a series of research related steps. Many sources are taken into account, from visual references, interests, news, demographics, scientific knowledge to how to subject is experienced by the photographer. The production of a photography archive, the mapping of interests and fascinations and constant contact with stories and theoretical sources, just as image references, are important aspects of this phase.

- *Making a long list (10) of interests:* This is a good start to the consolidation of the formation of topics. It can be varied and not limited to any specific form. Amplifying

personal interests and seeking self-knowledge, making use of display methods (for example, simply by hanging pictures on the wall) can facilitate the process in this study. In carrying out the list, restricting time (e.g. giving 3 minutes to finish the list) can bring out consistent results more easily.

- *Making a short list (3) of interests:* With the long list of interests at hand, the photographer selects 3 or 4 items for a shorter list. The items are selected based on personal correlation and potential for storytelling.
- *Setting a Plan A and Plan B:* From the short list, a Plan A is selected based on plus and minus points: its visual possibilities (e.g. working with artificial light), Access to the subject (e.g. credentials to a hospital), newsworthiness (e.g. if it's a current debate in the society), relationship with personal interests are all examples of information to take in account as positive or negative aspects when selecting a Plan A. A shadow plan is also selected, but now taking into account the easiness for accomplishment, in case the plan A fails. Plan A and Plan B are carried out simultaneously.
- *Making a mind map:* Situating the topic chosen at the centre of a sheet or poster and lifting concepts, words, memories, ideas that relate in some way to the theme is way of expanding the topic and gathering impressions or possible paths for the project. Images are also welcome in this process.
- *Listing references and research tools:* Bringing statistics, news, stories, observations, scholarly articles, images, reflections, experiments, works of other photographers and other works related to the theme is very important step in grounding abstractions and subjective analysis in reality. The material is reviewed to list what is important and what and how the information can be used in the series.
- *Answer the "three whys":* "Why me, why this, why now?" are three questions that specify and organize how the photographer deals with the collection of the conducted research. The question "why this?" reveals which aspect of the subject the photographer is more interested in and how it relates to the rest of the story. The question "Why now?" seeks to answer what is the social and current relevance of the chosen subject and the question "why me?" exposes how personal characteristics, experience and fascinations of the photographer relates to the photographic subject, why he or she is the best one to talk about it. Therefore, the responses bring clarity to how the research related to the actual project.
- *Visual Research:* This process comprises the experimentation of photographing and observing one's subject. What contains the story to be told? Dedicating time in observing or participating can change the point of view that outlines visual possibilities. This focus should be expanded by playing with variables of the situation (e.g. visiting at different times of the day or different days of the week). Another aspect of visual research contains of looking into the works of other photographers.

- *Photograph*: This step is most successful when one shoots freely on the chosen topic. The more produced, the better overview material is created for the next step. As one can find it difficult to have sharp eyes and see possibilities, it is most productive to go out to shoot various times during the given period in shorter sessions (one or two hours) than to insist on long intensive sessions.
- *Organizing the process*: Contact sheets comprise how the photographer went about the subject and the scene. In order to do so, one needs to reflect on the behaviour of the photographer first, before reflection on the topic in the image itself. Annotations and remarks over the contact sheets contribute to joint reflection about subject, experience and depiction. To showcase this process close to a selection of pictures from the last shoot, combined with references and sketches, potentializes discoveries and correlations. Here again, the wall plays an important role to get a good overview of the whole process and results. It means that one has to distance oneself from the experience during the shoot and reflect only on the results. One distances oneself literally taking distance to the results. Here lies the key to recognize patterns and record relations: making connections. (Refer to image on p. 15)
- *Making photo prints*: Displaying at least one picture out of the selection is another important step in this process. It enables one to materialize photos and experiment with the development of the optimum possibilities (e. g. technique, colour, image quality, composition, etc.). This allows to understanding visual elements that are not clear in the virtual image, limited in its size and distance from outlet (e. g. hanging the picture on a wall makes possible zooming in and out by walking in space, rather than just from a seeing from a normative scale). Recommended printed size, given the proportions of each project, is A3 (297 mm x 420 mm) format.
- *Showing work*: Within the curriculum of the Dutch Applied Science University, the work is shown in order to have general discussions of mutual problems during the process of production. This was done in weekly sessions of classmates and teachers. Discussions about the work (e. g. teachers, partners, audience) is how assumptions are confirmed and new questions come up. Arisen problems and overlooked possibilities are taken out in the open. Within a professional setting of a photographer this is often the case as well. In this case it is a discussion between colleagues.

Decision-making

The decision making step is a bridge between the previous working process and the actual making of the series. It requires a considerable amount of material produced during and before this process and is characterized by the insistent reflection of the research done until this point, combined with the election and definition of a specific visual strategy. This term

has to do with the construction of visual elements that can deal with the proposed subject (e. g. place, behaviour, situation, etc.) and still talk of a larger theme (e. g. love, anger, tolerance, etc.) in a metaphorical way. It is the approach as a photographer that can deal both with these immediate questions and a larger story. This stage begins at the moment when this duality is found in the material produced and ends when the production process starts by defining of a key image, determined by the limits of time and scope of each project.

As shown in Image 2 (p. 19), when entering the production phase, it always comes back to the decision-making process since the reflection process is dialectic. Therefore, each decision stage leads to a period of production, which is then re-evaluated and capable of re-configuration in its visual approach, but the choice is always decisive in taking the research to the next question.

- *Looking for a metaphor*: What is the essence of the subject? What stands out of the experience with this subject? What struck the most? These are some revelations of what is important for the photographer, when finding the elements of what he's looking for.
- *Define a key-image*: ("Why me, Why this and why now") a fourth question added to the "three whys" is the question "Why like this?" Referring to visual strategy used to tell history. Among the factors influencing this process are the composition, camera perspective, camera standpoint, object distance, mental distance of the photographer, focal length, use of light, disclosure, manipulation, display, among others. It is important to remember that a key-image is not made, but rather is a product of the material produced and research processed in stage one, being constantly re-evaluated.
- *Conceptualizing a visual strategy*: It is important to name what are the visual aspects in the key image and develop a concept to follow the work of the series. This concept should include the visual strategy in the form of telling the story, but considers not to limiting in only one way of photographing and get caught in a visual model. That's why the last question, "Why like this?" is made after electing the key image. Thus, the process becomes the constant concept of an effective and exiting visual strategy and not the replication of an image model. "It is never what is in the picture, but what she refers to"¹¹ is a reference in this process. Also here, one discusses what it leaves in and but most important what to leave out of the story. By limiting oneself, the story focuses on what it wants to talk about.

11 - As Susan Sontag (1977, p. 23) denotes: "The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, continuity, but which confers on each moment the character of a mystery. Any photograph has multiple meanings; indeed, to see something in the form of a photograph is to encounter a potential object of fascination. The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: There is a surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way".

Production and creation

After choosing a key-image, the production of the photographic material remains consistent in its visual approach as the series enters a sharpening process. It is interesting that, whilst that reflection remains constantly present, the photographer already knows what needs to be done over the subject – the way of working is already set and there's already an idea of how the series will look like, but it is through experimentation and creation that it will be confirmed. This step consists of continued production.

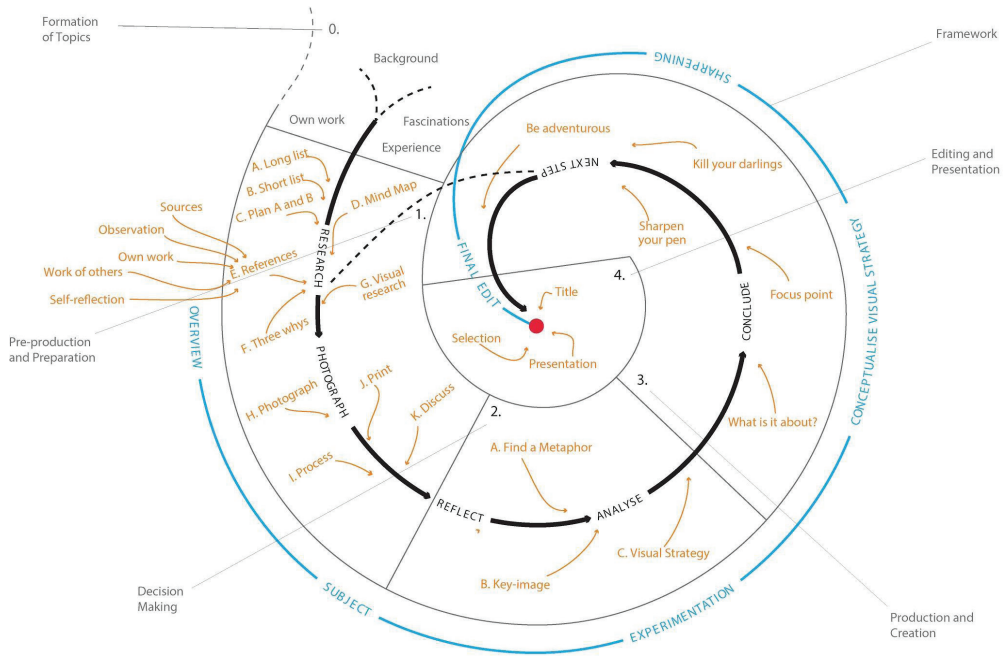
- *"What is it about?"*: Knowing what to look for, or even where to look. There is no need to worry if one doesn't know about what is and needs to continue making questions as way of guidance through the process. Printing and reflecting over the material is critical in each photographic session.
- *Finding a Focus Point*: The focus point is where the meaning of the whole story can become specific according certain visual elements. By choosing what to frame in the images and, most important, what to leave out, the approach of the photographer becomes clear following certain parameters of a visual strategy.
- *"Kill your darlings" and "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater"*: Not always the best shot, or the one with the most pleasant technical aspects, is the metaphor proposed and requires overcoming. Elements on the photograph must be recognised for what they offer to the overall narrative context, subject, topic and theme. The key image, here, is a lead.
- *"Sharpen your pen"*: It's about sharpening the process to reach the sweet spot. It means making intentions and producing material that is in-depth and accurate (considering the limits of space and time).
- *Be adventurous*: As consistency remains the same, one aims to tell different parts of the story and subject, with a variety of visual possibilities within a concept. This strategy is to create a framework in order to explore the subject visually.

Editing and presentation

There is the need to evaluate the dynamics of a series. Editing, as the way to judge and rank images, is not the cornerstone of this process. The framework of each project conduces it to the end, which is shown in the model (p. 19). *Making a final selection* is to work on the dynamics of the story as each photograph contributes in showing different parts of it, but still remaining consistent towards the concept. *Choosing an opening image* should seduce the viewer to enter the series. A title should touch the focus point, but not describe it. A subtitle should give a little more context to facilitate understanding of the series by the audience.

A work can be seen in countless ways, as photo book, on the wall or in a magazine, but the photographer must ask himself which way works best in order to support the concept. In addition, the concept of exhibition and presentation of the material should help that concept and how and where people will come in contact with the series.

Image 2 – “Zeewse Bolus” Model, 2015



APPLICATION ANALYSIS

Apparitions, again according Sergio Larrain's letter (2012), can also be seen as images that form inside one's head by the moment of discovery by experiencing the photographic subject. These can be insights, but are no more than virtual ideas of how individual subjectivity reacts to reality when photographing a certain topic. These images are always confronted with the actual pictures that a photographer has when he or she develops the material. This confrontation is the heart of the reflection process, established here as a contradiction: although the photographer is the one who knows best how the subject appears in reality, it is always hard to actually recognize that in the photos taken.

This difficulty derives in trying to match two different experiences: one which is existential, based on seeing and experiencing the subject in the real world, and one which is visual,

in relation to how a photographer experiences his or her own visual language and how this connects to an audience. The present methodology seeks to create an environment that contributes for conscious choices, based on the process of analysing and reflecting over the photographic material. The difference between evaluating whether a work of photography is good or bad and reflecting over it, is a matter of producing and elevating consciousness over visual possibilities that are materialized through the act photographing. This refers to the process of sharpening the approach as a photographer through correlating visual experiments that are hanging on the wall with what happened during the shooting. The choices, then, are guided by the goal of the photographer, which have already analysed and reflected over these connections between visual elements and personal experience.

This methodological device is intended to produce knowledge about the relationship between subject and photographer, correlated to a topic and a larger theme, which are also part of the discovery process. It parts from the notion that arriving to ideas, especially when regarding photographs as visual artefacts, is a process of working with visible objects and establishing connections between them. On one side, rarely these apparitions are taken as final images that are searched for in reality, but that usually leads to a complete blindness of the photographer when considering the actual possibilities of a photographic project. On the other side, apparitions are disregarded; one put's forward a work that is dry and distant, taking for granted the actual experience of making pictures. There must be connection between this duality in order to see what the subject entails and how it is the best way to go about it.

Lev Manovich established interesting ways of producing knowledge through the acquisition and display of data according certain image processing techniques. These technologies have certain principles in relation to generating insights related to the history of culture that can contribute for a better understanding of what is being done through contact sheets, for instance. Using visualization techniques to acquire, clean and process data, the object of study is no longer sampled but seen in its total image as in projects such as *SelfieCity*, *Today I feel* and *On Broadway* (MANOVICH, 2009). This principle of non-sampling is one way of looking towards contact sheets, which is the raw, uncompressed and unedited visual registry of a photographer experience through the camera. Surely, it is a much smaller data set when compared to projects like *SelfieCity*, but it is still not sampling its subject. By doing that, contact sheets on the wall, combined with a selection of prints and the research process, can offer a variety of patterns that can be understood to formulate new ideas or new ways to think about the subject which is being photographed.

Not only the process of hanging the work/research on the wall, but the actual making and placement of this material in a specific way is, by itself, part of the reflection. Screens of computers, for instance, can only show one image after another, while on the wall it is possible to zoom in and out of the whole picture easily. Thus, it is analogue, even though image processing technologies have developed increasingly fast over the course of the last two

years, the cheapest way is to print it and do it by hand. It would be interesting to see, however, how would a software application that gathers metadata and arrange images in different ways further contribute to this process.

Image 3 – Working visually on the wall. Brazil, 2015



Another important aspect noted with the practical applications is related to materiality of pictures. In order to properly visualize photographs, the necessity of printing is justified way beyond quality of screens and number of pixels. Apart from the fact previously mentioned, related to the possibility of situating all materials on wall and having the possibility of taking distance, the actual act of printing as a waiting moment and as a perceptual experience of the artefact can already bring things that are hidden when only looking through a screen. Printing draft versions of digital images also puts it a social perspective of sharing, which contributes to a deeper analysis of how audiences can correlate to the work.

Experience can confront personal expectations and assumptions about a specific theme. As Dexter (2003, p. 18) draws conclusions on that topic regarding "[...] a medium that is so fitted to description and representation seems here to be telling us that it can only denote, and that there is always something which lies beyond - that which is unrepresentable." It challenges the depiction of what one sees that has so much to do with an engagement with the common world, but is still lured by being a part of it when taking a stance. Dealing with that situation has to do with the assimilation of one's most direct interests and fascinations when "speaking from the heart".

A combination of working elements can provide views on reality: firstly, by taking distance from the subject, secondly, taking long periods of time in observing and finding the subject essence and, lastly, intensely experimenting with visual language in order to properly conceptualize the story into a series. These processes aim at transforming personal experience into shared experience, making it possible for other people to recognize themselves in it.

But successfully conceptualizing the subject into a visual strategy requires a good amount of research in order to convey personal experience and the common world. A good way of systematizing all research gathered is to ask the three why's questions: Why this, why me, why now. These are designed to inventorize and evaluate sources, structuring the content related to the subject and the approach of the photographer. The "why this" question is related to the relevance of the subject towards the photographer and the outside world. It inquires what is the universality of the topic chosen and why did the photographer chose it. The "why me" question, however, seeks to deal with the personal background and interests of the photographer in a way of identifying why he or she is suited to talk about that topic. Lastly, the why now has to do with the currency of topic, as if it is actual or in debate by society, or even if it needs to be debated and it is being silenced. Asking oneself these questions is a way of organizing the research in an accessible way.

A good example of how a subject is conceptualized in a visual strategy, can be seen in the making of a special photographic series by Rob Wetzer, about the drinking water industry in the Netherlands. Despite the fact that photographer knew a lot about the subject, the definition of a visual strategy took time and experimentation:

[...] It was a very big place and could not photograph everything in one image, to my satisfaction. So, I did not have a picture, but a collage. It was a very large room, then I photographed it in about 8 photos and I thought, well, when I get home I'll see if something comes out. It was an attempt [...]. Sometimes you have to do to see it for a while that those images were not so obvious, you know? How collages in large-angular, but for high resolution of a landscape or common architecture images, but prospectively they looked very much like the way landscapes were portrayed in video games. [...] That's it!¹²

The above excerpt shows the procedure used by the author in the election of a key image or the definition of a specific visual strategy – correlating the research, with the photographic practice, fascinations and, finally, reflection.

CONCLUSION

Trying to be specific, particularly in a world with far too many images, is a way of seeking to produce knowledge about it. The proposed photography methodology is an instrument to potentialize fascinations and interests of a photographer towards his subject. Yet, it is still

12 - Interview with Rob Wetzer, conducted on November, 2014.

largely based on the personal experience of viewing a subject matter. It proposes to deal with simple, straightforward topics and situations to start with, aiming to speak of a larger subject and universality.

The method in question facilitates a conscious aesthetic choice, in line with the artistic impulses of the creator, which leads to a productive reflection on the visuality of the photographic series created.

As it deals with the finding of a visual approach by means of experimentation, experience and reflection, it is a fundamental tool to unlock perceptual visions over the common world as images become more and more un-empathic. Thus, it is important to draw time and effort to address photography through methodology, not only to consciously produce images but also to be able to better visualize what goes on in a photograph.

It is from these observations that the educational and artistic methodology seen in KABK is carried out into pushing the photographer into a three way lane: on one side, to organize their own fascinations so it can be transferred and made universal through images; in the middle, to get acquainted with these professional working methods through experimentation and professionalization, based on their interests; and on the other side, develop their own artistic authorship. This "productive playground" sheds light over photography in contemporary universities and art schools.

CONSIDERANDO APARIÇÕES: POR UMA METODOLOGIA EM FOTOGRAFIA DOCUMENTAL

Resumo – Este texto busca analisar e sistematizar uma metodologia fotográfica observada em práticas oriundas do Departamento de Fotografia da Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, na Holanda. A fundamentação teórica e aplicações práticas do método referido partiram de uma visualidade específica, caracterizada por um engajamento e distanciamento em relação ao objeto fotográfico (DEXTER, 2003), utilizando como principal referência o catálogo "Cruel and Tender: The Real in the Twentieth-Century photography". Publicações contemporâneas sobre este tema também foram utilizadas para esta análise, juntamente com entrevistas com fotógrafos-chave da academia de arte na Holanda. A pesquisa investigou como medidas processuais podem influenciar dramaticamente um projeto ou obra de arte, não apenas para fins educacionais, mas como uma ferramenta para a criação de novas formas de conhecimento por meio de imagens e sua ligação com a experiência do mundo. A metodologia fotográfica proposta funciona como um instrumento para potencializar revelações sobre interesses e fascinações de um fotógrafo para com seu tema, ainda em grande parte baseada na experiência real de visualizar um objeto fotográfico, facilitando escolhas estéticas conscientes.

Palavras-chave: Artes visuais. Fotografia. Metodologia. Educação em arte. Visualização.

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