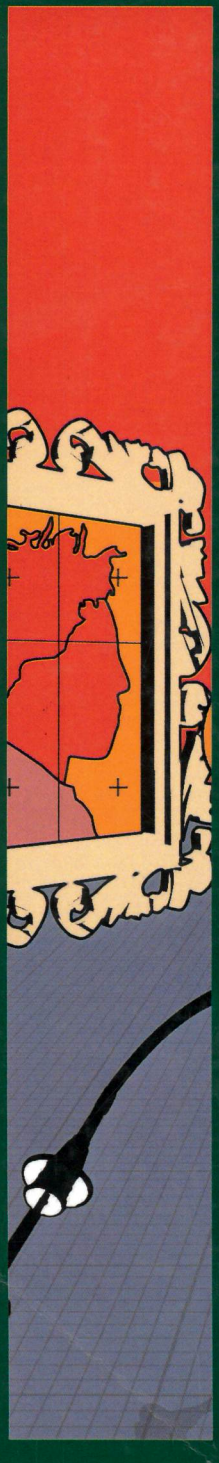

Photography explores the photograph in the 21st century and its importance as a media form. Stephen Bull considers our media-saturated society and the place of photography in everyday life, introducing the theories used to analyse photographs and exploring the impact of digital technology.

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 Britiain 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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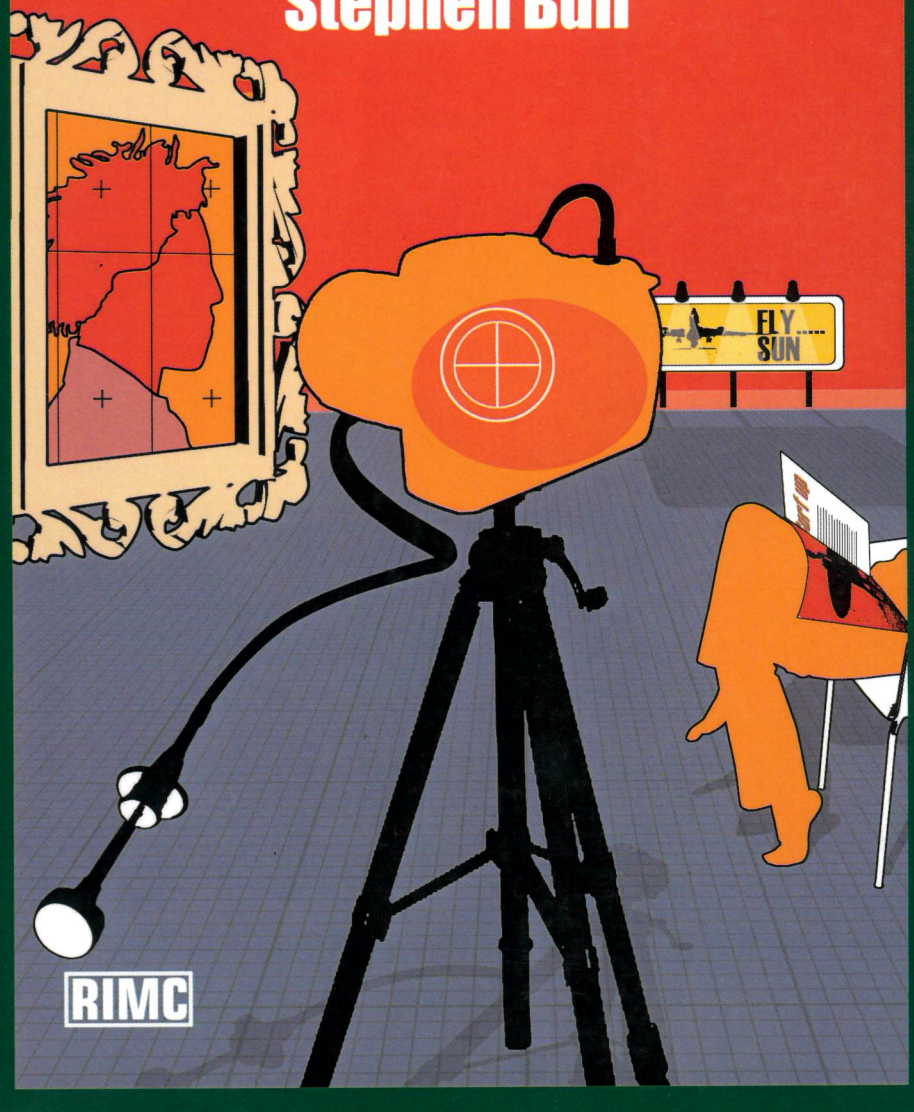

to take up France's Bertillon-style technique of full-face and profile images for photographing criminals (a technique that is still in place). Since 2005 these kinds of images have been made available to the public on the UK police force's *Most Wanted* web pages. To Peter Hamilton this style of photographic evidence continues and extends far beyond legal institutions, remaining 'the dominant metaphor for identity in the 21st century' (Hamilton 2001: 106). Sekula argued towards the end of the 20th century that the ideas evidenced in Galton's work continued to be central to debates about genetics (1989: 376). Sekula also noted that the emergence and development of institutions such as the police run parallel with the emergence and development of photography.

This is an argument expanded by Tagg, who has demonstrated that it is not just legal, but also medical and educational institutions that refined the use of photography as evidence in remarkably similar ways. Dr Hugh Diamond's 1850s photographs of inmates of the Surrey County Asylum, the pictures of children admitted to Dr Barnardo's 'Home for Destitute Lads' from the 1870s onwards, the anonymous images of convicts from Wandsworth Prison Records from the same era (at this point still showing the influence of painted portraits prior to their full 'Bertillonage' systematisation): all of these institutional and archival documents that were becoming elements of an increasingly ordered society during the 19th century connected their textual information with the same style of photographing their subjects (isolated, in a narrow space, brightly and evenly lit, sharply focused) (Tagg 1988c).

Tagg uses ideas from the French thinker Michel Foucault about how power and control permeates every part of society in order to analyse the way these images were used to survey and discipline the workforce of an increasingly industrialised society (whose members were required to be 'produced' as healthy, educated and law-abiding citizens) without the need for physical coercion (Tagg 1988c: 85–87; see also Chapter 3 and Green 1997). Foucault employed the Panopticon as a metaphor to describe such a society. The Panopticon was an 'ideal prison' (designed in the 19th century by the reformer Jeremy Bentham, who also first proposed the police force) where each prisoner was isolated in a narrow, brightly lit cell. Every cell was in a view of a tall central guard tower that had slatted windows so that the guards could see out, but the prisoners could not see in (Foucault 1977: 195–228). The Panopticon's potential for constant and unseen surveillance means that it is often employed as a metaphor for the society of surveillance in which many argue we now live.

The most visible means of this surveillance are closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras, which are prevalent in many cities: for example, in 2002 there was estimated to be one CCTV camera for every 14 people in

London (McCahill and Norri
frequently reproduced in new
is reported. Although, as Sara
as the crime has not been p
are often not visible (an early
the stills of two-year-old Jam
by the two older boys who the
has argued that the very look
– has come to connote 'guilt
images from social networkin
crimes are often reproduced in newspaper articles, with similar connotations (see Chapter 5).)

The aerial view has been a part of photographic evidence since Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon) took pictures of Paris from a hot air balloon in the 1850s (Martin 1983; Rosenblum 1997: 245–247). In the 21st century, *Google Earth* provides another apparent 'democracy of the image', not for everyone to have a portrait made so that they can be looked at, but for everyone to look upon the entire world in great detail via a patchwork of satellite photographs (see Mitchell 1992: 57) and details at ground level via the controversially revealing *Street View* application. Or almost the entire world: some governments have requested that certain areas of their country remain pixelated from view (Ritchin 2009: 123). This precise mapping of the world recalls the Enlightenment-era origins of photography discussed in Chapter 2.

CLASSIFICATION BY OBSERVATION: ANTHROPOLOGY AND COLONIALISM

The same Enlightenment-era beliefs in progress, order and classification that led to the development of eugenics and evolutionary theory in the Western world also inspired the creation of encyclopaedias. The original vast *Encyclopaedia*, published between 1751 and 1772, comprised 17 volumes of text and a further 12 volumes of illustrations which, as Hamilton argues, indicates the importance of images as a method of conveying information (Hamilton 2001: 58–59). Encyclopaedias were a way to bring together knowledge based on observation and recording: once things were observed and recorded they could be put into some kind of order and classified. In the 1830s, just as photography was becoming public, Auguste Comte developed the philosophy of positivism, the central idea of which is that facts about the world can be gained through unbiased observation (see Robins 1995: 33–34; Slater 1997a: 96–99; see also Chapter 2). Positivism exerted a huge influence on the development

of sciences, including the social science of anthropology (the study of humankind).

With its links to science and nature and its perceived indexicality (see Chapter 2), photography, coupled with positivism, began to be used as an observational and recording tool for anthropology as the West explored and documented 'the rest of the world' (Hamilton 2001: 85). This exploration included colonising countries such as Africa and India as the British Empire – and the empires of other European countries – expanded (Edwards 1997). In Britain, the Royal Anthropological Institute, another institution that emerged at around the same time as photography, began to establish guidelines about how to create photographic evidence of the people, places and objects that were being observed. While there were some variations in technique, the conventions encouraged are remarkably similar to those that Tagg identifies within medical, educational and legal institutions. Elizabeth Edwards, a writer at the forefront of studies on photography and anthropology, notes how people were photographed one by one, isolated in bright and evenly lit shallow spaces (Edwards 1997: 56).

The two pioneers of this kind of anthropological photographic classification were J H Lamprey and T H Huxley. As well as full face and profile images, their guidelines advocated the full-length study of the body, which they recommended should be naked (a style that has been linked to the type of illustrations found in encyclopaedias; see Spencer 1992). In the late 1860s, Lamprey devised a system where subjects were photographed in front of a portable frame of silk threads forming a grid of two-inch squares, allowing for the comparison of measurements across subjects, while at around the same time Huxley recommended the use of measuring rods against which subjects were positioned (Edwards 1997; Hamilton 2001). Placed within a system of images, these photographs could be made to function as individual types representing the whole, allowing for comparisons across races. As Hamilton notes, what was considered 'superior' (the look and shape of the Western European face and body) was compared with what was considered 'inferior' (the look and shape of any other type of face and body) in order to legitimate colonialism and social Darwinist evolutionary theory (2001: 84–93).

Edwards applies the idea of the exotic 'Other' to this issue: where what is different (or Other) is an object of both anxiety and desire, used to justify the 'normality' of what is not Other (an idea that has also been analysed in detail by Edward Said) (Edwards 1997; see also Said 1991 and Chapter 3). Photography plays a key role in providing 'evidence' of this in what are of course highly staged, performative photographs: for example, the nakedness of the subjects could be read as connoting an uncivilised 'savage' compared to the civilised clothed Westerner (Edwards 1992, 2001). Christopher Pinney has argued that it is not just the strict guidelines for making anthropological photographs that authenticates them as evidence (their meanings fixed by their positioning within the image and text system of the archive), but also the perceived technological superiority of the camera apparatus itself (Pinney 1992). The era of anthropological and colonial certainty, from approximately the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, coincides with an era of photographic certainty. Pinney argues that uncertainty about photographs of anthropological origin emerged when they were removed from their meaning-fixing position within archives and became the object of much critical analysis during the final decades of the 20th century – coinciding with an era of postmodern questioning of the reality of the photograph (Charity et al 1995; Edwards 1992; Pinney 1992). Edwards has consistently emphasised that while anthropological photographs are still images meant to record facts, meanings move around them and shift over time: they are active, unfixed images, not passive bearers of fixed, anthropological evidence (Edwards 1992: 3–17; Edwards 2001; see also Chapter 2). As Edwards and Pinney's arguments make clear, the perception of anthropological photographs as evidence has altered as the belief in the reliability of photographic documents in general has changed.

OBJECTIVE FICTIONS: DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY AND PHOTOJOURNALISM

Although the term 'documentary' was occasionally used before the 1920s (see Winston 1995: 8–10), it was not yet in wide circulation when photographers such as Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine were making the images that are regarded as some of the most well-known precursors to documentary photography. Riis, a pioneer of flash photography, and Hine, a sociologist who took up the camera to record child and immigrant labour, illuminated the poor conditions of workers in America in the late 19th century and early 20th century respectively (Marien 2006: 202–208). The books they published of their photographs were an attempt at social reform and led to some improvements in the situations they recorded. It is this kind of social documentation that first came to be closely linked with the term 'documentary'. As the previous sections in this chapter have suggested – and as Martha Rosler, Abigail Solomon-Godeau and Ian Walker have all pointed out – the word 'document' was believed to be applicable to most photographs up until the early 20th century. When Eugéne Atget (another perceived precursor of documentary photography, who meticulously photographed Paris for over 30 years until his death in

1927) described his pictures as 'simply documents I make', he was articulating a view of photographs as being 'objective' that was dominant at the time (Nesbit 1992: 1; Walker 2002: 21–22). It was only after some practitioners began to successfully establish photography as an art form that there was a need to define which images were based on 'objective' reality (documentary) and which were instead the creations of an artist's 'subjective' sensibility (art) (Rosler 2003; Sekula 1982; Solomon-Godeau 1991b; Walker 2002: 21–23; see also Chapter 7).

The concept of documentary is therefore historically specific. The word and its associated ideas largely derive from the filmmaker John Grierson, who in 1926 described a film by Robert Flaherty as having 'documentary value' (see Solomon-Godeau 1991b: 299–300n; Wells 1999: 213). Like Grierson, Flaherty made films about the lives of real people, including *Man of Aran* (1934) based on a family struggling to survive the harsh conditions on the west coast of Ireland. Flaherty also used a high degree of fiction, construction and staging; for example, the family members in *Man of Aran* were not actually related and many scenes were performed specifically for the camera (see Wells 1999: 217–219; Winston 1995: 19–23). Nevertheless, the idea of objectively recording people living very different lives to those of the film's viewers, and especially lives that are difficult and which might raise the moral concern of the audience, became embedded in the idea of documentary film and was carried over to the term's use in photography (later being retrospectively conferred onto the work of Riis and Hine in seminal histories of photography, such as Newhall 1964; see also Bull 2003). Yet both Rosler and Solomon-Godeau have argued, from a point-of-view clearly informed by Marxism, that this kind of 'concerned' documentary labours under the idea that social reform will make a fundamental difference to society by raising consciousness of issues, without taking into account that a capitalist system requires the exploitation of workers and a hierarchy of wealth to function (Rosler 2003: 262; Solomon-Godeau 1991b: 179).

What is arguably the definitive concerned documentary photography project took place in 1930s America during an era when the US capitalist system seemed on the verge of collapse. At a time of droughts and economic depression, the government-led Farm Security Adminstration (FSA) commissioned a team of photographers including Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange to record the plight of the starving farmers, many of which had left their farms to search for work. Evans' images of farming families and the austere conditions in which they lived (such as the corner of a barely furnished farmhouse kitchen taken in Hale County, Alabama during 1936 (see also Chapter 7)) and Lange's famous photograph of a worried but stoic woman still looking after her children (a picture usually known as the *Migrant Mother*, see Lange 1996; Price and Wells 2009: 38–49), have come to represent not just the FSA but concerned documentary photography in general. It is important to note that at the time, however, the names of the photographers were irrelevant to the audience, reinforcing the idea of objectivity. Only later, as discussed below, did the photographers' subjective viewpoints become recognised as significant.

Many of the FSA photographs were published in widely read newspapers and magazines to raise awareness of what was happening. Mary Panzer has traced the development of photography in newspapers and magazines where, from the first reproduction of an actual photograph in 1880 to the boom in photo magazines from the 1920s to the 1960s, photographs were prioritised and appeared along with text, applying the principle of montage (see Chapter 3) to tell 'objective' stories about 'things as they are' (Panzer 2006: 8–33). In Europe *VU*, *Münchner Illustriete Presse* and *Berliner Illustriete Zeitung,* in Britain *Picture Post* and *The Sunday Times Magazine* and in America *Life* (along with many other photo magazines across the world) helped to establish and consolidate the principles of photojournalism during this period (Hall 1979; Hopkinson 1970; Panzer 2006; Rosenblum 1997: 462–479).

Initially, newspapers and photo magazines would commission photographers to work for them, and it is important to remember the impact of editorial control over photographers' commissioned work and the wider ideological context in which these magazines were produced (*Picture Post*, for instance, was primarily created by its editor Stefan Lorant as a form of pro-British propaganda in the run up to the Second World War). However, clashes between editorial policy and the use of photographs led to many photographers resigning from their roles as staff photographers and seeking greater independence (Capa 1989; Rosenblum 1997: 485).

During the middle years of the 20th century, freelance photographers such as Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson strived for such a freedom, travelling the world and getting close to the action using new smaller and faster cameras such as the Leica (Rosenblum 1997: 480–191). Capa's pictures from the D-Day Landings and Spanish Civil War show his close proximity to the fighting, especially in images such as that of a falling Spanish loyalist soldier (published in magazines including *VU* and *Life*) who was apparently shot dead in front of him. Cartier-Bresson defined the act of street documentary and coined the term 'the decisive moment', where an action, gesture or expression is caught in a perfectly composed photograph (see Chapter 2); his approach, like other street photographers

of the mid-20th century, was also influenced by the Surrealist idea of 'chance encounters' in the city street (Durden 1999; Scott 2007: 162–194; Walker 2002: 168–187; see also Chapter 3).

Sometimes these 'chance encounters' have proven to be less than random. Images by photographers such as the similarly Surrealism-influenced Bill Brandt, the street photographer Robert Doisneau and the extraordinary tabloid photojournalist Weegee (Arthur Fellig) have been revealed to be set-ups with fictionalised elements (Barth 2000: 26–28; Thomas 2006: 126–128). There has also been much debate about whether Capa's famous photograph actually depicts the soldier being shot (see for example Brothers 1997: 178–185; Koetzle 2002: 18–27; Sontag 2004: 29–30; Taylor 1998: 58–59). Many of the supposedly 'objective' images made within the discourse of documentary are in fact highly constructed fictions. The peak of such fictional photojournalism may have been reached in the 21st century with a new breed of freelance reportage photographers who work within virtual worlds such as *Second Life*, photographing entirely digital people and places in entirely digital images (see Ritchin 2009: 144).

The American philosopher and semiotician John Deely has made the distinction between things, objects and signs (Deely 1994) – distinctions that are useful for the analysis of objectivity and subjectivity in photography. 'Things', in Deely's terms, exist in nature without the need to be experienced by humans, whereas 'objects' – to be objects – are things that are, as he refers to it, 'dosed' with human experience. When these objects are used in processes of signification (when they are photographed, for example) they become signs (see Chapter 3). To Deely, then, 'objectivity' must be redefined: it is not – as it is commonly understood – some kind of unbiased point-of-view, but is instead already a viewpoint on the world determined by human experience of objects. Deely's distinctions suggest that the idea of presenting 'things as they are' – without human intervention – via photographs is impossible. We can never apprehend 'things' because, as soon as we do so, they become 'objects' of our experience. Equally, 'subjectivity' is also called into question by Deely's ideas. Because he argues that the interpretation of all objects is affected by human experience in general, a subjective view of the world can consist only in what is an individual variation of a more general objectivity. According to Deely's argument, the differences between objectivity and subjectivity become almost irrelevant. In the next section, ideas of subjectivity are further debated in relation to documentary photography.

SUBJECTIVE FACTS: DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE PHOTOBOOK AND GALLERY

Walker has argued that, whereas American documentary photography such as the FSA was seen as state-sponsored and objective, from the 1930s onwards an increasing idea of the subjective expression of individual convictions through photographs was combined with the observation of reality that had developed in European documentary photography (Walker 2002: 22). Emblematic of this freedom from editorial control and the increasing emphasis on supposedly subjective, individual viewpoints on topics was the formation in 1947 of Magnum, a co-operative photo agency where all members retain control of how their images are used (Capa and Cartier-Bresson were two of the agency's founders, and pioneers of the photo essay such as W Eugene Smith soon joined) (see also Chapter 3). However, as Deely's ideas suggest, this idea of individual viewpoints in documentary photographs suggests a potential problem. Grierson himself defined documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality' – but Brian Winston has wondered just what is left of 'actuality' after it has been treated creatively (1995: 11). In answer to this, Walker proposes that the documentary photograph combines construction with indexicality: positioning the documentary photograph as a kind of subjective fact (Walker 2002: 8–29). Catherine Belsey has defined the term 'expressive realism' as one which describes works in any medium that 'tell truths – about the period that produced them, about the world in general or about human nature – and that in doing so . . . express the particular perceptions, the individual insights of their authors' (Belsey 1980: 2). Victor Burgin has argued that this idea of expressive realism underpins a great deal of visual practice in the Western world, 'and it is nowhere stronger than when it is legitimating documentary photography' (Burgin 1986b: 157).

Documentary photographers came to increasingly acknowledge and exploit this idea of presenting subjective facts in their photographs (Westerbeck 1998), and the single-authored book (or 'photobook') became one of the key vehicles for their opinions. When Robert Frank toured America in the 1950s making photographs along the way for his book *The Americans*, originally published in 1958/9, he deliberately set out to discover and present his own point-of-view on the country (see Ferguson 2001: 9–11; Mitchell 2005; Weski 2003: 24–25). With its subtle, rhythmic ordering of images and recurring motifs, Frank's book was a cynical and celebratory 'poem' in photographs – and hugely influential on future generations of photographers who were to convey their subjective viewpoints in projects on specific subjects (Parr and Badger 2004: 232–239).