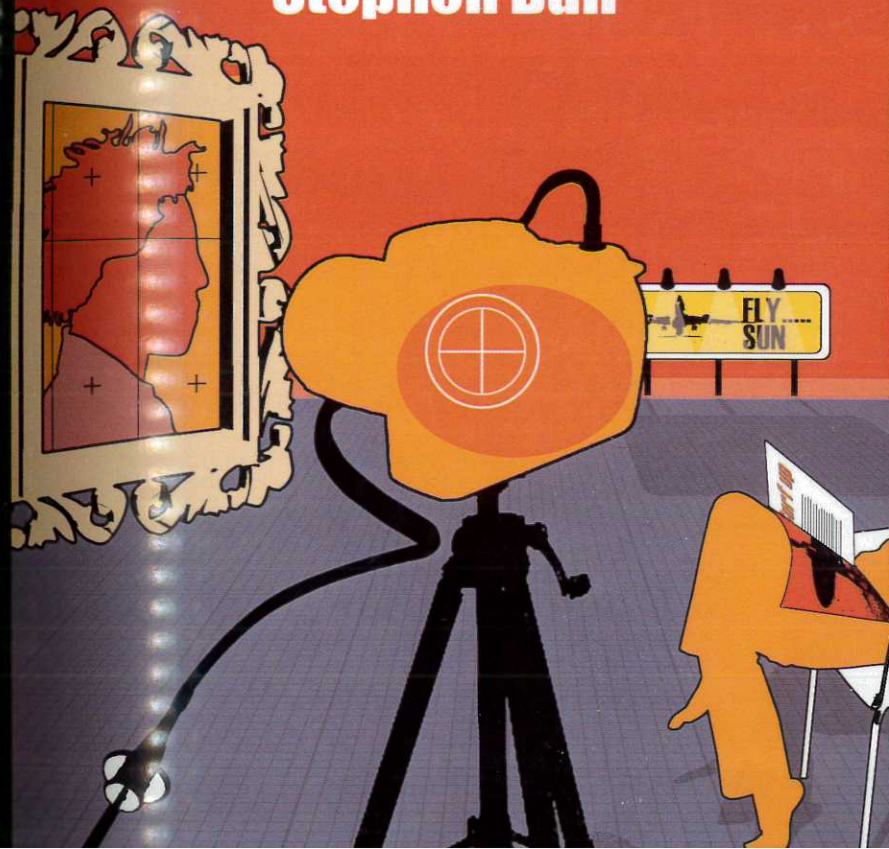


PHOTOGRAPHY

Stephen Bull



Photography explores the photograph in the 21st century and its importance as a media form. Stephen Bull considers our media-saturated society and the place of photography in everyday life, introducing the theories used to analyse photographs and exploring the impact of digital technology.

The book is split into short, accessible chapters on the broad themes central to the study and analysis of photography, and key issues are explained and applied to visual examples in each chapter.

Topics covered include:

- the identity of photography
- the meanings of photographs
- photography for sale
- snapshots
- the photograph as document
- photography as art
- photographs in fashion
- photography and celebrity.

Photography is an up-to-date, clear and comprehensive introduction to debates about photography now and is particularly useful to media, photography and visual culture students.

Stephen Bull is a writer, lecturer and artist. He has written articles for *Creative Camera*, *Photoworks* and *Source: The Photographic Review* and contributed chapters to books such as *The Media: An Introduction* and *Joachim Schmid: Photoworks 1982–2007*. He has exhibited in London at Tate Britain and The Photographers' Gallery. He was Course Leader for BA (Hons) Photography at the University of Portsmouth and is Course Leader for Photography at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham.

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audience. But of course digital photographs are mobile in the sense of being in transit from computer to computer and screen to screen all the time and all over the world via the Internet, with a theoretically unlimited audience. Increasingly – and at any given moment – digital snapshots are uploaded from most parts of the world to photo-sharing websites such as Flickr, as well as less photo specific, but still heavily photo-based social networking sites, including the tellingly named *Facebook*. These images can be viewed online anywhere there is a connection or signal. But what is the subject matter of these transient snaps? Has it changed from the kind of imagery that dominated popular photography in the era of fixed photography? (See Chapter 2 for more about the distinctions between fixed and transient photography.) The next chapter suggests answers to these questions through a detailed analysis of snapshots.

SNAPSHOTS

take a photo of something you want to forget
 it makes
 understand
 question

Family photos depict smiling faces. Births, weddings, holidays, children's birthday parties: people take pictures of the happy moments in their lives. Someone looking through our photo albums would conclude that we had led a joyous, leisurely existence, free of tragedy. No one ever takes a photograph of something they want to forget.

One Hour Photo (Mark Romanek, 2002)

The above lines are spoken by Seymour Parrish, the narrator and central character of the 2002 film *One Hour Photo*. Parrish works in the photographic department of a large out of town store, processing and printing customers' films. As his narration suggests, Parrish is well aware of the highly selective version of family life provided by the snapshots he sees all day. Nevertheless he disavows what he knows, becoming obsessed with the photographs he develops of a family that he convinces himself is perfect: imagining himself within their images as an escape from his own less than ideal family background. More generally, *One Hour Photo* serves as a commentary on the constructed character of snapshots and the desire to believe in the content of what is by far the most popular form of photography. Snapshots are the photographs most people make and appear in most of the time. They are sophisticated images and the majority of us receive an education in how to pose for and take snapshots from the

This chapter begins with an analysis of the term 'snapshot' and a debate about the relative lack of study of this ubiquitous form of imagery. The second section examines in detail what is meant by snapshot photography. Taking its cue from the modernist approach of authors such as John Szarkowski with the book *The Photographer's Eye* (2007; see Chapter 2), the essential nature of the snapshot photograph is defined. From a more postmodern approach, the next section examines the cultural context of snapshots, the outside influences upon them that shape their look and their purpose. This is followed by a section examining the work carried out in the area of 'phototherapy', a practice that both analyses and goes beyond the content of the family album. In the penultimate section, the changes to the nature of the snapshot that happened with digital technology are debated. This leads to the concluding section, which considers the implications of the increasing distribution of the snapshot as part of the culture of online social networking: a process that has seen the private snapshot go public.

PRIVATE SNAPSHOTS: THE SILENT MAJORITY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The origin of the word 'snapshot' is generally agreed to derive from a 19th-century hunting term for a gunshot fired quickly and haphazardly. Although writers disagree over details, it is usually accepted that Sir John Herschel first applied the term to photography in an 1860 article (see Green 1975: 3; Greenough 2007: 284n; King 1986: 4; Kotchemidova 2005: 7; West 2000: 217n) (Herschel also coined the word 'photography'; see Chapter 2). Parrish's narration in *One Hour Photo* reiterates the idea of a snapshot as being a photograph taken with a lack of deliberate aim. Yet the anthropologist Richard Chalfen, in his book *Snapshot Versions of Life*, argues that it is clear from watching people in the process of creating snapshots, as well as from examining the resulting pictures, that such photographs 'are made with considerable *deliberation*' (Chalfen 1987: 72).

The process of making snapshots evolved across the late 19th and early 20th century. Julia Hirsch has traced the development of family photographs – the subject matter of much snapshot photography, as I discuss below – from formal portraits made in commercial studios with poses held as if sitting for an oil painting, to the same kinds of formal

fixed, serious expressions in these images as the sitters concentrated on maintaining their posture.

Kodak's marketing of its cheap and easy to use cameras in the years between the late 1880s and the introduction of the Brownie in 1900 transformed the making of snapshots into a much more widespread and apparently casual activity, an idea encapsulated in the company's 1888 slogan 'You Press The Button, We Do The Rest' (see Chapter 4). One hundred years later, according to the Wolfman Report (an annual survey of the photographic industry), over 16 billion snapshots were processed in the US alone during the (pre-digital camera) financial year 1989–1990 (see Paster 1992: 139).

Writing in 1986, Graham King described the result of this century of picture taking as an 'ocean of snapshots' (King 1986: xi). Yet, as King and a number of other authors noted in the 1980s, snapshots were hardly paid attention to within the critical study of photographs over those 100 years. Analysis of snaps tended to consider them from the perspective of art photography, such as Szarkowski's book and exhibition *The Photographer's Eye* (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 7), which was pioneering in its inclusion of anonymous snapshots, but examined them only through the application of modernist aesthetics (Szarkowski 2007; see also Malcolm 1997). As Chalfen notes, Szarkowski tends to just incorporate those snapshots that are inconsistent exceptions to the kinds that are usually made (Chalfen 1987: 152), a practice that continues in most of the books of snapshot photography published in the 1990s and 2000s (see Batchen 2008b: 130–131).

Douglas R. Nickel has argued that 'what we call the history of photography' began to be written in the 1930s by art historians such as Beaumont Newhall from the perspective of modernism (see Chapter 7 for more on art photography and the writing of its history) (Nickel 2000: 229). From this viewpoint, snapshots have often been regarded as 'vernacular' photography: a phrase that, as Elizabeth Hutchinson has noted, was originally used to refer to a specialised language belonging to a particular group of people (Hutchinson 2000: 229–230). However, from a position outside of the history of art, it is snapshots that represent the majority of photographs and art photography itself that is 'vernacular' in its specialisation of language and its ownership by a specific group (see also Edwards 2009: 47). Art photography is only a drop in the ocean of photography as a whole. It is snapshots that flooded the world from the late 19th century

Since the 1990s writers such as Batchen have regularly put forward the view that it is not snapshots that somehow fall short of being included in histories of photography, but rather histories of photography written from the perspective of art that fall short of what is required in order to analyse the greater body of photography (e.g. Batchen 2003: 28–29; see also Starl 1993: 7). Batchen argues that histories of the snapshot cannot be written by homing-in on individual pictures (or representing them as ‘art’), but must consider snapshot photography as a mass. As Patricia Holland has also contended, snapshots need to be studied on their own terms (Holland 2009: 124). Although the cultural context and social function of snapshot production is vital (and is examined below), it is important to first debate the essential ‘nature’ of snapshots in terms of their look and subject matter (Chalfen 1987: 166; Copley and Haeffner 2009; Zuromskis 2009: 53). Graham King, Dave Kenyon and Richard Chalfen are three writers who have contributed significantly to such an examination.

THE NATURE OF SNAPSHOTS: THE SHOOTER’S EYE

In ‘The Quintessential Snapshot’, the third chapter of his book *Say Cheese!*, King describes the general qualities of snapshots in a similar way to which Szarkowski approaches a definition of modernist art photographs in *The Photographer’s Eye* (King 1986: 48–60). Yet King’s aim is not to suggest that snapshots are art photographs. Instead he wishes to ‘isolate and describe’ those characteristics that define the look – or as King puts it, the ‘visual surface’ – of snapshot photography itself (1986: 48–49). King lists 12 characteristics common to images made not by ‘photographers’, but by snapshotters. Many of these refer to what might be considered ‘mistakes’, and some of them require a brief explanation here. The recurring characteristics of snapshots, according to King (and using his own terms), are:

- Tilted horizon
- Unconventional cropping
- Eccentric framing
- The distant subject
- Blurring
- Double exposure

- The close encounter (where the view is obstructed by an object such as a finger over the lens)
- The shadow (of the photographer entering the frame)
- Banality (the subject and how it has been photographed is ‘uninteresting’)
- Ambiguity (the purpose of the photograph is unclear).

Although King’s list is eccentric in its terminology, it successfully encompasses many of the main visual characteristics that have come to be (sometimes pejoratively) associated with snapshot photography.

With *Inside Amateur Photography*, Kenyon emphasises the general subject matter, rather than the look, of snapshots, presenting an extensive categorisation in five parts of what most people tend to photograph (although the subjects discussed are inevitably generalised and informed by a Western viewpoint) (1992: 23–63):

- Family (parents with babies, new bikes and cars, pets, etc.)
- Christmas (which could be substituted by other religious and secular festivals)
- Holidays (hotel window views, tourist sites, seaside images, etc.)
- Weddings (signing the register, the exit from the church, cutting the cake, etc.)
- Environmental (images of landscapes, trees, animals).

Kenyon also uses these categories of what appears in snapshots to discuss what such photographs usually miss out, including ‘everyday drudgery, the unpleasant or threatening experience, illness, discord’ (Kenyon 1992: 24). The absence of these subjects has been referred to by Judith Williamson in psychoanalytic terms as a form of repression (Williamson 1988a: 122–124; see also Chapter 3 and below). Kenyon provides funerals as a specific example of subject matter avoided by the Western snapshotter, in this case the recording of a ritual prompted by death (Kenyon 1992: 56–57; see also Ruby 1995; Townsend 1998: 128–136).

In his study of snapshots Chalfen considers answers to the question ‘When in the course of a lifetime is a white middle-class member of American society asked to appear as an on-camera participant in snapshot communication?’ (Chalfen 1987: 70–99). He lists the following general

- From Infancy to Toddlerhood (the 'firsts' of everything: first birthday, Christmas, etc.)
- Childhood and Adolescence (from the first day at school to the graduation photograph)
- Early Adulthood (including relationships, which may well eventually include marriage, leading to . . .)
- Married Life (many of the snaps taken at this time, Chalfen points out, are made on holiday)
- Parenthood (returning the subject of the snapshot back to its beginnings, as the child and their own 'firsts' become the central subject)
- The Later Years (snapshots become infrequent, but there may be a desire to record the 'lasts': the final significant events in a life)
- Images Of Life's End (death is a subject that, like Kenyon, Chalfen argues is seldom documented).

Chalfen notes that snapshots are only used to record positive changes, which he sees as transitional events from one stage of life to the next. What is photographed in a snapshot is therefore extremely discriminatory: for example, work colleagues who might be seen almost every day for years may never be photographed (1987: 90). The achievements and possessions gained as a result of work will often appear in snapshots, while the many hours, months and years of work that enabled them to be attained will almost certainly go unseen (1987: 88–89; see also Stanley 1991).

Chalfen also makes a remarkable calculation. Based on the average life expectancy of a middle-class American in 1987 of 75 years, it is likely that a person will accumulate around 3000 snapshots by the end of their life. If the average shutter speed is 1/100th of a second, then these photographs represent a total of 30 seconds of that person's life (1987: 96–97). With reference to Henri Cartier-Bresson's idea of 'the decisive moment' (see Chapters 2 and 6), Chalfen calls this 'the decisive half-minute'.

Seventy-five years represented by 30 seconds of what are – as we shall go on to further examine – highly constructed photographs: there cannot be a better illustration of how selective snapshot versions of life are. As Chalfen puts it,

mirror of the past and present 'true' situations. It is more the case that snapshotters and family album makers selectively expose parts of their world to their cameras; or, said differently, snapshotters selectively use their cameras at specific times, in specific places, during specific events, for specific reasons.

(Chalfen 1987: 98)

In the next section the specific reasons why these specific times, places and events are photographed will be analysed.

THE KODAK CULTURE OF SNAPSHOTS: TOURISM, FAMILY AND MEMORY

Chapter 4 examined the ways in which the cameras and films made by George Eastman's company, Kodak, came to dominate photography as it became a popular medium in the late 19th and early 20th century. Nickel has claimed that 'Eastman created not just a product, but a culture' (quoted in Kotchemidova 2005: 10). Chalfen calls this 'Kodak Culture' and argues that it came to dictate the popular idea of what makes a good picture: defining who and what to photograph, as well as when and where to photograph them (1987: 4–48). Kodak Culture is therefore the culture of snapshots that developed from the dominance of Kodak's marketing during the period in which photography became widespread. It is important to acknowledge that, although global, Kodak Culture is at its most influential in the Western world. Writers such as Christopher Pinney have shown that what constitutes a 'good' snapshot varies, often subtly, across the world (see for example Pinney 1997).

Don Slater warns that the influential marketing of Kodak should not be regarded as an 'evil plot', but does argue that the mass-marketing of photography restricted most snapshotters to photographing 'conventional situations' (Slater 1991: 57). Phillip Stokes points to logistical factors that have also shaped the look of snapshots. He notes that the paucity of photographs of people at work may be explained as much by a lack of time and opportunity to make such images as by the socialisation of snapshotters into Kodak Culture (Stokes 1992: 200–201). Nevertheless, the influence of Kodak is vital to the culture of snapshots. In this section we will analyse this culture and how it has circumscribed the look and subject matter of snapshots as defined in the previous section

directed the consumer 'outwards'. Kodak advocated the use of snapshots as a way of documenting the leisurely travel that was becoming increasingly accessible via the expansion of the railway network and the technology of the bicycle (and, soon after, the automobile) (Holland 2009: 144). Nancy Martha West has argued that Kodak used the independent, freely roaming and photographing figure of the 'Kodak Girl' in many of their advertising images of the time to represent this idea (West 2000: 53–60; see also Chapter 4). In her book *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, West details how the associations Kodak made between travel, holidays and photography shrewdly connected with changes in Western culture that led to the determining of the structure of the working week, the weekend, and the legal requirement for paid holidays. These changes resulted in increased leisure time for the working-classes as well as the previously privileged middle-classes, allowing greater opportunities for travel and leading to the expansion of tourism (West 2000: 36–73). West notes how Kodak pressurised consumers to preserve their leisure time photographically. One early advertisement showed a Kodak Girl with her camera – positioned between illustrations of a train steaming through a rural landscape and a boat sailing off the coast – accompanied by the claim 'A vacation without a Kodak is a vacation wasted'.

Tourist photography is a highly cultural construction. Following on from the studies of tourism made in the 1960s and 1970s by Daniel Boorstin and Dean MacCannell at a time when the industry was rapidly expanding in the West, Chalfen discusses the way that tourists are directed towards particular sites in which to take photographs that, as John Urry has noted, often emulate the kinds of images used to promote the holiday in the first place (Chalfen 1987: 104; Urry 1990: 140). Some 'pseudo-events' (Boorstin's phrase) even came to be fabricated just for tourists to watch and take pictures of, such as Kodak-sponsored hula dances in Hawaii in the 1950s (see Chalfen 1987: 100–118; see also Bourdieu 1990: 35–39; Osborne 2000: 70–121; Sontag 1979: 65; Taylor 1994; Urry 1990: 138–140). Kenyon notes that by the 1980s and 1990s many coach outings for tourists incorporated stops at attractions primarily so that holidaymakers could take photographs of themselves in front of the sites (1992: 52–54). The tourist snapshots that result from this kind of sightseeing tend to depict, as Holland puts it, 'a familiar face . . . in an unfamiliar place' (2004: 146).

Tourist snapshots in particular are photographs made to show to

slides were projected onto a wall or a screen at home (Parr and Badger 2007: 205). Indeed, this era of the snapshot can be thought of as 'the golden age of domestic slide projection', although Slater's reference to 'the dreaded slideshow' in a 1995 essay suggests that this period had well and truly passed by the final decade of the 20th century (Bull 2004a: 57; Slater 1995: 141; see also Starl 1993: 12).

Nevertheless, as Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart have argued, the snapshot photograph in use remains a social object (Edwards and Hart 2004; Edwards 2005; see also Chalfen 1987: 70). When viewed as slides snapshots are commented on, while in their physical form (on album pages or individually) snapshots are passed around, talked about, laughed at. These are activities that continue and, as I will suggest below, have arguably expanded with the digital photographic image through its display on the screens of handheld electronic devices as well as via online social networking (see also Chapter 2).

While, as Holland notes, the public audience for such social activities includes friends, it is families that arguably remain central to snapshot culture as both the primary audience and subject matter of snaps (2009: 119–121). After an initial emphasis on travel, Kodak Culture soon turned 'inwards' to concentrate on the family (Holland 2009: 144). West meticulously traces how Kodak advertising between the 1880s and early 1930s systematically demonstrated to the public not only what family events they should photograph, but also played a significant role in shaping the idea of the family itself (West 2000: xii; see also Hirsch 1999; Slater 1991: 49–59). Williamson has argued that photography developed historically in parallel with the formation of the modern family (Williamson 1988a: 125–126). The institution of the family, she contends, is crucial in maintaining the state – although snapshots may seem far removed from politics, the idealised images in family snaps represent the fulfilment of desires that help to prevent a descent into 'social chaos' (1988a: 115–116).

Snapshots therefore play a part in the naturalisation and replication of the ideology of the family and as such are rarely radical (see Chapter 3 for an analysis of ideology). Pierre Bourdieu, in a pioneering sociological study of snapshots made in the 1960s, saw the key role of the snap as being the social integration of the family via the recording of celebratory moments, especially markers of family success and enlargement (Bourdieu 1990; see also Kenyon 1992: 92–93). This helps to explain the wilful omission of subjects such as funerals (as we saw in the previous section), which Kenyon

emphasising the fun of making photographs while insinuating the brand into everyday life (West 2000: 19–35). Although the snapshots used in Kodak's promotional material were clearly staged, West notes that the indexicality of the photographs helped to convince the viewer of their authenticity, creating what, as noted in Chapter 4, Patricia Johnston has called 'real fantasies' (Johnston 1997: 72–104; West 2000: 204–205). The photographic Kodak advertisements of 'families' photographed by Edward Steichen in the 1930s, for example, were deliberately designed to be mimicked by their consumers (Johnston 1997: 98–104; see also Chapter 4). Many of these adverts demonstrate both the act of taking a photograph and the image that will result from it. Beyond directly promotional material such as imagery extends to the packaging of films and cameras, the envelopes photographic prints arrived in, and even the example images found in photo frames (see Holland 2009: 150–151; Kotchemidova 2005; Williamson 1988a: 119; Zuromskis 2009: 57).

Christina Kotchemidova argues that this imagery resulted in a consensus of when to photograph the family, and this helped to overcome the initial anxiety that many had of being 'shot' by the camera. As photographing became accepted as something to do at special occasions – rather than a special occasion in itself – the fixed poses and serious expressions of the 19th century gave way to more casual images of family members already relaxed and engaged in festivities (Kotchemidova 2005: 8). The phrase 'say prunes', originally used in the Victorian era (when a closed, small mouth was considered polite and attractive), came to be



replaced by 'say cheese!' – the resulting open-mouthed smile creating what Kodak advocated as exuberant and 'lifelike' snaps (2005: 2–3).

Handbooks and magazines and the images found on the packaging of photographic products – either made by Kodak or influenced by the company – continue to educate snapshooters in how to carefully construct 'spontaneous' photographs of happy families (Holland 2009: 150–151; Williamson 1988a: 119). Kotchemidova suggests that through such images the public has fully absorbed ideas about how to make snapshots, as well as what facial expressions and poses to adopt themselves when photographed in order to create the impression of contentment and social integration: 'No matter how bored we are at a social gathering, we always smile for the camera' (2000: 22). Zuromskis argues that the making of snapshots is far more collaborative than other forms of photography, such as documentary (see Chapter 6). Rather than the power relations that can be dictated by who is behind and in front of the camera (see Chapter 3), Zuromskis sees snaps as a form of photography where all of those involved participate in a 'photographic fiction' (Zuromskis 2009: 60). Such a fiction, still determined in its overall look by promotional imagery, came to be widely referred to in the 20th century as a 'Kodak Moment' (West 2000: 157).

The shift towards recording the family at important instants occurred over the first few decades of the 20th century and changed the emphasis in the role of the snapshooter from photographing for fun to having the duty to record irretrievable events. Making these moments look pleasurable became a serious business. As West puts it, 'Playtime was now over' (2000: 135). Advertising began to pressurise families to record loved ones during times that would otherwise be lost forever, with Kodak often using the phrase 'Let Kodak Keep The Story' in its 1920s magazine advertisements. The stories that these adverts demonstrated must be kept included, for example, what Chalfen refers to as important 'firsts' in infancy (such as learning to walk). Sarah Kennel has discussed how it became a 'moral responsibility' for families to preserve these passing moments, pointing to Kodak advertisements such as one from 1936 where a father shows snaps of his children to another man who (the caption tells us) 'felt ashamed' that he had not taken similar pictures of his own children (Kennel 2007: 94–96). In some, rarer, cases the duty could even be to record potential 'lasts'. A 1926 American advertisement by the Master Photo Finishers of America (that is clearly influenced by Kodak's

'Save the Day with Snap Shots' – the day of the year which brings most families together, is a splendid opportunity to take snap-shots [*sic*] of the entire family, both singly and as a group. Next year might be too late. Have your camera and a few extra film [*sic*] ready.

The duty thus falls upon the shooter to not just 'save' moments, but to 'immortalise' the people who they photograph.

James E Paster observes that the early emphasis on the technology of the camera to catch an instant came to be overtaken by a focus on preserving life forever: 'Kodak, and the photographic industry as a whole, wields a profoundly compelling sales tool, one that is intertwined with concepts of life, death and ritual' (Paster 1992: 139). Although Paster does not make the connection directly, his argument corresponds with Roland Barthes' claim in his book *Camera Lucida* that photographs by amateurs come closest to the 'essence' of photography, which he perceives as being the photograph's apparent ability to prove 'that-has-been' (Barthes 2000: 98; see Chapters 2 and 3). However, Barthes' explicit associations between the photograph and physical mortality – which he elaborates upon throughout *Camera Lucida* – remain only implicit in Kodak Culture (see Batchen 2003: 21). As we have seen, death itself is rarely dealt with in snapshots. West notes that a proposed 1932 campaign by Kodak that employed images and captions directly addressing the deaths of family members – including a Thanksgiving scene with elderly relatives – was pulled before it had even reached any publications (2000: 200–207).

Instead, as we have seen, the shooter is educated by Kodak Culture to preserve life only through 'happy memories' (West 2000: 143). West sees this memorialising as an attempt to seize control of time and find stability in an idealised past while in the midst of constant change: a form of reminiscence that became increasingly important in the era of fast-paced transformation that arrived with modernity in the 19th century (2000: 154–155; see also Chapter 2). Batchen makes a similar point, but argues that photographs are not a good way to fight against the loss of memory in fast-changing cultures as they only preserve the visual sense, leaving out other sensual experiences such as touch, taste, smell, sound and temperature (Batchen 2004: 94–98; see also Chapter 2). To Batchen, photographs are hollowed-out versions of memory, replacing a full sensory experience with a picture (see also Batchen 2003: 25). The real

PHOTOTHERAPY: THE FAMILY ALBUM AND BEYOND

An important part of this planning lies in the editing and arrangement of snapshots. Batchen writes that photo albums present the opportunity to order and control the meanings of snaps, as well as add to their sensory experience with text and, in some cases, objects (for example, tickets for an event recorded in the images) (2004: 48–60; see also Chalfen 1987: 142). Marina Warner emphasises the playful nature of Victorian photo albums that often placed the photographs within hand-painted, fantasy scenes in order to create narratives of escapism (and perhaps to compensate for the lack of spontaneity afforded by static 19th-century photographs such as *cartes de visite*) (Warner 1999). Philip Stokes suggests that the inventiveness that went into assembling these albums came to be replaced over time by a more strictly systematic and chronological approach as a result of Kodak's influence, with the family being confirmed as the key subject matter (Stokes 1992). Martha Langford argues that the family album remains a performance, presenting a constructed version of the identity of its participants both to the participants themselves and to others – a process in which the addition of written explanation and narrative occupies a key role (Langford 2001). Edwards has emphasised the importance of orality to family albums, noting that they are used to narrate stories, often from a range of interweaving viewpoints (Edwards 2009: 38–39).

However, the partial tales told in snapshot albums and the selective fictions created in snapshots result in a wide gap between photographs and lived experience. This is a point made clear in some of the books and exhibitions constructed by Joachim Schmid, where he gathers together thousands of 'found' photographs taken by anonymous shooters (see Figure 5.1), revealing both the repetitive nature of the snapshot styles and subjects as well as indicating – by implication – what goes unrepresented (for more about found photography and Schmid see Berger 2009; Bull 1997; MacDonald and Weber 2007). A number of different but related practices under the heading of 'PhotoTherapy' or 'Phototherapy' have actively sought to address and narrow this gap by suggesting other stories that can be told using snapshots (see Chalfen 1987: 156–160).

Since the mid-1970s, psychologists, councillors and therapists, such as Linda Berman and Judy Weiser, have used photographs with their clients. Weiser devised the term 'PhotoTherapy' in 1975 for this process, although

technique of asking the clients themselves to talk – in this instance by asking them to discuss snapshots (see Chapter 3 for an examination of Freudian psychoanalysis). These snapshots could be pictures taken of the client, taken by the client, or simply pictures selected by the client. The theory is that both the photographs themselves and the ideas that the client projects into the images while discussing them allow access to their repressed unconscious anxieties and desires, aiding the therapeutic process (Berman 1993: 6–9; Weiser 1999: 1–8). Annette Kuhn has applied this process to her own unconscious, using her family's photographs to provoke her memories and creating a reading of snapshots informed by both psychoanalysis and Marxism as a way to connect the personal life of private snapshots with wider political events in public life (Kuhn 2002).

Kuhn's approach was also influenced by the work of Jo Spence and Rosy Martin, who pioneered the related technique usually referred to as 'phototherapy'. A key event for the establishment of this version of the practice was Spence's exhibition *Beyond the Family Album*, shown at the Hayward Gallery, London in 1979 (see Spence 1986: 82–97). Despite its gallery context, *Beyond the Family Album* was not intended to suggest that snapshots could be art photography, but instead created a forum to present and analyse snapshots publicly. The show largely consisted of snapshots taken of Spence from her birth in 1939 – all of which fitted the standard categories of happy snaps defined earlier in this chapter. However, as Julia Hirsch notes, the captions and texts accompanying the snapshots did not reinforce the positive messages of the images, but instead went 'beyond' the album to fill in what the photographs did not record: negative memories and anxieties centring particularly on issues of class and gender (Hirsch 1997: 133–135).

Spence did not just analyse snapshots, she created new ones too (a technique that is also sometimes used by psychotherapists, including Berman). This was a practice that she continued in the 1980s and 1990s. As well as making snapshots of everyday life such as daily work (as opposed to special occasions), this form of phototherapy also involved what Spence and Martin called 'the theatre of the self' (Spence and Martin 1995: 180). For this latter practice, Spence, in collaboration with Martin and others, used makeshift studios and a few props and outfits to restage moments from the subjects' past that had gone unrecorded in snapshots made at the time. For these photographs the participants would play *multiple versions of themselves or other roles*, such as that of their

Yet, as Hirsch has pointed out, Spence also recognised the need to stage idealised photographs and create positive memories (Hirsch 1997: 135). As with Seymour Parrish in *One Hour Photo*, even those who are fully aware of the lies that snapshots can tell still need to believe them occasionally. *Beyond the Family Album* ends with a panel of conventional snaps mimicking the pages of albums, accompanied by the explanation: 'These pictures are here for no better reason than they remind me of happy times and of people I love.'

DIGITAL SNAPSHOTS: SCREENS AND PERFORMANCE

David Campany has argued that the scenes in the processing lab that appear in *One Hour Photo* were 'made at the last point where a contemporary film could linger legitimately over celluloid negatives, sprocket holes, gurgling chemicals, and all the rest of the production process, without seeming nostalgic' (Campany 2008b: 55). The film also includes many moments where characters become absorbed in what they are viewing on screens (while using a computer, playing on a games console, watching television and so on) as well as a scene where a customer discussing her camera with Parrish tells him she has been advised to 'go digital'.

Of course most snapshooters have now 'gone digital' and use digital cameras to make their images (see Chapter 4 for statistics relating to this). In 1986 King presciently asked of the then nascent digital photograph: 'Will these novel and intangible images further change the essential nature of the snapshot?' (King 1986: 13). Paul Cogley and Nick Haeffner have argued that this is exactly what has happened – and that the fast-moving, changing character of the photographic apparatus therefore needs to be studied and commented on (Cogley and Haeffner 2009: 142–143). The wider implications of digital technology for the identity of photography as a whole are debated in Chapter 2. The rest of this chapter looks at the impact of digital technology on snapshots and (in the final section) their distribution.

While contemporary art photography is often referred to as 'performative' (Green and Lowry 2003: 47–60; see also Chapter 2), snapshots are arguably the most constructed of all photographs. Hirsch suggests that snaps have always been events performed for the camera

and expression could be made for a second image (Kenyon 1992: 94). In 2008 Polaroid (temporarily) ceased production of instant film (see Buse 2008). It seemed that it was no longer required. The screens on digital cameras mean that the staging of performances for snaps may be instantly checked, deleted and remade until the snapshot has been fine-tuned to all the participants' satisfaction (and at no financial cost) (see Cobby and Haeffner 2009: 142).

This fine-tuning continues after the event, as digital snaps can be adjusted both in-camera and on a computer (Cobby and Haeffner 2009: 144). Digital technology allows snapshooters greater control of the images they make. Applications such as Photogene for the iPhone can be used to manipulate images via the device itself. Tourist snapshots can be made even before going to the location by using Photoshop to place the tourist-to-be in front of an image of their destination; while 'scene completion' software now allows users to search other uploaded snaps to fill in gaps obscured in their own picture (by the back of a head, perhaps) (Ritchin 2009: 53–59). Unwanted ex-lovers can also be digitally removed from our lives by Photoshopping them out of the picture (Ritchin 2009: 22). As Holland argues, digital images are not only more disposable, but also more open to alteration than their film and paper counterparts: "Doing the rest" is now as easy as "pressing the button" (2009: 120; see also Chapter 2).

Many of the digital cameras used for these snaps are not just cameras but mobile devices such as camera phones. As examined in the previous chapter, the market for camera phones is huge, with an estimated one billion sales by 2010 (Sutton 2005: 46; Marien 2006: 510). There are parallels between the initial impact of Kodak and the effects of mobile devices on snapshot photography. Damian Sutton as well as Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis have identified analogies between the increase in accessibility that arrived with miniature and novelty cameras in the late 19th century and the even greater integration of the snapshot into everyday life via the miniaturisation and mobility of devices incorporating digital cameras (Rubinstein and Sluis 2008: 21; Sutton 2005). This has prompted Sutton to refer to the idealised snapshots made on such devices as 'Nokia Moments', with Nokia as the pioneering equivalent to Kodak in the development and marketing of camera phone technology (Sutton 2005).

Digital snapshots are not just 'mobile' due to their likelihood of being

'crowd sourced' from a vast range of participants (Gauntlett 2008: 1–2; Ritchin 2009: 125). This gives the impression that each participant is engaging creatively with the media through both text-based and visual communication, often with an emphasis on playful participation. Images made on camera phones, for example, can be uploaded instantly to websites as digital files, or picture messaged from one phone to another. It is this that Sutton refers to as 'the mobile photograph'.

In 1995 Slater addressed the new issues arising from digital photography, prophetically noting that the flow of photographic images in digital form was becoming the most significant issue relating to the new version of the medium (Slater 1995: 131–132). Digital snaps can be uploaded to sites such as PhotoBox where they are printed and sent to customers often within 24 hours, or printed out by being sent wirelessly to other portable printers. But, as discussed in Chapter 4, the printing of photographs is only one way of experiencing them: digital photo frames for example allow images to be edited, ordered and viewed in domestic spaces, while handheld devices such as iPods, iPhones and camera phones include increasingly large screens and are often used to display images, as they can be passed around like individual printed snaps or photo albums (Rubinstein and Sluis 2008: 13–14). However, it is via the online dissemination of photographs that private snapshots have gone public.

ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING: SNAPSHOTS GO PUBLIC

In the mid-1990s, Slater pointed out that family albums were highly valued, noting that most people were likely to say that their photo albums would be the first thing rescued from a house fire after relatives and pets. However, Slater argues, surveys revealed that the making of snapshots often took precedence over the act of looking at the resulting photographs, which instead languished unseen in albums, boxes and envelopes (1995: 137–141). The reason for this, Slater suggests, is that while the process of making snapshots was incorporated into systematised leisure activities (holidays, family celebrations, etc.), very few structured activities existed for viewing them (1995: 138–140).

While digital photography had been in existence for some time by 1995 (see Chapter 2), it remained largely the preserve of professionals and hobbyists, who used the new technology as an old-fashioned

access, leading to the widespread use of emails, blogs and websites as forms of communication. Digital photographs became the preserve of most people, with snapshots rarely printed but instead viewed on screens. The ease with which digital images could be transmitted online led to a dramatic change in the circulation of photographs.

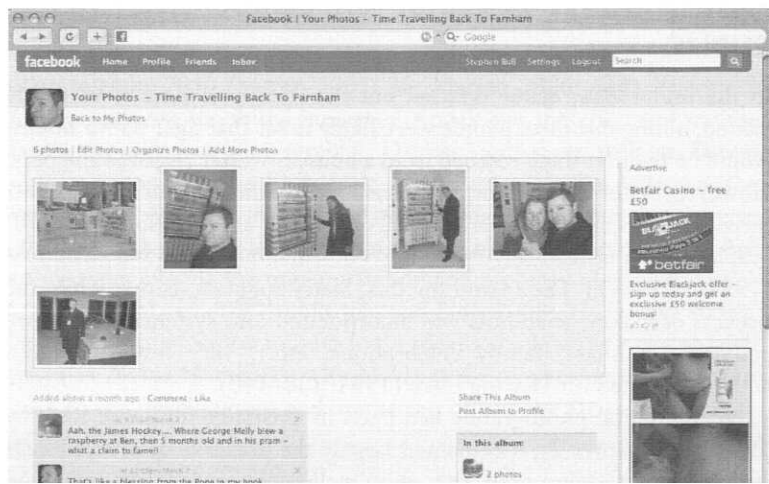
As Rubinstein and Sluis argue, this revolution coincided with the development of camera phones, resulting in a convergence between 'Kodak Culture' and 'Nokia Moments' (2008: 10). Sutton has identified the significance of moblogs (blogs consisting of regularly uploaded mobile phone images) (Sutton 2005). More generally, photo-sharing sites such as *Fotolog* (which featured 90 million pictures by 2006 (Long 2006)) and *Flickr* (19 million pictures by 2008, increasing annually by around 30 per cent (Rabia 2008)) became places where all kinds of photographic images were made visible to their millions of members. But it was with the emergence of online social networking websites such as *Facebook* in the early part of the 21st century that the snapshot became more public than at any time in its history (see Figure 5.2).

Facebook has its origins in a website developed at Harvard University in 2004 based on yearbooks where students present an image and information about themselves for fellow students to see. By 2007 the website had expanded to a global scale with 50 million users worldwide:

its primary functions centring on self-presentation, communication, game playing, and the publicising of events and issues (Hodges 2008: 8–10). Such a phenomenon fits with an era of individuality and isolation in the West, as it reconnects people in an increasingly disconnected culture. Snapshots are central to *Facebook*, with users regularly uploading images of themselves and their relatives and friends (Hodges 2008: 8). Through photo-sharing and online social networking millions of snapshots are now made public, not as art – which was usually the only way such images were previously publicly seen – but still in their role as snaps (Cobley and Haeffner 2009: 125–126; Rubinstein and Sluis 2008; see also Langford 2008). From this perspective, snapshots could now be seen as the 'loud majority' of photography.

How these snapshots are ordered and viewed needs to be considered. Lev Manovich has argued that storing digital photographs results in a collection that can be viewed, navigated and searched (Manovich 2001: 219). Rubinstein and Sluis contend that the millions of online snapshots on social networking sites create an expanded 'social life' for the snapshot (2008: 17–18). But authors such as Langford have noted that the meanings of snapshots are only clear to their participants (Langford 2001), and it might therefore be asked whether the potential for millions to see snapshots online actually results in a public interest in viewing other people's snaps. However, the navigation of snapshots on websites via devices such as tagging – where the subject matter of images is labelled by users and becomes searchable within a 'database' – allows people to find and be alerted to images that are potentially relevant to them.

Through such navigation, the experience of snapshots online becomes far less linear than viewing the chronologically ordered snaps in most post-Victorian photo albums (Rubinstein and Sluis 2008: 19–20). The tags and comments that can be added to online snapshots mimic the pointing out of subjects and verbal commentary by viewers that accompanies looking at albums and was also a vital element of traditional domestic slideshows. Indeed it could be argued that with online social networking Slater's 'dreaded slideshow' has returned on a global scale. The reappearance of digital snapshots in different users' online 'photo albums' and the varied comments that can accompany them from a multitude of viewpoints creates an endless re-contextualisation of images, whose meanings are never fixed – fully exposing the polysemy of photographs (Ritchin 2009: 147–157; Rubinstein and Sluis 2008: 18–21; see Chapter



gave the title to 'You'. The cover of the 25 December issue of the magazine featured a computer, the screen of its monitor replaced by mirrored paper to reflect the reader. Richard Stengel, the magazine's editor, justified this choice by arguing inside that through online technologies the public were interacting with – and therefore 'creating' – the mass media as never before (Stengel 2006: 4). Slater contends that in the late 20th century the idea of the 'chooser', who decides their own pathway through the media they use, was replacing that of the consumer. However, he argues that these decisions can only be made within a structure that is not created by the choosers themselves. Instead, digital images join the previously existing flow of systematised leisure, with users selecting from pre-programmed choices and with certain pathways encouraged (Slater 1995: 141–143).

In terms of snapshots, online social networking sites take their structures from older traditions: for example, just as with Kodak Culture, the recording and viewing of leisure activities rather than work is actively promoted on *Facebook*. Most uploaded snaps still fit the traditional categories defined in the first section of this chapter. Any potential for true interactivity and empowerment through disseminating a more diverse range of photographs via online social networking does not take place because these images do not fit within the structure of such sites (see Copley and Haeffner 2009). The online systems by which 21st-century snapshots are widely distributed empower the user to conform.

Private viewing is arguably a central characteristic of snapshot photography. Once a snap becomes public, the meaning of the picture – which was previously specific to its participants – can change dramatically with its new context. For example, in 2007 images of Oxford students celebrating their exams over-enthusiastically in the street were used as evidence towards their expulsion after the photographs were posted on a *Facebook* page. The same year, a British parliamentary aide was forced to resign from his job when images of him 'blacking up' the face of a colleague appeared online (Doorne 2008: 110–111; see also Sutton 2005: 46–47). Images from social networking sites are also widely used to illustrate news stories in papers and online; for example, if someone who was previously unknown to the public becomes newsworthy, images of them from their online albums often become widely reproduced.

With their move from the domestic space to wider contexts, snapshots

THE PHOTOGRAPH AS DOCUMENT

In 1844 William Henry Fox Talbot enthusiastically promoted the usefulness of the photograph as document. Inside his book *The Pencil of Nature* he accompanied a picture of his own *Articles of China* (ornate vases, bowls, figurines, and cups and saucers lined up in rows on shelves) with the statement that the photograph would provide legal evidence of his possession of these objects should they be stolen (Sekula 1989: 344–345). The descriptive simplicity of Talbot's image, each object ordered and presented frontally to the camera then recorded in some detail by the resulting photograph, makes it the perfect example of a photographic document (this desire to catalogue also recalls the legacy of photography's Enlightenment-era origins; see Chapter 2 and Roberts 2004b). Throughout its uses in this context, photography is seen to provide evidence of what was in front of the camera lens. Central to this are the terms 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'. With photographic objectivity it is 'the objects' in front of the camera that are regarded as producing the photograph. With photographic subjectivity it is the photographer behind the camera – known as 'the subject' (not to be confused with the picture's subject *matter*) – who is regarded as the producer of the photograph. I return to these ideas and apply them to images throughout the chapter. As we shall see, the distinction between the terms is often open to question.

This chapter examines the various applications of photographs as