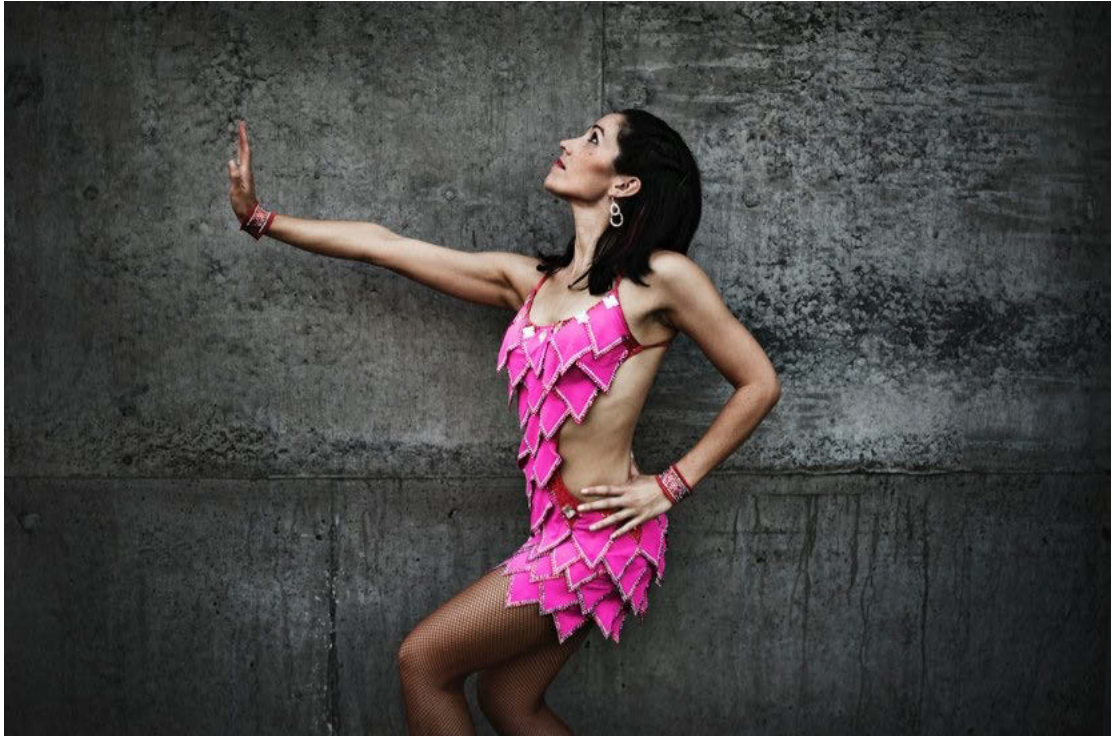C03012v3 Master of Design (Research)

Research Topic:

8 Stories: A New Language in Portrait Photography Using Video and Sound as a Platform/Framework.

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Acknowledgements

Karen's daughter, still doesn't understand why I would want to go back to school, since it's so much work.

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Abstract

Still photography has evolved into a new discipline of storytelling. Media platforms have become easily accessible and layered and an editorial photographer's strength must now include structuring a story with skill, and with multiple devices. The aptitude for mastering software has replaced the skill of understanding light, color temperature, and film emulsions. Traditional skills focus on capture rather than retouching and enhancement. Prioritizing capture amplifies the connection to the subject; prioritizing retouching or post-production creates a veneer. If all the tools are new with increasing ease at which we can extend and modify our photographs, how is the process of changing one's self as a photographer to be approached?

Eight Stories examines the styles and photographic techniques of six artists. Diane Arbus and her obsession with her subjects; Andy Warhol's view of life as art, Alfred Hitchcock's beliefs in dramatic economy, Jean Cocteau's poetic love of beauty, Chris Marker's exploration of memory and time, and Shirin Neshat's explorations in social justice. Using their work as a platform, *Eight Stories* explores a method of merging media from analogue photography to digital formats as a method of storytelling, illustrating the development of a new digital voice in portraiture.

Introduction

When you have a camera and photograph for many years, you begin in one place and end up in another. I know this well because I have made my living photographing as a commercial artist for thirty years. Although a simple process, working photographers intuitively travel to where their art evolves. In other words photographers go to where the assignments are. The art of photography is propelled by emotional and intellectual wanderings. In their creative travelings, the photographer is the passenger.

I fell in love with photography when I was in my twenty-third year. It was during that time that I soon learned that I was adept at photographing people. Whenever I got the chance, I pulled interesting people aside and photographed them with a twin reflex medium format camera. I was working for a family portrait company in New York State at the time. I had a portable studio which was set up at different urban or country locations every weekend. I did this for three years.

I took photographs for a company that would rent space in malls, hotels, or other commercial spaces and advertise a very inexpensive family portrait offer. I would arrive on the advertised date, often with another photographer. Oddly, people would magically arrive, ranging in status from poor to middle class families and couples. We could be in a country town, a city suburb, or a very tough section of New York City. People tended to arrive at the same time. Over a three-day period I would have a lot of free time with which to take my own photographs. I began bringing my own black and white film to these sessions. In my free time, I would approach interesting characters, people who came for their commercial portrait, and ask if I could take my own personal photograph. At these photographic shoots I had studio lighting with umbrellas as sources, a textured canvas background, and an acceptable Japanese camera. The film was often processed in my bathroom where the film rolls hung to dry. I printed the portraits on fine art paper at a friend's studio. What fascinated me about this exercise was how pleased people were to be asked, how much they enjoyed themselves, and what was revealed in these portraits that I had not noticed

before. A few of them were, and are, very beautiful. I loved what I could create from casting almost anyone. My friends were amused and often very interested.

So why wouldn't I stop? Back in that time, needing the money was, for me, the wrong answer. What was the meaning of exercising my art of photography if I did? Although there was a lot of money to be made in photography in 1979, I knew I could make more doing something else. It just happened that I loved this process.

In my time, the essence of photography was to see what there was in the world, examine what I saw, and express it. The detail was shown through examination. The consideration was about learning. The art was, and is, about study. It was as though the use of the camera provided me with some knowledge, some truth, some interesting connections, dreams, stories, and curiously, nostalgia. These were often happy and personal associations.

I then moved to New York City. I travelled to the American West to photograph on the plains and in the desert. In the city, I assisted photographers. While working for the fashion photographer George Holz, and the celebrity photographer William Coupon, I was also in the New York City assistants circuit. Some days I would work for Carel Fonteyne from Belgium, other days I would work for Annie Leibovitz, Joyce Ravid, or Benno Friedman. I did a four-month stint with the rock photographer Lynn Goldsmith during that period.

My life was a time of celebrities, travel, and interesting locations. I came to Sydney for a brief trip and photographed the musician Jimmy Barnes for *Rolling Stone Magazine*. There was so much to witness during this time between my roles as suburban portrait photographer, New York City assistant, and emerging editorial photographer. As a professional portrait photographer, I moved to Sydney in 1988. There came a time when I had more technical skill. I could be very close to knowing the outcome while having a strong sensation when I achieved, or acquired the image I wanted. My achievement was in developing an analogue precision to my style. This style was not too exact but embraced

some flaws and surprises; yet the structure was attained and the message was communicated. That was in my forty-first year or eighteen years later. Before then I had produced some very well received photographs and photographic series', but I remember when the time arrived that I had developed my skills to the level where I could focus on my subject, and my

Fig.1 *Circus Oz Cellist*. **Photo: Jim Rolon 1997**

message, more than ever. At that time, I had executed a series of portraits of the circus performers in *Circus Oz* (collection: National Library Australia;

Figure 1). As I photographed, the skill that I had acquired became apparent to me. The photographic process felt seamless.

Also at that time, I wanted to photograph and emphasize stories from society in my work. While I was learning how to do this, to communicate as deeply as I could while working to extend my capabilities, various artists of the seventies and eighties became major influences in my work. Diane Arbus was deemed a master in expressing real life on the fringe. She had the ability to make celebrities appear marginal rather than glamorous. Peter and Terry Morello printed Andy Warhol's black and white photographs, and I went to special screenings of Alfred Hitchcock and Kenneth Anger with David Wald, my video editor roommate. In 1983, I purchased a secondhand hardback monograph of *Portraits*, by Richard Avedon for ten dollars at a flea market in lower Manhattan.[1] It could be the most sublime collection of portraits I own. The images show a connective human essence and a skill of photographing that I have kept in mind throughout my photographic career. These images are created with a sensitive use of lenses, choice in depth of field, and of film, soft light source, and great printing. This collection affected me greatly. This was the fabric into which my naive spirit was stitched.

In 1979 I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from Marlboro College, in Vermont; an alternative school of two hundred students on three hundred and fifty acres of hills and forest. Between 1979 and 1983, I worked as a free-lance family portrait photographer in the New York City/New Jersey area. After moving into Manhattan, during the six years from 1983 to 1988, I worked and travelled as a camera and studio/location first assistant to very well known photographers. I began working as a published photographer in 1986 while still assisting photographers. Since then I have continued working on advertising, editorial and special projects in Australia and abroad, from 1986 through to 2011 the main thrust of my working life has been of taking portraits on location for publication. I studied briefly at the New School for Social Research in New York, and won design and advertising awards in Australia and Cannes. My method of

storytelling and photography - as a discipline and art - has been converging into a new means of communication.

This work, entitled 8 Stories, is made up of two components. The creative component is a series of eight merged media biographic portrait pieces. Essentially, still photographs are merged with, or dropped into, a video platform to amplify the photograph's message. The autobiographic written component, the exegesis, is an exploration of the process, context, and achieved outcomes through this practice.

I tell stories to remember the past, or at least to keep from forgetting it. Stories entertain and connect us. Photography has lost its narrative promise. Our way of connecting through audio or visual communication rapidly continues to merge and evolve as personal connection becomes more virtual through digital environments. Human interaction is storytelling and without our stories, imagined, told, or felt, there are no lasting connections. There is a loss of empathy. We forget.

As a photographer, pictures were my language. Eye contact with my subject, and words, provided me with a subject to illustrate. The digital machine has been effecting these processes and the change has been sobering for a person who connects by visually recording life. Facebook, a utility which connects people with others who may or may not be friends (but appear to be), recently purchased Instagram, the photo-sharing service, for $1 billion.[2]

While increasingly more photographs are being controlled by fewer entities (i.e. photo libraries such as the very large Getty Images), there is a new standard of continuously increasing existing archives from which to view and purchase images. I have seen this through my professional experience as an advertising location photographer (of people). Advertising layouts were once presented to clients as drawings. This process helped to make the production unique. The layout illustrated a concept yet to be realized or produced. The artists, photographers, illustrators and directors, would be commissioned to interpret

the concept. Now layouts use temporary pictures as samples. Clients now often ask the agency to quote a fee to use the temp stock agency photograph for the campaign, to save production costs; hence a reliance on archives. While personal pictures are just one aspect of our lives which many people share through social media, the internet is now so flooded with photographs that finding a well done image is now commonplace. Advanced digital processing and retouching software enables more refined photographic techniques in amateurs yet creates a disconnection with the recorded event by professionals. I do experience this in my work. The temptation to not immerse yourself, as the communicator and artist, in a heartfelt connection with your subject is very great, due to the many corrective aspects of new technology which enable efficient quickness in production. What I end up with is less, or more, than my intention. The change has been severe. Photographs are treated with decreased import on the web and are valued as mere items. Photographers, previously viewed as artists, due to the demand for unique images based on experience or hard earned in-camera skills, are increasingly viewed now as commodities dependent on the latest software.

During the recent history of photography, this occurrence has taken place, in shortening increments - in a decade - too quick for even a pre-bankrupt Kodak to consider a deal with Instagram.

> *The application's filters that convert pictures to look like snapshots from yesteryear were inspired by classic Brownies and Instamatics and disposable point-and-shoots...So why was a small start-up with only 13 employees able to build Instagram while a company like Eastman Kodak, which recently filed for bankruptcy protection was not? [...] Michael Hawley, who is on Kodak's board, said the answer could be summed up in one word: culture* (*New York Times,* 2012).[3]

With continuous new startup initiatives and the growing reach of the digital machine, where do artists go? How will this different, and new, media environment accommodate the traditional rules of photography? What happens to the art of telling a story in the changing photographic landscape? What now entertains a digital savvy audience? In this 21st century environment, it is a

surety that even new concepts will be in production at an accelerated rate. According to the Artefact Group,

> *Camera Futura envisions the future of digital photography. It proposes a platform that leverages the best of the DSLR and the mobile device worlds. It is a new architecture that combines the lens and sensor together into one wireless unit. Dedicated apps built around a mobile software platform facilitate taking the "perfect picture" without an advanced degree in photography...Camera Futura is an entirely different beast and reveals its true potential, by using the hardware architecture that we have christened "WVIL", meaning "Wireless Viewfinder, Interchangeable Lens"...*[4] (Artefact Group, 2012)

The "WVIL" camera does not yet exist and is only a concept. Within its design parameters, this camera creates images in RAW (unprocessed digital negatives) with a thirty-one megapixel full size sensor located in each lens (albeit with a camera possessing an excellent color processor, I had produced an international advertising campaign for HSBC Bank on a twelve megapixel DX sensor in 2008). It can work with more than one lens at a time. It also shoots in High Definition video. It works on a mobile phone platform and it connects to the internet. Photographs can be altered and retouched on the camera's LCD screen. This tool would decisively change the way even a professional would approach photographic communication. The technology for this concept camera, however, now exists.

If all the tools are new, and if the ease at which we can extend and modify our photographs are rapidly evolving (through the use of programmed slide shows, for example, with sound, or through the mix of still photographs and video), how is the process of changing, or becoming, or reinventing one's self as a photographer to be approached?

It took me nine years of training, practice, study, and assisting major photographers to become an independent published photographer. That second part of my career lasted, to date, twenty-five years. I am now in a very different creative landscape. For me, this research is another beginning.

While I have conducted this research to develop a strong understanding of visual digital media in an ever changing environment, my intent is to discover the sort of communication the art of photography, for me and other photographers like me, will become. In the environment of New Media, digital elements may have certain qualities identified with older sources of reproduction. The characteristic accuracy of the digital realm however remains a temptation during production. But what is there in the real (breathing) world that is predicated by stand alone precision? In her novel, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Jennifer Egan's character, Bennie laments what has happened to art in the digital age:[5]

> *He listened for muddiness, the sense of actual musicians playing actual instruments in an actual room. Nowadays that quality (if it existed at all) was usually an effect of analogue signaling rather than bona fide tape...Too clear, too clean. The problem was* ***digitization***, *which sucked the life out of everything that got smeared through its microscopic mesh. Film, photography, music: dead.* ***An aesthetic holocaust!***
> (Egan, 2010, p.22)

Now more than ever, I feel that just because I do not have a camera in my hand doesn't mean I'm not photographing. And with all the current technological means of recording and expression which most people carry with them (mobile phones with cameras and digital sound recorders all in one with the capability to text or email songs, sound, video, or photographs; small laptops connected by satellite or wifi which can do just as much), the ability to tell a meaningful story should be the skill to appreciate most as we constantly master each new advance in technology.

As an artist my point of focus is to evolve my skills into a multi digital media language well suited to the way information in general is currently exchanged. It is my intention that my experience of taking photographs for thirty years will be channelled through digital applications and expanded into what will be my new personal visual language.

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The process of photographing a person involved an initial idea, a casting if the portrait was to illustrate a concept, a choice of location which supported the original idea, the actual taking of the photograph, editing to choose an image, and lastly finishing the image for presentation. A portrait image captured a past moment to be viewed by an outside audience looking in. As an out of time audience experience, the photograph is often admired as an object of emotive communication, ugliness or beauty. Within this research, this task will be expanded.

With the current ability to easily access multiple media applications with our computers, the rapidly growing expectation in visual communication is for one to have the ability to apply many different types of media. This has never been a photographer's job. An aptitude for mastering software has replaced the skill of understanding light, colour temperature, and film emulsions. Software applies to many applications, the latter is image capture specific. The former applies a different way of seeing, visualizing and applying new possibilities to create different outcomes mixing different media. Roland Barthes view of the photograph as *that has been* (Barthes, 2000, p.77) has become more a concept of *what can I make it into*.[6]

The result of taking portrait photographs over and over again, for many years, was that I became it and it became me. I hold or use my cameras as easily as drinking from a glass. Visualization is as instinctual as listening. I look at a room and I am immediately aware of distance, of foreground and background. The compositional arrangement of objects within a space, even outside, within imagined boundaries, is visually taken in together with the quality of the light while, perhaps, appreciating the beauty of silhouettes of forms created by natural backlight. I am inclined to look at a face and search out the eyes, the facial structure (and what it means to me), while evaluating the relationships between the surface planes of the face, in relation to other surface planes in the immediate space of the person's environment. In my mind's eye, this all takes place very quickly in what has become a natural tendency. I assume that this

must have been the same experience for artists like Diane Arbus and Richard Avedon who greatly influenced my thinking and my work.

In various lectures given by the photographer Diane Arbus at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1970 to 1971 (and in recorded interviews), she talks throughout, in various statements, about what she had learned about her relationship to the photograph and her process of taking, or seeing pictures. "It was my teacher Lisette Model", she writes,

> *who finally made it clear to me that the more specific you are, the more general it'll be. You really have to face that thing. And there are certain evasions, certain nicenesses that I think you have to get rid of...The thing that's important to know is that you never know. You're always sort of feeling your way...One thing that struck me very early is that you don't put into a photograph what's going to come out. Or, vice versa, what comes out is not what you put in.[7]* (Arbus,1972, pp. 1-15)

Diane Arbus approached her photographic problem-solving with an admirable openness to her subject. Her view had more to do with emotion than technique, connection than observation. Having a narrative result which is a precise match to a photographer's intention is more an exercise of control. Accepting a better or worse result by being open to what occurs between photographer and subject is more of a connective process. In my thirty years experience, I know that I never knew how my subject was going to respond, nor what interactions would occur. I wanted to intellectually and emotionally connect with my process and adjust with each nuance of the portrait sitting.

As I gained more experience, maturity and photographic sophistication in my career, I lost interest in photographing celebrities and tended to focus on photographing equitability in human experience. I was interested in connecting with people from the viewpoint of our shared, or not so shared, perceptions of the actual. What I called the real world, as opposed to a world insulated by money and minders, interested me.

This research through practice, which is entitled *8 Stories*, is a series of 8 hybrid photography/video narratives with sound. *8 Stories* is a framework for still photographs that are modified by video. The video segments provide an in time extension of the portrait which should enable the viewer to experience, rather than only observe, the narrative portrait during these segments.

From Analogue Photography to Digital Communication

As a New York photographer who began to acquire creative independence and photograph professionally in 1986, I was of a generation who were very aware of the artists Arbus, Avedon and Warhol. The films of Alfred Hitchcock were constantly being shown in art house cinemas and discussed by my colleagues. On visits to the Museum of Modern Art during that time, I always sought out the work of Edward Weston, Irving Penn, Diane Arbus, and Richard Avedon. Weston's photographs were often referred to by the photographers I knew as a harbinger of fine high quality black and white large format photography. I felt an affinity for the work of Arbus and Avedon. Andy Warhol published *Interview Magazine,* which was a much sought after showcase for young photographers. In New York at that time his influence was everywhere. My understanding of my own artistic language was deliberately, intuitively and directly influenced by these artists. I decided for this reason to conduct this research being mindful of their influence..

In the process of writing and refining my proposal for this research I identified a number of other artists whose work became reference points for a reflection on my current and past practice, these include Jean Cocteau, Alfred Hitchcock, Chris Marker, and Shirin Neshat.

In the time of my apprenticeship to photographers and attendance at workshops during the 1980's, the photography of Edward Weston (b.1886) was my standard of reference for fine art black and white photographic perfection. The tonal quality of his images is what I attempted to achieve. I always viewed Richard Avedon's (b.1923) technique and his stylish work with awe. His deftness in capturing movement and personality with a large format film camera

was unique. Yet it was Diane Arbus' (b. 1923) vision, her affinity for expressing a meaning and poignancy in her images of people living on the fringe of society, with which I identified. As I mentioned earlier, the spirit of Andy Warhol (b.1928) permeated the 1980's New York world I inhabited during my early years as a photographer. In structuring this research to find a new voice as a digital artist, I needed to reference these artists as they are representative of my origins as a photographer. In other words, I wanted *8 Stories* to evolve as a process that sourced the hallmarks of the chosen artists: the carefully executed imagery of Weston, the skill in photographing people with great structure in storytelling of Avedon, the raw insight and pathos of Arbus, and the democratic approach to what constitutes insight and meaning of Warhol.

As the problem I intended to resolve was one of transitioning my work and my thinking from an analogue portrait photographer to a digital communicator justified in using additional mediums, I also determined to reference this research to experimental (at least in their time) videographers and filmmakers whose work could influence the refinement of my tasks. The task being the creation of digital work involving more than one medium to create my digital voice. Alfred Hitchcock (b.1889) was unsurpassed in dramatic economy. Jean Cocteau's (b.1889) obsession with the voice of the poet and the spirit as well as Chris Marker's (b.1921) experimental filming and structure would provide lessons in developing my in time narrative video skills.

Lastly, Shirin Neshat (b.1957), whose video work seemed to reference aspects of all the artists I have mentioned, represented a finishing point for the structural direction of this research.

An essence of Arbus and Warhol, some small visual element or particular way of thinking creatively, has always been evident in my work. I needed to reference these artists in the process of creating my new work because they were already embedded in my creative thought processes. Cocteau and Marker, with very different creative styles were artists who felt comfortable using, and mixing various media. They both examined one's perception of time

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and memory, as a concept. The comparison to their work has been based not only on their use of media, but on their different versions of what was poetic. Neshat's poetic revelations via her work struck me as a synthesis of these artist's motives. The path from Arbus to Neshat, via Warhol, Cocteau, Marker and Hitchcock, seemed clear.

If (human) society's basic element is a person, then each portrait reflects aspects of the society in which the subject lives. Although a basic concept, it is at the center of the approach to *8 Stories.* We are the interactive elements of a story which is always moving or changing. Each story will be an observation of why a person proceeds in the way that they do. This is perhaps best expressed by the photographer Edward Weston in his *Daybooks*, when he writes,

> *...that the camera should be used for a recording of life, for rendering the very substance and quintessence of the* **thing itself***, whether it be polished steel or palpitating flesh.*[8] (Weston, 1961, p.55)

Edward Weston's art exists "out of time". This project uses video as a framework and explores the use of "in time" media to modify the photograph. Sound is used as in time media. Having a beginning and an end is inherent of sound, whether ambient or expressive. The expected post-produced precision in digital media and software is an aspect of new technology this project will attempt to resist. In producing *8 Stories,* the point is the narrative, the subject of the portrait piece.

Merging or layering additional digital media with still portrait photographs to extend photographic portraits adds ways in which to feel a person's story. The additional enhancement of various media provides a brief sensation of the passage of time. Traditional approaches to photography are applied to the use of digital media. The tools, cameras, recorders, and software, although chosen for effect, are not central to the series as how to relearn to structure a story. How would Edward Weston, Richard Avedon, or Diane Arbus, photographers who come from a tradition of careful planning in the use of film formats,

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materials, and qualities of light in image capture, approach the portrait now in the current landscape of digital communication?

The traditional skills which created effective analogue photographs would enhance image making in the current digital sphere because these traditional skills focus on capture rather than retouching and enhancement. Prioritizing capture amplifies connection. Prioritizing retouching or post production creates veneer. The intent of this research is to explore another method in merging media from the starting point of developed skills in still photography.

Andy Warhol would have enjoyed the possibilities provided by digital media. He constantly looked for new possibilities and resolutions in his art. Danto, in *Andy Warhol*, writes:

> *Warhol revolutionized art as such. His decisions were always surprising, and if they did not especially make his work popular, they seem, in retrospect, to have been precisely in harmony with the spirit of his era.*[9] (Danto, 2009, p.48)

Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests*

During the 1980's, when we were all struggling artists living in lower Manhattan, my friends Peter and Terry Morello were Andy Warhol's black and white photography film processors and printers. I remember dropping in at their East 11th Street apartment and, immersed in the odors of stop bath and fixer, seeing Andy's images strewn around the main room, drying or piled on the table. Setting up a live/work studio in an old loft on Canal Street and Eldridge, a five minute bike ride away, I was a young photographer, as was Peter. Yet we - Peter, Terry, and I - shared that style of black and white photography which was evidently used in Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests*. It was a photographic technique that was characteristic of that time in New York. The style continued to survive from the 1960's through the 1980's.

Speaking recently with Terry (who is now the Vice-President of External Affairs at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), I asked about her impressions of Andy Warhol. Terry casually said that she thought that: "Andy Warhol may be the most important American Artist of the twentieth century [...] You know",

> he was always so positive and never demanding. Andy was always curious and he looked at things, especially the prints I brought him, with enlightenment; maybe a type of positive affirmation. If I tried to point out a particular problem in a print, he would respond with "Who cares? What difference does it make? I think it's great!" ... and then there was what he was doing creating an image of an image. It was almost like he could see what was coming in the future, what was going to happen in photography...[10]
> (Morello, 2011)

In viewing a large selection of *Andy Warhol, Motion Pictures,* first curated by Mary Lea Bandy at the Museum of Modern Art in 2003, the subjects look as if they are of this time although these *Stillies* (that is what they were called at *The Factory*) are shot in the 1960's.[11] Most of the people look as though they could have been pulled off the streets of Darlinghurst, East Sydney, Newtown, SoHo, Tribeca or Brooklyn during this century. The variations in the light sources seem to suggest that these are experiments, as do the change of backgrounds, the use of various movements or facial expressions with each different subject, the use of wardrobe and clothing, and the change or use of different film stocks. The films are shot at twenty-four frames per second yet are shown at sixteen frames per second to slow the movement.[12] They are truly tests or studies.

These *Stillies*, in style or in abstract, are not portraits but filmic studies. From a photographer's point of view, on screen, from screen test to screen test, there are no dramatic elements. An experiment of listening to the music of John Cage while viewing each piece, because this composer shares a similar affinity for creative possibilities as Warhol, which is a curiosity for chance discoveries, created drama to each film clip.[13]

The composer John Cage, as one of the most influential American composers of the 20th century, "would have argued that the act of listening was all that was

necessary for sound to become music. Cage aimed to remove his ego from the act of composition"(Ford, 2011, pp.125-127, p.2).[14] There are parallels to Andy Warhol creating an image of an image, or layering line and color on an existing image in much of his work. Visually, it is as different way of seeing as John Cage's work exists as a different way of listening. Cage believed that we should pay attention to everyday "sounds and appreciate them". He appreciated and composed aleatoric music in which one element or a number of elements in a composition is left to chance. He appreciated the musical concept of *Chance Operations* in which the will of the composer is removed from the performance (or lack of performance) of the musical piece. The *Stillies* seem to share this concept of chance.

Research into, or a search for, a new language to communicate photographic portrait stories must rely on chance happenings to be believably dramatic, and entertaining. Still photography, in and merged with, video segments, however, should be structured in such a way to provide effective story telling. They should be engaging, encompassing shades of light and dark, either visually or narratively, and have a beginning, a climax and an ending (perhaps as a novel; as a good read).

Alfred Hitchcock's economic or efficient style of structuring a thriller can be observed as an effective style of engaging an audience.

Alfred Hitchcock's Films as an Opposite Point of View
The film director Alfred Hitchcock was a storyteller of suspense and thrillers. He was a film maker skilled in seizing an audience's attention. Whereas chance, in the context of a work's structure, has been inherent in the work of Cage and Warhol, control of clarity in structure was vital to Hitchcock's storytelling. Hitchcock asserted that:

> *"I don't want to film a "slice of life" because people can get that at home, in the street, or even in front of the movie theatre* [...] *and I avoid out-and-out fantasy because people should be able to identify with the characters. Making a film means, first of all, to tell a*

story. That story should never be banal. It must be dramatic and human. What is drama, after all, but life with the dull bits cut out. The next factor is the technique of film-making, and in this connection, I am against virtuosity for its own sake. Technique should enrich the action...The beauty of image and movement, the rhythm and the effects---everything must be subordinated to the purpose.[15] (Truffaut,1983, p.103)

Hitchcock's concern was the pace and quality of the storytelling rather than unwavering plausibility. With Francois Truffaut he discussed the problem of "credibility" in film. He said:

Let's be logical if you're going to analyze everything in terms plausibility or credibility, then no fiction script can stand up to that approach, and you wind up doing a documentary [...]*To insist that a storyteller stick to the facts is just as ridiculous as to demand of a representative painter that he show objects accurately* [...]*There's quite a difference, you see, between the creation of a film and the making of a documentary. In the documentary the basic material has been created by God, whereas in the fiction film the director is the God…* (Truffaut, 1983, p.102)

The film sequence from *North By Northwest* in which Cary Grant is chased and attacked by a crop duster plane through cornfields is one of the most well known clips in the history of modern film, even in its lack of realistic credibility.[16] This scene is filmed as a sort of absurd abstract to indicate a man "put on the spot" with nowhere to go. The sequence is gratuitous, and extremely dramatic. Hitchcock's view of the film director as God, in the context of a film's creation, is not unlike what has become of digital photography with the endless options in retouching. Not that there is anything new about the concept God as Artist which is also emphasized in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*:

...“God, we were lucky,” he said. “How lucky can you get?”
I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and -
potence, I'm making no claims at present, but I can manage this much, I hope.
Chamcha willed it and Farisha did what was willed.
Which was the miracle worker?
Of what type - angelic, satanic - was Farisha's song?
Who am I?
Let's put it this way: who has the best tunes?[17] (Rushdie, 1992, p.10)

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Nor was there anything new, in respect to the past eighty years, in mixing media. *Lulu*, Alban Berg's final opera, was begun in Vienna in 1929. The second act consisted of a short film:

> *Lulu is a three-act opera, but it is also a work of two halves, and dramatically these halves mirror each other, hence the three husbands of the first half playing the three clients of the second. The centre of the opera is marked by a hectic orchestral interlude, lasting just two and a half minutes, during which Berg envisaged the showing of a film depicting the events of Lulu's trial and imprisonment for Dr Schon's murder, her transfer to the cholera ward and her escape, stage-managed by Countess Geschwitz.[18]* (Ford, 2011, pp.84-89)

While hardly an expert of twelve tone composition of the 1930's, my reading about *Lulu* caused me to realize that the use of various media to extend a story is an effective means of engaging an audience with a great story; yet this undertaking is hollow of itself. A visual artist, or commercial artist, must live his subject. The photographer must think, research, understand and attempt to connect. Photographers who are in the business of storytelling are losing this ability.

What has changed is the way in which we expect our truths and our stories to be told. With abbreviated media everywhere in our lives, newspapers, magazines, iPods, iPads, laptops, screens and televisions (in shopping malls, shops, banks, pubs, outdoor advertising) cause us habitual impatience in getting the message. Alfred Hitchcock asks,

> *Why has it become old fashioned to tell a story, to use a plot?...*

> *Francois Truffaut: Well, it isn't systematic, it's simply a trend that reflects the evolution of the public, the impact of television, and the increasing use of documentary and press materials in the entertainment field. All of these factors have a bearing on the current attitude toward fiction; people seem to be rather leery of old patterns.*

> *Alfred Hitchcock: In other words, the trend away from the plot is due to the progress in communications? Well, that's possible. I feel that way myself, and nowadays, I'd prefer to build a film around a situation rather than a plot.* (Truffaut, 1983, p.203)

Responding to the chance happenings of real life, a photographer structures, in his way, an out of time scene through various methods. Photographers have always been dependent on chance. It has been creatively necessary to be at peace with the unexpected. In the digital environment, photographers skilled in analogue are working very hard to pertain to, or be connected with, current modes of communication. After working a particular way for two or three decades, to become new, and affective, is a very deep and complicated exercise.

While this series includes "in time" sequences as framework, and while the still photographic portraits are less dependent on chance and not mere subjective constructs, *8 Stories* merges "in time" and "out of time", chance and control. Why? Because while it is historically and socially important to tell the truth, and real modern stories, with all the technological tools available, portraits need to be evocative, relevant and entertaining. The storyteller, for the sake of society, needs to provide "the best tunes". These tunes, as a consequence of digital media, should easily operate as a method which references the past. These tunes should be fluidly unified with media that creates an audience sensation of experiencing moments of being there in the narrative.These stories should be dramatic and engaging.

Chris Marker's Understanding of Remembering: Merging Stills with Moving Pictures While Exploring the Mind's Interpretation of Experience.
Sans Soleil and *La Jetee*, two films by post World War II French film director, photographer, writer, and essayist, Chris Marker, examine the relationship between subject and image in the context of time's arrow not necessarily being linear but forged in memory. Considered to be Marker's masterpiece, *Sans Soleil* is concerned with memory's perception of time promoted over place and historical chronology.[19] In *La Jetee,* the story travels in a full circle between the beginning and end of a series of episodes in a man's life, both of which take place at the occurrence of his death. For Marker, our ideas of past events are truer to the individual than sensations which are felt. One recalls the sensory idea, not the actual experience.

He wrote me: I will have spent my life trying to understand the function of remembering, which is not the opposite of forgetting, but rather its lining. We do not remember, we rewrite memory much as history is rewritten. How can one remember thirst? (*Sans Soleil* narration)

Sans Soleil is a film essay and a study of "loss, history, human community, and how our fragile subjectivity can acknowledge, represent, surrender, and survive these experiences".[20] Memory is information encoded, stored and retrieved by our minds. Our memories are the sum of the different experiences we have perceived, inserted into a personal running structured by our thinking processes and viewed by our mind's eye. The mind's ever - changing (*in time* structure) movie images are a construct of temporal stasis, like still photographs, and in time sequences of our perceived personal experience. These memories, which often jumble past and future, will often change with each viewing by the mind's eye as new and different concepts are applied by the wisdom in aging. In *Sans Soleil*, we are alone, and all together, in memory's always changing past, present and future.[21]

When people talk about their lives, they refer to their past as it pertains to their present or future, or the other way around. The direction in which the mind's lens is pointed is a personal decision, effected by one's perception as their story evolves with age, with time. The in time segments of *8 Stories* have traces of the themes found in *Sans Soleil*.

The film sorts, reorders and restructures experiences back together.[22] It references itself to Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo* and the story of coming to terms with extreme painful memories.[23] In Hitchcock's film, the protagonist Scotty attempts to relive his painful loss by revisiting, in his mind and in reality, the past by reconstructing the event: the past continues to exist in Scotty's present. Traveling through time abstractly provides his resolution.

He wrote me that only one film had been capable of portraying impossible memory--- insane memory: Alfred Hitchcock's Vertigo. *In the spiral of the titles he saw time covering a field ever wider as it moved away, a cyclone whose present moment contains, motionless, the eye.* (*Sans Soleil* narration)

Photographic essays that were very popular in the nineteen forties, fifties, and sixties, told stories with a series of *"That-has-been"* (Barthes, 2000, p.77) artful photographs which also served as reference.[24] Photographic time was always in the past. These essays recorded history. Carefully shot with drama and usually traditional in structure, these essays communicated to a mass audience. As illustrations, life's problems or happenings were to be easily understood in an entertaining manner. The best or most successful stories would be intended to "quicken the heart" with it's historical message. In their time, these photographic essays succeeded in satisfying an audience.

> *He spoke to me of Sei Shonagon, a lady in waiting to Princess Sadako at the beginning of the 11th century, in the Heian period... Shonagon had a passion for lists: the list of 'elegant things,' 'distressing things,' or even of 'things not worth doing.' One day she got the idea of drawing up a list of 'things that quicken the heart.' Not a bad criterion I realize when I'm filming; I bow to the economic miracle, but what I want to show you are the neighborhood celebrations.*
>
> That's how history advances, plugging its memory as one plugs one's ears.
> (*Sans Soleil* narration)

Yet, these post war photographic essays did present history as entertainment to be easily understood. It did not take very long to view the photographs and read the text. Executed and presented eloquently, a sensation was briefly communicated with the message blatantly imposed.

More intricate concepts for mass audiences, and the narrative solutions to perplexing problems, were left to the skills of film makers. The French director Jean Cocteau thought film a dream participated by all.[25]

> *A film is not the telling of a dream,* (he writes) *but a dream in which we all participate together through a kind of hypnosis, and the slightest breakdown in the mechanics of the dream wakens the dreamer, who loses interest in a sleep that is no longer his own.*
> (Cocteau, 1948, p.40)

Film, or photographing in time, is much better suited to examining abstract problems of life and death, or memory's perceptions of space, time and revelation. About his film *Orphee*, Cocteau wrote:[26]

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> *I wanted to deal with the problem of what is decreed in advance and what is not*
> *decreed in advance---in short, with free will...Realism in unreality is a constant pitfall.*
> *People can always tell me that this is possible, or that is impossible; but do we*
> *understand anything about the workings of fate? This is the mysterious mechanism*
> *that I have tried to make tangible...*
> (Cocteau, 1948, p.155)

Marker interprets *Orphee* "as a map of an interior world" that is as palpable as the real world.[27]

> *In this story, each word echoes from the other side of the wall, and without losing*
> *anything of its own architecture it builds at the same time an invisible itinerary where*
> *the adventures of the soul are found.* (In Lupton, 2005, Location 314.)

In retracing the steps of this discussion, it is important to refer to the motivations of the previous artists considered. While the photographer Edward Weston was concerned with capturing the "substance and quintessence of the **thing itself**" (Weston,1961, p.55)**,** and while Diane Arbus would believe that a photograph "has to be of something [...] And what it's of is always more remarkable than what it is" (Arbus, 1972, pp.1-15)[28] in an almost mystical way, knowing that the outcome of a portrait sitting was very conditional on chance, Andy Warhol's moving pictures were dependent on a different sort of chance: they were studies of chance movement in time. Their essence was a study without deep layers, or only layers projected by an audience. The artist was removed from the piece in a similar style to Cage's *Chance Operations.* This refusal to control outcomes created an experience rather than a story, or perhaps a story without a plot. In Weston and Arbus, a carefully crafted structure in casting and concept provided a clear narrative, even if the theme was, in respect to Weston, form. Weston, Arbus and, among others, Avedon, created drama in the beauty of structure in the photograph. Their photographs were, and are, viewed from a vantage point of being outside of the recorded event. The audience appreciated the craft of the piece without the ability to immerse themselves, or participate, in the experience. Film, as a very different medium, provided the opportunity for the audience to experience the illusion of

being a witness to the narrative in real time, with in time sequences. In this context, filmmakers have had the best tunes: a facility to layer in time sequences with out of time sequences in montage, with sound as storytelling pieces.

As in Hitchcock, a story could be told in a fast paced, economically dramatic manner which provided pure entertainment, much like the postwar photographic essays blatantly provided editorial out of time entertainment, but with audience immersion. In Hitchcock there was the beauty of carefully built sets and crafted scenes with every detail examined. A panning camera would provide the background for the audience before the beginning of important scenes, as in *Rear Window*.[29] The scene would be set and the drama would unfold.

Story telling as a revelation of life's meaning or as an enquiry into the deeper realities of our mind's perception, in space and time, were in the domain of Chris Marker. Placed between editorial, documentary and drama, sometimes contained in dreamlike sequences, Marker's work attempted to put on show deeper truths about physical existence. While Cocteau would explore our inner lives through fantasy, Marker adopted an approach firmly reasoned through the everyday world. Hitchcock's work is pure well-crafted entertainment; Marker's work delves into what it means to be alive, to experience, and to exist.

Legends are born out of the need to decipher the indecipherable. Memories must make do with their delirium, with their drift. A moment stopped would burn like a frame of film blocked before the furnace of the projector. Madness protects, as fever does. (Sans Soleil narration)

Experimenting with, and using the new portable sixteen millimeter cameras of the time, which facilitated an increasing photojournalistic style, Marker, as an essayist, examined, through individual lives, significance via the trivial and the probable even in fantasy; both with a strong or challenging point of view.

Sans Soleil is narrated by a recipient of letters sent by the fictional traveller and filmmaker Sandor Krasner. In English, the narrator is Alexandra Stewart (there is a different narrator for each different language version of the film) who reads

out references in the form of excerpts from letters which reflect on the imagery shown. The film represents stills and moving pictures taken over decades, and Krasner's "folklore of dreams" or wisdom in memory. For Krasner, his film challenges mortality. The film compares life in the Cape Verde Islands and mostly Japan as "extreme poles of survival".

Like *Sans Soleil*, *La Jetee* examines history through a vantage point of memory, or looking back from the future, but in the form of an apocalyptic fantasy. Early in the film's narration, the audience is confronted with a dark description of remembrances. The ominous statement that "nothing sorts out memories from ordinary moments; it is only later that they show themselves to us, on account of their scars" (*La Jetee* narration) sets the tone for the narrative.

It is the story of a soldier who witnesses his own death in his childhood. As the moment has taken place before the outbreak of World War III, the outcome of the story is shown in the first few minutes of the film. *La Jetee* is a film constructed by still photographs yet engages the audience as if it is a moving picture. Each well composed image builds a dark experience of watching the supposed German winners of the war torture prisoners underground, beneath the radioactive ruins of Paris, using dreamlike mind time-travel experiments. Happiness for the soldier is found in memories of a woman he saw at the airport, as a child, and as an adult love connection in his dreams during the experiments.

There is a link made between the woman in the film and the soldier's own death; the woman is a symbol of his mortality: the otherness of the opposite sex compared with the otherness, or opposite, of life, which is death. Roland Barthes' association of photographs with death is inferred. These experiments, in the context of the story, are designed to find help for the human race of the past from what can be offered in the future. While the use of still photographs as structure for a film can be deemed as unnatural as time travel via drug induced dreams, a strong aspect of *La Jetee* is the dreaming in memory, and how darkly beautiful human remembrance is illustrated and experienced. The imbedded

motif in the film is of the process of examining the experiences of the past from the present and an examination of the present from a future perspective.[30]

Although Cocteau's use of fictional narrative to examine history makes more use of a fairytale style in the make believe, parallels can be drawn to Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*. In *Orphee*, Cocteau examines the reality of postwar France, through a metaphorical and dreamy fictional narrative. Much of the filming takes place in bombed out ruins located outside Paris. References to the war are clear in the scenes where Orphee listens for coded messages via the car radio and in the scenes which include the uniformed motorcyclists wearing black, who are not unlike independent militia. While Orphee, a famous yet emotionally weak and middle-aged poet, who fears becoming irrelevant, may symbolically represent an aging Cocteau experiencing the same concerns at age sixty, the film is an examination of parallel worlds. There is the real; in the context of this film it is Orphee being replaced by a younger poet, or by time. The other world is of our soul, our fears, emotions, and memories, bundled together in a zone which exists in a dream time.[31]

> *In the film, there is no Death and no Angel. There can be none. Heurtebise is a young Death serving in one of the numerous suborders of Death, and the Princess is no more Death than an air hostess is an angel.*
>
> *I never touch on Dogmas. The region that I depict is a border on life, a no man's land where one hovers between life and death. The tribunal bears the same relationship to the supreme tribunal as the investigating magistrate to the trial. The Princess says: "Here, you go from one tribunal to the next."* (Cocteau, 1948, p.158)

Marker, as Cocteau, enjoyed examining the mind's mysteries, although in a less poetic manner. By examining the physical world through the imagined reality of our dreams, Cocteau is not so far from the younger Chris Marker's style of delving into our subjective awareness of dreams via a narration coupled with imagery.

During the time of *La Jetee* and *Sans Soleil* portable film cameras, which eventually could encompass synchronized sound, became accessible. Portable video cameras became available a decade later. The relative ease and portability of these cameras enabled independent film and documentary makers to work more independently, alone or with small crews. In time, the moving picture became increasingly affordable for the artist to produce.

Films and videos could be produced almost as independently as the work of still photographers. This evolution of the technology was embraced by Marker as filmmaker and essayist. Marker was becoming one of the pioneers of New Media. Having many vocations as a writer, novelist, editor, photographer, and filmmaker, Marker easily identified with merging platforms. In the context of this research, his passion for social justice, and Marker's fascination with comparing different cultures while examining the human condition from a context of history remembered, provided work which served as a roadmap or standard for *8 Stories*.

In the domain of storytelling in a current context of social justice in the Muslim world, the visual art of Shirin Neshat fits well into this discussion.

The Revelations of Shirin Neshat

Shirin Neshat, an Iranian visual artist based in New York City whose work examines Iranian culture, imbedded in dreamlike imagery or contrasting sequences, but with an essence of revelation, has worked in photography, video, and film. Born in Iran in 1957, she was sent to Los Angeles to study art in 1979. In that same year a revolution brought down the Shah's monarchy and she was unable to return to Iran until the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. The theocracy changed the Iranian life that she knew to another that was restructured into an Islamic state. This contrast, especially in how the lives of women were affected, provided Neshat with an emotional and deep compulsion to explore the radical shift which took place within her own culture.[32]

In Iran, upon her first visit, eleven years since she was sent away to school, in 1990, she witnessed:

> *Martyrs' fountains flowed with blood-colored water; women streamed down narrow streets...Images of women, rifles at their sides, flowers in their hair, from pictures that she had collected from newspapers during the Iran/Iraq war, were remembered as she watched the daily lives of women in her homeland, diametrically altered from the Iran she had known before. "Beautiful women," she said, of the earlier photojournalist samples, "wrapped in chadors, with **huge** machine guns in their hands. Brilliant, shocking, amazingly contradictory images." "They compelled me," she said of these photographs that inevitably shaped her reading of women on her visit to Iran, "to deeply investigate these ideas."* (Goldberg, 2002. p.66)

Neshat returned to New York after her stay in Iran of several months and began creating her visual work. She purchased guns and asked a photographer friend to photograph her covered in a black chador. Influenced by the film makers Hitchcock and Bunuel, she made romantically dramatic black and white photographs, many of which were offensive to Islam. She read avidly, with poetry, journalism and politics among her favorite subjects.

> *I remember ever since childhood growing up in Iran, I saw how text was always incorporated with decorative motifs, whether through pages in the Koran, miniature paintings, functional objects such as dishes, carpets, in architecture, jewelry, and other decorative materials.*[33] (Shirin Neshat in Danto, 2009, p.13)

Women of Allah, Neshat's series of black and white portraits executed between 1993 and 1997 was the result of her search for a voice to express the shock of experiencing an Islamic Iran. In this series, a poem would be used as the inspiration for a carefully constructed photograph. The same poem would then be hand-written in pen and ink in Farsi, in decorative calligraphy, on parts of the actual photograph. The written text was the "voice of the photograph", writes Neshat.

> *It breaks the silence of the still woman in the portrait.*
> (Shirin Neshat in Goldberg, 2002, p.67)

But in retrospect, Neshat found the series limiting. She believed that the photographs lacked ambiguity and the lyricism of poetry which had originally inspired the direction or creation of her work.

Ambiguity aside, the images are unique in their style and subject. The photographs are clear in their message. The Farsi calligraphy, even without translation, draws the viewer into an imagined conversation. The images exist as objects of beauty; the design elements created by the Farsi text reinforces the viewer's eye movement rather than taking away from what a photograph does. That is to communicate with a unique voice.

Shirin Neshat moved from still photography to video in 1997. Shooting in time provided an expansion of her ability to communicate her perceptions of contrasts: between the old Iran of her childhood and the current theocracy, between the experienced lives of men and women within modern Iran, and the contrast of the fixed image to the audience experience of time and space revolving around movement. Sound also provided poetic music and ambience.

> *I even surprised myself about how I left it cold, completely, just when it was taking off.*
> (Shirin Neshat in Goldberg, 2002, p.67)

In Iran, law forbids women to sing in public. *Turbulent* is a video installation from 1998 in which the audience stands in a space between two screens. In one screen a male singer, facing the viewer with his back to an all male audience, performs a love song with words from a thirteenth century Persian Muslim poet. In the other screen, as a confrontation of sorts, after waiting for the male singer to finish and take his bow, a female singer sings an original composition to an empty auditorium. On this screen the camera moves and revolves around the female singer. The camera never moves on the first screen while filming the male singer. The singers are recorded in close-ups reminiscent of Carl Theodore Dreyer's 1928 silent film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc.* These close-ups, along with the camera movement and music, communicate tension between the two screens with drama; Marker also appreciated the emotion revealed by the close-up:

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> *...in Marker's reading of* La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc *the object of revelation is indeed divine: the metaphysical struggle of the soul to attain grace through suffering and the confrontation with evil, incarnated in the physical play of expressions across the actress Renee Falconetti's face, "in the grain of the skin, the tear, the drool, the hair, the glint of the eye".[34]* (Lupton, 2005, Location 309)

While, in *Turbulent*, the male singer appears self - satisfied in traditional grace, the female singer clearly exemplifies suffering and passion in subversion. Although the close-ups are not extreme, the use of black, and the use of camera movement (or the lack of, coupled with the contrast of songs between the two screens), creates the impression of a close-up that is. There is an inference of evil in the contrast between the lives of men and women in Islam in the context of this work.

Moving to more recent work, *Beginning of the Cold Season* (2011), a video from a series representing change in current turbulent times, with each video representative of a season, reintroduces the use of Farsi over images as typography layered with video. The beauty in this series is in the revelation in the imagery. One's impression from viewing on the *New York Times* website (the only site on which to see this video: there are no other good references available) is that the Farsi in this video is from the poem *Window* (1967), by Forugh Farrokhzad, a Persian poet.[35]

> *When my trust hung from the thin thread of justice*
> *And the hearts of my lamps were smashed into tiny pieces*
> *All over town*
> *And the childlike eyes of my love were blindfolded*
> *With the black kerchief of law*
> *When blood was gushing forth from the anxious temples of my desire*
> *When my life was nothing other than the ticking of the clock*
> *I realized that I must love*
> *That I must madly love.*
> (exert from *Window* by Forugh Farrokhzad)

The video opens with the image of a tree, its branches shaped in a circle and the centre trunk shaped in the form of a woman's body. The branches of the tree give the impression of outstretched arms. There is also the sensation of the interconnectedness of life in the opening image. The video continues with studio black and white still photographed head shots, on black backgrounds, of Middle Eastern looking people. These images scroll from the viewer's right to left, slowly, amplified by an ambient Persian musical soundtrack. The Farsi appears translucent and is layered over the imagery. The images evolve into pictures suggestive of torture in captivity, while the music becomes suggestive of pain and a confrontation with evil. The first head shot is of a young Persian man, the final head shot is of a middle aged woman with an expression of weariness. In between are head shots which suggest brotherhood or connectedness.The closing shot is again of the tree. As revelation, this work acknowledges the yearning for dignity pitted against a suggestion of evil. The black background reminds one of a prison cell. We feel the hope and witness the despair.

Finding a New Language

I have, in my life, learned that it is one thing to have a theory, and quite another to execute or produce an idea successfully with elegance. Structuring a story well is essential to effectiveness. Not only does this skill demand knowing many seen or read stories, but this skill develops very slowly with experience. Picking an interesting story to tell, which in this case, is the art of casting a person with depth and presence, involves time, patience, and waiting for inspiration. Mistakes in style or editing, with repetitive practice, become hallmarks of an image maker when these mistakes are resolved. In my work, old ways of creating, that which has been done, be it ways of shooting, editing, or story telling, seem new with contemporary subjects and the influences of current popular culture. In developing this practice, I decided not be afraid of mistakes or visual lapses in attempting to create effective work. Unattractive and naive beginnings did eventually develop into effectively well executed imagery. This practice has been about developing proficiency. Proficiency is not the starting point.

8 Stories focuses on real people with real stories in real environments. There are no artificial sets nor clever art direction. Perhaps journalistic, this is not, however, journalism. I am executing a portrait sitting while making the message larger. If aspects are perceived as artful, this is not intended as fine art. This is digital communication; the application of computer based programs which are ever evolving and used as after capture processing or editing tools (or devices). This is about learning to speak again. The stories are of our time; so is the work. It is acceptable for the tools to be basic. The still cameras that are used, although of professional quality (they are now avidly purchased by amateurs), are continuously superseded, as are video cameras and the versions of Photoshop or Final Cut. The only constant is the creator's mind; this evolving project. The only important meaning of this work is in the message.

The artists discussed in this thesis, Arbus, Cage, Cocteau, Hitchcock, Marker, Warhol and Neshat repeated their processes until their concepts were communicated effectively and their work became refined. To see filmic editing problems, one needs only to view Hitchcock's early films.

8 Stories are very short stories, which, I have found, can be one of the most difficult kinds of stories to tell. The question I wrestle with is how can this narrative be told more effectively and economically?

These are not short films because that is not what I do nor are short films my intent. I am expending the message of a photograph with additional mediums. An image out of another time is the basis of this work; or a short video segment may come first to confirm a theme. Which media confirms the subject of the piece depends on chance. There is a certain kind of dream, or abstract, I attach to carefully composed photographs, where the beauty lies partly in not being immersed in the story but outside of it. As an experienced photographer of many years I have learned that admiration from the outsider is a function of the successfully structured photographic image. Bringing moving pictures to this traditional process is a challenge and interesting on a few levels. Having the facility to easily merge media creates the most demanding challenge; the one of

choice and discretion. I love words and the way my subjects attempt to explain their actions. As the humanities examine human culture, I have in the past, used the prose and the stories of novels to seek insights into how I view my photographic subjects. Tom McCarthy, in his novel C, describes the importance of speech:

> *It is through our participation in the realm of speech that we become moral, learn to respect the law, to understand another's pain, and to expand and fortify our faculties through the great edifices of the arts and sciences: poetry, reason, argument, discourse. Speech is the method and the measure of our flowering into bloom. It is the currency and current of our congress in the world and all the cackling wonders of its institutions and exchanges.*[36] (McCarthy, 2011, p.15)

Warhol's moving pictures lacked sound. The narration in Marker's work served as counterpoint, a style of layering which demanded concentration and reflection. Time, past, present and future, was merged in and out of normal sequence. Neshat's use of musical soundtrack has amplified the drama of her imagery and has been essential to the message.

While Arbus soulfully constructed her images with her feelings and intuition, Hitchcock mastered darkly dramatic stories with structural economy. His scenes, the way in which they were artfully directed, were vital to this dramatic restraint. The audience could not look away, even if they wanted to. Cocteau, in this aspect contrary to Hitchcock, believed the work must contain creative intensity, and the emotionally stylistic beauty of poetry.

In this project, I took the discussed hallmarks of these artist's work and applied them to merged media portrait pieces as I created my new communicative language.

Like Neshat, I now find still photography limiting. The evolving digital machine continues to enable accessibility to different media. The challenge of structuring effective short stories with in time sequences, out of time sequences, voice, music, chance ambient sounds, narrated interior thinking transitioned with visual

occurrences exercising counterpoint between sound and image, while attempting to succeed with dramatic economy, is the focus of this research. Dreams of the future, memory, and observations of the present, are juxtaposed.

What does art need to be in order to be identified as art? With Cage, where does one separate music from everyday life's soundscape? In an interview Cage states:

> *...I think was important not only to my work, but which has become important to others, is that the most common denominator of music has nothing to do with pitch – that is to say counterpoint or harmony – but rather has to do with time...I've since found that there is no absence of sound, that noise is constantly taking place...If we think of the harmony that is still taught in the schools, we have to distinguish it from the harmony that we know by just bringing sounds together, say, by chance...Sounds, just by their nature, produce harmony; they can't produce anything else but harmony.*[37]
> (John Cage in Ford, 1993, p.174)

In this context, whereas the most prevalent divisor in music is time, how far is Cage from Warhol, who created iconic images based on society's values of the time? In other words, he painted what we are.[38] Cage's music is about what we hear, in real life. What is important in this instance is the relationship between art and life.

I began this research as a photographer. At this juncture, with these artists discussed as context, and as more of a visual communicator, I have learned about blending and absorbing media to begin clarifying my voice, while refining my process and style.

The Fabric of This Work
Photographers create pictures of the world in all its aspects: inside, outside, blatant, opaque. Although our images exist as objects, even in their own regard on screen, we show and exhibit the world through a lens from the outside looking in. It is hard to see the picture until one steps out of the frame. The contradiction is that in order to know our subject, we need to live it. Creative

decisions are made as the photographer identifies with the object of examination. We then step out of the situation briefly to take the picture; the viewer is then invited to look at the image from the same perspective.

> *When you have no picture of the world, you don't know how to make choices –*
> *material, inconsequential or moral. You don't know which way is up, or if you're coming*
> *or going, or how many beans make five.*[39] (Rushdie, 1999, p.487)

Film-makers and videographers examine subjects or tell stories by in time illustration. The in time sequences of moving pictures are similar to having someone read a story to you from a picture book. Nevertheless, the quality and the core perspective of the story are what matters.

For Diane Arbus the world was exotic, whether in the province of middle class life or the spheres of freakishness. She left fashion photography for portraiture when her marriage ended in 1959. Unlike Andy Warhol, who was her contemporary, Arbus had none of the "Warhol style" or his sentimentality.[40] Arbus had turned her back on glamour. Susan Sontag observed:

> *Most of Arbus's work lies within the Warhol aesthetic, that is, defines itself in relation to*
> *the twin poles of boringness and freakishness; but it doesn't have the Warhol style.*
> *Arbus had neither Warhol's narcissism and genius for publicity nor the self-protective*
> *blandness with which he insulates himself from the freaky nor his sentimentality…*
> *Compared with Warhol, Arbus seems stirringly vulnerable, innocent—and certainly*
> *more pessimistic. Her Dantesque vision of the city (and the suburbs) has no reserves*
> *of irony.* (Sontag, 2008, pp.44-45)

Despite their rawness, Andy Warhol's *Stillies* were studies that were fashionable in their 1960's time space. Oddly immersive, these moving pictures prevail as a sort of practice: they do not feel like the real thing. Contrastingly, Diane Arbus's square images were an obsession. James Joyce's "prerequisites for an artist's survival in the modern world (silence, cunning, and exile)" were how Arbus travelled through the 1960's (Bosworth, 2012, p.163). She became friends with Richard Avedon, who impressed her with his technical skill and his staying

power. Avedon had said that "Diane and I were so close we used to tell each other our dreams" (Bosworth, 2012, p.189).[41]

Diane Arbus befriended the photographer Walker Evans around 1963. Evans was 59 at the time, teaching photography at Yale and in despair "because he felt he had *dried up creatively*" (Bosworth, 2012, p.210). Arbus admired Evans's work: the Depression portrait photographs from his collaboration with James Agee in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and his subway pictures, in addition to his "straightforward" portraits.

> *To Evans, the artist was an image-collector--"He collects things with his eye." He once said: "The secret of photography is that the camera takes on the character and the personality of the handler. The mind works on the machine."[42]*
> (Bosworth, 2012, p.209)

Arbus became a fixture at New York City news events such as parties, openings, or political demonstrations. She always carried her cameras around her neck. Seemingly fearless, although she admitted to always being afraid, Arbus would wander the city from "dusk to dawn" searching for photographs. When she spotted someone interesting, she would strike up a conversation. "She had a magnetic quality" which drew people in. She was impressed by everyone. Arbus photographed both the fringes of the middle class and her freaks to show "the poetry, the irony, (and) the fantasy" in real life. In my career, this was how I sought my subjects; more with a focus on irony.

> *"Walker called Diane a huntress. He admired her daring, but couldn't understand how she was able to go so fearlessly into the underworld of New York... He'd always been attracted to and repelled by lowlife, but he had Victorian barnacles on him, he said; he couldn't shake them off. How did she do it?"* (Bosworth, 2012, p.210)

This general type of fascination with humanity was not too distant from Chris Marker's point of view in the context of connection, fascination and, although with more emphasis, remembering. Arbus and Marker were wanderers intrigued

by humanity. Arbus stayed close to home; Marker travelled the world. Marker's obsession, however, with time, remembering, and developing a concept of what designates history, was where the comparisons of process with Arbus departs to the realm of moving pictures. Like Warhol, he experimented with different media. Unlike Warhol, Marker was not concerned with fashion; his search for meaning was concerned with problems of existence. In attempting to provide ideas which seemed like answers via narration, coupled with time sequences in his work, Marker provided an interesting extension to his stories: not narratively dramatic as Hitchcock, but meaningful like Arbus, yet with different kinds of layers. Arbus saw beauty in the strange human behavior that was perceived as threatening to gentile (and upright) society, and illustrated it. Marker perceived the world from a political aspect and questioned the meaning of man's behavior balanced in history or through the passage of time. Hitchcock focused on drama, the well structured narrative. Time, for Hitchcock, needed to be used economically. The structure of a story must be paced tightly. Dramatic suspense should be constructed without excess, so that sequences fit together perfectly to keep the audience's attention immersed in the story. Yet with Hitchcock it has been difficult to not be aware of his camera and his dramatic lighting. The sets were so carefully designed. Lighting was the stuff of romance: the careful use of color, the contrast of light and dark, the zooming in of a handheld object to direct the audience were a few examples. Yet time was a concept to be controlled. Time, however, for Marker, was nothing as an isolated abstraction. Coupled with remembering, Marker focused on the notion of time's movement to define perception or human consciousness.

There is a poetic beauty in the scenes and structure of Shirin Neshat's videos which reminds one of the motives in the films of Jean Cocteau. The creative process, for Cocteau, encompasses elements of legend, truth, and fiction, in non-linear but organized structures that create dream-like sequences to provide affective, meaningful, and poetic storytelling. Almost fifty years later, Neshat, although stylistically in the current era, seems to embrace a similar creative process.

In *Beginning of the Cold Season* which has been discussed, the well executed black and white images scrolling across the screen layered under Farsi text lures the viewer into a false time sequence. Truth and legend are integrated by the sequence, which provides the viewer with the pathos of political struggle. In *Before My Eyes,* from the same series of the seasons, Neshat uses, once again, two sequences running simultaneously to immerse, rather than illustrate, the viewer into her take on recent occurrences.

> *As spring ends, we grieve what has been lost and cherish what has been gained. We measure the rise and fall of our hopes in the Middle East and remember the catastrophic earthquake in Japan-a natural disaster erupting into a human one. As we enter a new, uncertain season, our destination is unknown, yet we travel against the flames of fear toward the promise of a better future ahead.*[43] (Neshat, 2011)

On the screen's left is the moving image of an eye. The moving pictures on the screen's right of a woman covered in a chador walking through a burning landscape is reflected in the iris of the eye on the left. The audience is in two places at once: looking into their own eye and viewing the landscapes of their fears. The scenes are visually affecting while the concept is poetic in a Cocteau-like way.

Jean Cocteau was arguably the first multi-media artist to "bring together literature, the visual arts, cinema, music, theatre and fashion". Andy Warhol carried on, and explored Cocteau's "cult of youth, beauty and celebrity" (Williams, 2008, Location 2852) while going beyond the bounds of most genres.[44] The various designs in visual communication practiced by Arbus, Warhol, Marker, Cocteau and Neshat all tended to embrace Hitchcock's view of the film director, or artist/poet, as God.

This approach to multi media rings true to how I view the nature of communication, of storytelling, of organizing events, and of Rushdie's "picture of the world"; this is what connects my research into these artists.

In referencing my work to these artists, I am learning to recreate the way I communicate visually.

8 Stories

At the beginning of this research, the process for merging still photography, video, sound, and typography, which I planned and imagined, depended on my reliance on an analogue way of thinking. My skill as a portrait photographer had been well established to such a degree that every other media I worked in would support the photographic idea as I knew it. In retrospect, the rigidity in this approach defeated the intent. Change, I learned as my work evolved, must even encompass the support; or in other words, to solve my creative problems in a different way, I must change my paradigm, otherwise neither the research, nor the outcome - the work - would have harmony. I believed I needed to become freer in my style of shooting stills: I came to realize that I should rely more on intuition. This evolution needed to become more developed so that the old ways of understanding communicative crafts were distanced farther in the corner of my mind. One major reoccurring lesson of this research stressed, again, courtesy of Salman Rushdie, that to see or understand the picture, you must step out of the frame. In the context of *8 Stories*, the task was to somehow, or in some way, free myself of the many habits acquired by my old approach to portraiture. Firstly, I dismissed artificial light in favor of existing ambient reflected light. Although cross lit mixtures of various color balances of light irritated my notions of professional craft, the effect seemed to bring an editorial feel closer to the original way I experienced the sitter's environment. All I could do to adjust my professional notions was to produce the work and let it evolve with the tools, the equipment, the platforms and the software. Yet an effective quality in resolution that contributed to my established sense of thematically romantic visual drama remained a requisite for the stills. That was in the context of what I like as a photographer. There was also the new creative problem of determining my version of what was real since digital photography demanded retouching in Photoshop.

Good stories have contrast. They contain subtle, good, bad, beauty, ugliness, light, dark, heroes, villains, love, hate, and every conceivable comparison or contrast. My notions of visual romance demanded strikingly different juxtapositions or distinctions to provide subjects with layers, depth, and a strong design for photographic eye movement; hence, drama. I did not want to dismiss this aspect of a style developed over the last 30 years. This style, synonymous with my voice, needed to be integrated with digital techniques.

I was living in Robertson NSW in the year 2000 when the composer Andrew Ford came by my house to interview another composer, my father-in-law from my previous marriage, for a radio segment. Andrew Ford is also the presenter of *The Music Show* on Radio National. We became friends over time, regularly meeting for coffee. I asked Andy if he would like to do a book with me. He countered with an idea of an exhibition of photographic portraits with sound recordings; the recordings being of our casted participants discussing their favorite piece of music and why. We theorized that the recording would provide a sense of place, personality, temperament, and often be revealing. As it turned out, many of the recordings were very moving.

Local Portraits was a very large exhibition commissioned by the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre in Casula, NSW: thirty-five portraits from Robertson NSW and thirty-five portraits from the NSW 2168 Liverpool postcode. The project was funded by Arts NSW, Liverpool City Council, Wingecarribee Shire Council and Kodak. We received our first payment in January 2002. Casting commenced shortly after. Five portraits were executed as samples to show in order to receive the balance of funding. The exhibition opened in September 2008.

Andrew and I decided to cast our participants together, and then work independently in counterpoint to feature our different impressions. This project changed the way I viewed media. I wanted to record the images on film with my Hasselblads, yet I knew that *Local Portraits* played homage to the way I had

worked for many years. By the time the exhibition opened, I realized that it sadly marked the end of my era as a creator of analogue images.

Andrew Ford's recordings were just fantastic:

> "I mean you're bombarded with music all the time...Nowadays, I mean everywhere you go...You sit down and watch the TV, they've got to put the incidental music on; you sit on the train, you get some little guys tinny stereo going; or you're on the bus, you've got the bus driver's radio going - I mean it's just become noise to me. And the nicest thing-the real nicest music you can get-is absolute quiet, the sort of quiet where you can hear your heart beat. I mean we're sitting in a park: we've got an aeroplane flying overhead, we've got cars flying past. And this is a park! Where do you find somewhere to be quiet? Somewhere to listen to yourself?"

> That's Rickie Allen talking to the tape recorder for Local Portraits, and he is, of course, absolutely right. There can be no dispute: the world we live in is full of music. Far too full. It's everywhere. We hear it by accident. Much of the time, we hear it even when we don't especially want to hear it. We seldom actively listen to anything.[45]
> (Ford, 2008, pp. 12-13)

In our discussions as Ford and I produced our work, we agreed that sound helped to answer the question of "why?" created by the environmental portrait of each subject. The stories on the recordings were often very moving. Actually being able to hear the sound of each person's voice truly extended each portrait. "The process is about telling stories, even if it is a very small segment of the story at hand...

> After all, still photography stops time... It does not matter that, for example, George Thirlwall does not play the trumpet. By picking it up and blowing into it, he proved it had meaning to him, no matter how small. Jasper Fernley (Figure 2) wanted the rat with her; so she got the rat.[46] (Rolon, 2008, p.10)

The style of portraiture I practiced, commercially and as an artist, was traditional and produced photographs that stand alone well without additional media. Often carefully researched, pre-visualized and well constructed, the photographs were well considered in camera. No additional media nor any provision for additional media was required.

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Fig. 2 *Jasper*. Photo: Jim Rolon 2005

What you don't necessarily see or hear in Local Portraits *are the stories behind the taking of the photographs and the recording of the interviews. For example, Jim took the photograph of Rhonda Rumble under considerable duress. Rhonda keeps pet birds, which were attracted to the bald spot on Jim's head and continually landed there as he framed his shots. The pet rat in the photograph of Jasper Fearnley is there at the insistence of Jasper herself, and so are the leathers that Fiona Donnelley (Figure 3) wears in her shot. Sometimes the photos are a little misleading.*[47] (Ford, 2008, p.19)

Fig. 3 *Fiona*. **Photo: Jim Rolon 2005**

During the production period of *Local Portraits* Andrew Ford became my mentor and in the process extended my scope as a photographer. Andrew had more experience in mixing media and sound. He would not have worked with me if he had not enjoyed my portrait photography. I also began reading his work knowing what a luxury it was to be able to call up the author to ask him a question. I was at that time a traditional photographer of people. Andrew Ford caused me to begin thinking differently about media.

As I photographed more with digital media, and as I increasingly post-visualized my imagery, my thinking changed. I was always reflecting on what I could or should add or change to the file. Thinking this way naturally caused me to

expand my work: more adjustments and more media. The sound had added one extension to the image; typography (on the most recent version of my website), another. Why not layer stills and sounds into video?

For me, *Local Portraits* marked the end of analogue photography. The project provided me with a limited understanding of expanding media. While still working to understand how to develop my portraiture with a convincing digital voice, I believed that typography and sound would provide the means to make my portraits effective again.

Creatively, this was my starting point to this research.

My digital camera of choice is a Nikon digital single lens reflex camera. Small, light, and compact, this camera provides me with a free versatility I never previously embraced. When shooting in a rectangle frame, I frame in horizontal because this is the way I see the world with my eyes. With sound everywhere, I attach words to each image in my head. It is hard to resist the temptation of relating my images to songs; hence, creating a digital still image is closer to film making than creating photographs with analogue because relationships between different media have become facilitated by digital technology. But I find I am still developing a connective process with this media.

The filmmaker Sally Potter, believes that when you film people's lives, "one moves then into a kind of political dimension of what's real and what's not real, because, for most of the world's population, the reality of their experience is neither expressed, nor listened to, nor even considered real - it's invisible;"[48]

> ...most people lead invisible lives. Once you start listening to those invisible lives, they are incredible dramas with incredible narratives, with incredible musicality in them, with unbelievable leaps through time and space and emotion and fantasy and what one might call madness. Most definitions of reality are simply a norm, a standard written by the educated voices of the dominant culture, one way or the other. So bollocks to reality! (Sally Potter in Ford, 2010, p.235)

Not really a point of view I would have given much thought to as an analogue still photographer since I was most concerned with expressing what was real in people's lives. Suddenly, in the digital realm, the temptation to think more as a filmmaker, a teller of narratives that become a blend of truth and fantasy designed to clarify the message within an immersive process, becomes stronger, as I learn to introduce video and sound to my work.

Story One - Jamie Hutchings

My first portrait piece for *8 Stories* was of the musician Jamie Hutchings (Figure 4), an independent musician rocker well known in the 1990's as the front man, and songwriter, in the Sydney band *Bluebottle Kiss*. Jamie had just released an album recorded on analogue called *Avalon Cassettes,* which was internationally well received by the press. He seemed perfect as my first casted subject because as an artist Jamie has experience and depth. He also came equipped with his own music.

Jamie Hutchings is Cocteau's poet; a middle - aged talented artist whose meaningful words and music has an increasingly dwindling but loyal audience. Jamie is almost of another world from the one we live in; a world which is dreamier, more loving, spiritual, and kinder. He is obsessed with expression through sound and music. Like the Zone in *Orphee,* my stills and video are monotoned and dark. My approach is mood driven meaning that I wanted the work to represent Jamie Hutching's creative moods.

Fig. 4 *Jamie Hutchings.* **Photo: Jim Rolon 2011**

Jamie Hutchings developed his craft during the same period in which I was finding a definitive style as a photographer. We both understood the thinking of the early 1990's. I found that what he was doing now with analogue, and the reasons why, created a good historical statement-making material for storytelling. The stills for this first piece were taken with the Nikon. Video segments were recorded on digital cassette tape and edited on Final Cut. I was attempting to provide a sharp contrast in quality between stills and video. This piece was my first exercise with a structure incorporating written words. No external microphones were used but I did have high quality recordings of Jamie's music. In using the typography, quotes from interviews with Jamie were layered over the still photographs and moving pictures. This in the end proved to be distracting. I felt that the words made the audience too aware of the technique. Reading onscreen text interfered with any immersive experience built by the music and imagery. My dissatisfaction with my first visual results and my initial lack of skill with the technology caused me to start testing video codecs.

I had not yet learned the importance and relationship of beauty to immersion; not the kind of beauty related to the perfect human being, nor the most pristine landscape, but the type of beauty achieved by expressing an idea with the most simple integration of elements like an Arbus photograph. This integration of aspects was what Cocteau believed to be the duty of the poet. The expression should be simple, natural, and made with deftness. As Cocteau wrote:

> But beauty's method is nature's. It is prodigal with its seeds. It does not require thousands of souls to ensure its survival. A few suffice and it takes root in them. And these, it always finds.[49] (Cocteau, 1948, p.46)

Although the still photographs alone were effective, this first exercise lacked poetic structure. It needed better use of technique to illustrate the portrait's abstractions in the context of the subject's spirit; a description of spirit which approaches that of literature:

> Methinks that what they call my shadow here on earth is my true substance. Methinks that in looking at things spiritual, we are too much like oysters observing the sun through water, and thinking that thick water the thinnest of air. Methinks my body is but the lees of my better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me.[50] (Melville, 1851, p.32)

My process of visualizing and structuring a photograph became intuitive with experience. The process became a skill connected to my being. When I trained with the New York photographers whom I assisted, and it was clear that they were among the world's best commercial photographers (this opinion was predicated on where their photographs were published), I was encouraged to not think so much and produce more work. I accepted this directive and developed my photography accordingly. I was not ready for my convictions to no longer pertain to healthy creative growth, but it was now necessary to change my way of thinking.

8 Stories are short portrait layered media pieces of approximately seven minutes for screens. The first portrait piece of Jamie Hutchings was too long

without a very clear intent. Relying too much on narrative caused the piece to become overly sentimental. It missed poetry's intensity and insight. Without Arbus' or Cocteau's poetic intent, the additional media contributed nothing important to the still photographs. My trained way of seeing in stills did not unify with the moving pictures. The work lacked harmony. To all the media of these portrait pieces I needed to apply Sontag's "ethos of photography":

> *–that of schooling us (in Moholy-Nagy's phrase) in "intensive seeing"–seems closer to that of modernist poetry than that of painting. As painting has become more and more conceptual, poetry (since Apollinaire, Eliot, Pound, and William Carlos Williams) has more and more defined itself as concerned with the visual...Poetry's commitment to concreteness and to the autonomy of the poem's language parallels photography's commitment to pure seeing...wrenching things from their context (to see them in a fresh way)...*[51] (Sontag, 2008, p.96)

Sontag's reference to freshness was the what I felt my first piece was lacking. Somehow the still images needed more poetic weight.

Poetry's language is distinctive in style and rhythm. Less (words) is often more. Words are carefully chosen.

Story Two - Kate Barnes

My next portrait piece, about the dancer Kate Barnes (Figure 5), suffered from the same weaknesses: the parts were stronger than the whole. I had not achieved integration of the various media. This integration was not about refined recording techniques or equipment, but what Sontag referred to as "pure seeing" and seeing things "in a fresh way" (Sontag, 2008, p.96). I was stuck in my old ways in one aspect while not proficient in another.

The intent of the work, *8 Stories,* is always to be unscripted and editorial. Although approaching the style of a newspaper feature, the pieces need to be freer; pieces which not only can be recorded and edited by one person quickly, but portrait pieces which have stylistic depth, with human interest.
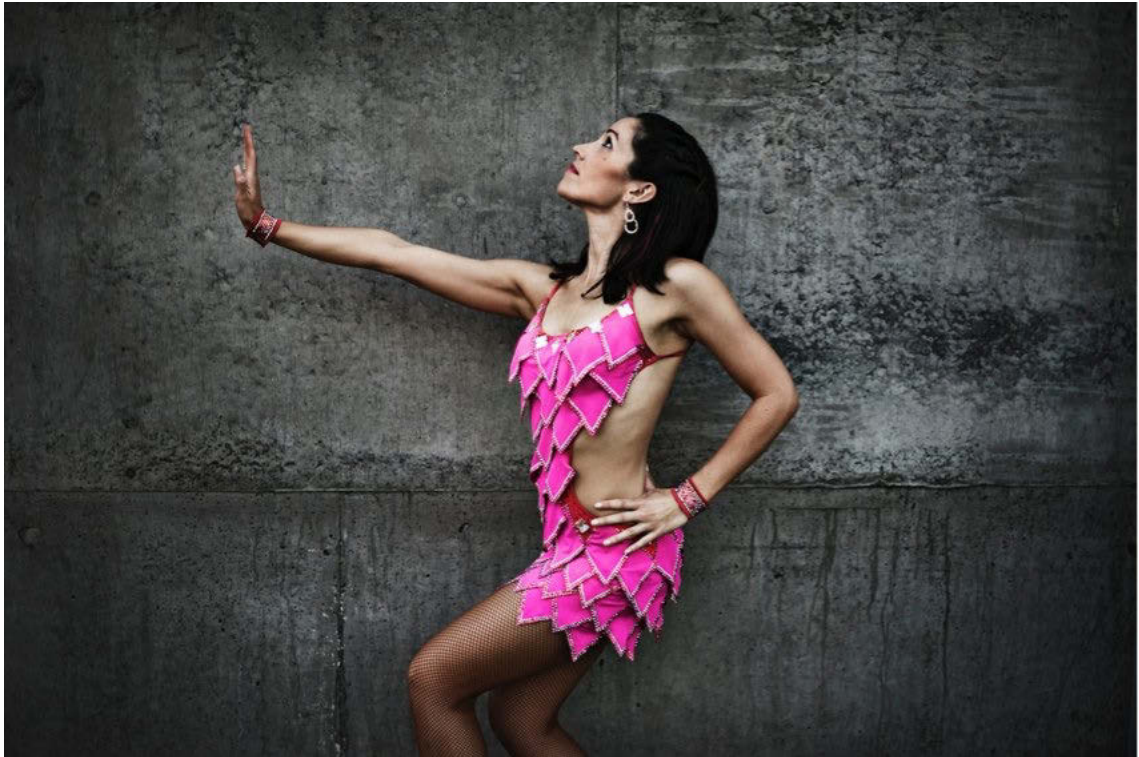
Fig. 5 *Kate Barnes.* **Photo: Jim Rolon 2011**

My maxim remained that in order to express with insight, the portrait pieces should be approached impromptu. When viewing my photographs one should not be aware of me nor my camera beyond the hallmarks of my photographic style. In order to provide the intended manner of audience immersion I had foreseen, my camera and my voice needed to be closeted.

Having the same issues with typography, the dancer piece was re-edited. The use of typography was then permanently discarded because I viewed the words as a distractingly affected creative device. Although the quality of the still photographs within a video platform improved with testing, the desired effect had not yet been achieved.

My still camera had professional quality. The video camera did not. I had wanted to work with amateurish video with the intention to create interesting work not dependent on the very best equipment. I had wanted to develop a style of expression slowly and work with what I had; and although I realized that my knowledge in the use of video codecs needed to be developed quickly, this

piece about Kate Barnes resulted in my decision to purchase a small high definition video camera. The failure inherent in this portrait piece was a decisive moment, bordering on lyric: find the video codecs and photography resolution to preserve the integrity of the portrait photograph within the video platform. I needed to learn how to create a structure to the portrait pieces so they not only appear unscripted, but integrate well the stills, the video and the sound without any perceived disruption. In addition I believed it necessary to produce the portrait pieces so that the audience would not be aware of the author's camera, nor personality. Lastly, I did not want to lose sight of the importance of economical editing. These were all technical concerns that needed to be resolved in order for the creative expression of the work to have any integrity. It was a long time ago that I learned that technique must become second nature to the photographer. Creative working systems needed to be securely in place so that the process was automatic. In this way, the photographer could focus solely on the method of, and the expression in, capture. Lastly, I needed to intuit less and increasingly consider structuring a formula. This formula, in order to be effective, needed to be characteristically hidden, invisible, yet applied just the same as a dramatic device. The pictures, still or moving, with accompanying sound, should essentially enable the audience to dream up their own insights. Jean Cocteau saw the film director as a medium:

> *The cabinet-maker's viewpoint is not that of the medium. The one ensures that the table is firm, that it stands up and its drawers slide properly; the other makes it turn and speak. And, just as tables speak, in other words establish a mysterious link between the darkness and light within us, so a work of art should also be a work of craftsmanship that yields its secrets without in the slightest having sought to put them across.*[52] (Cocteau, 1948, pp.37-38)

In this practise, Sontag's argument that "photography heralds (and creates) new ambitions for the arts" (Sontag, 2008, p.149)[53] in the context of media and developments in new media, continued to effect my approach. Hitchcock's economy of narrative also needed to be applied with more elegance. My still images of Kate Barnes (Figure 5) were, like the images of Hutchings, well executed and crafted but the work did not hold together.

Story Three - Tony Palmer

My next portrait piece was of a race car driver named Tony Palmer (Figure 6). The original edit included Tony's narration about how his life led him to race cars. In this work I came to realize that my casting was flawed and that the car, the actual object in use, told the portrait story better than his words. As my technique was improving with a better understanding of the media, I decided to apply Jean Cocteau's views about poetry and cinema: "Indeed, whatever of our shades, our darkness and, in a sense, our poetry we put into a film is not our concern and should only be uncovered by those who judge us" (Cocteau, 1948, p.37).

Fig. 6 *Tony Palmer*. Photo: Jim Rolon 2012

The result of re-editing this video caused me a resolve to apply elegance as an instrument of subtle drama to my formula for the first time. It was during the re-edit that I began to apply what I had appreciated not only in Chris Marker's *La Jetee*, a story told by a strong series of revealing still photographs, but Shirin Neshat's use of still photographs as a theatrical device to transfix. The careful selection of a musical soundtrack, in this case *Hymn to the Sun* (1999) and *Like*

Icarus ascending (1984) by Andrew Ford[54], is also a reference to the style of Neshat's short films.
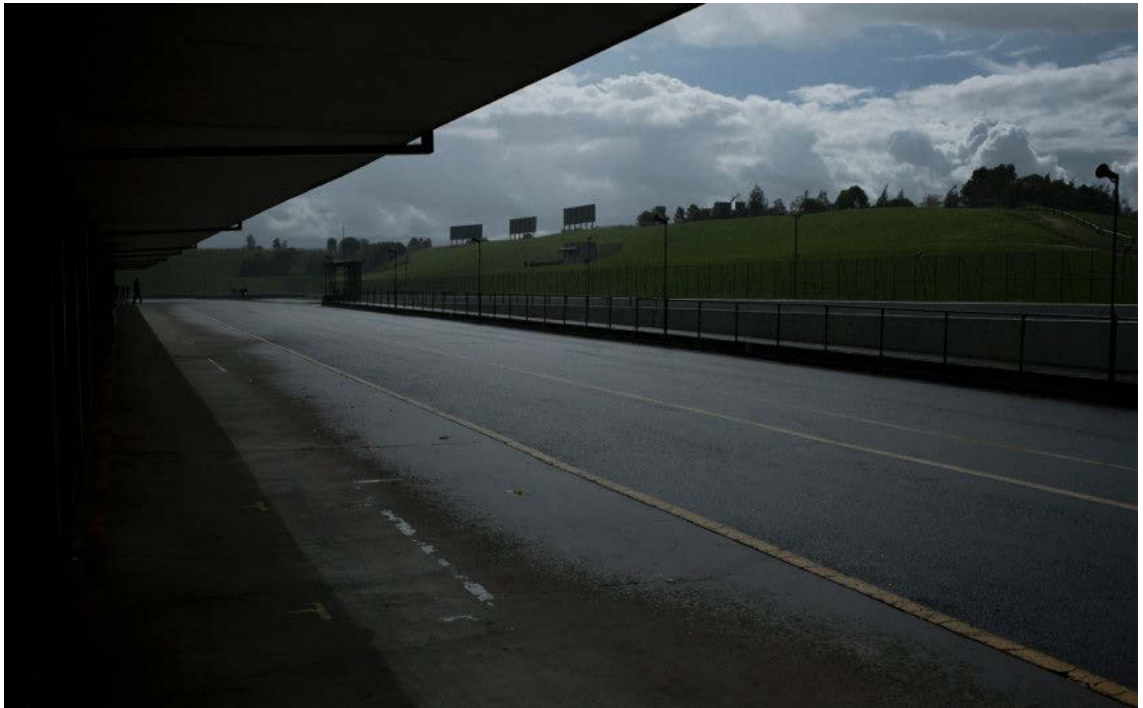

Fig. 7 *Tony Palmer Racetrack*. **Photo: Jim Rolon 2012**

My style of shooting and editing was not yet as graceful as I would have liked. Approaching multi-media portraits impromptu required me to develop a system of shooting which I could rely upon repeatedly and I felt I needed to understand what to do quickly.

Story Four - Anja

The portrait piece of a young female Swedish boxer named Anja (Figure 8) was an accidental turning point. Using counterpoint with sound and visual media, both still and moving pictures, provided a structure that expressed an insightful story about her character.

Anja's narration in the portrait piece was recorded at our last meeting. At the time I felt I needed more insight in the form of a recording. For no reason that I was aware of, Anja began talking about love non-stop for over nine minutes.

Fig. 8 *Anja*. **Photo: Jim Rolon 2012**

The unexpected result was an edited narration which spanned the portrait piece from start to finish. It was the most revealing element with which to structure the story. This narration provided harmony in line with Cage, in that "sounds, just by their nature, produce harmony". I would extend that thought to add sounds and visions. Cage had said "structure without life is dead. But life without structure is un-seen" (Haskins, 2012, p.58):[55]

> *Pure life expresses itself within and through structure. Each moment is absolute, alive and significant.* (John Cage in Haskins, p.58)

Anja physically and visually seemed most alive in the ring. Her words revealed her inner life and seemingly the reason why she was boxing. The poetry could be the counterpoint; the poetry could be the expression of life. Her unplanned confession created a dramatic sequence. In time moving pictures provided the sense of being in her life. The soundtrack, both music and narration, delivered the extension I wanted. The still photographs stood alone, and well individually,

while the mixed media portrait achieved its intended result; and this result provided a significant structure for me to refine in my next portrait pieces.

Anja's photographic still portrait is a work in itself. The less elegant video segments of boxing or sparring engaged the viewer with what it may feel like to be in the boxing ring. The narration about her memories of love and its effect seem to evoke Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* narration. That "memories must make do with their delirium, with their drift" appeared as a statement well suited to Anja's story. The last in time segment of this work (Figure 9) is deliberately videoed as if it is a still photograph as a reference not only to Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* but also to the scene in *La Jetee* in which the protagonist's lover blinks during a still closeup. The filmic devices used here
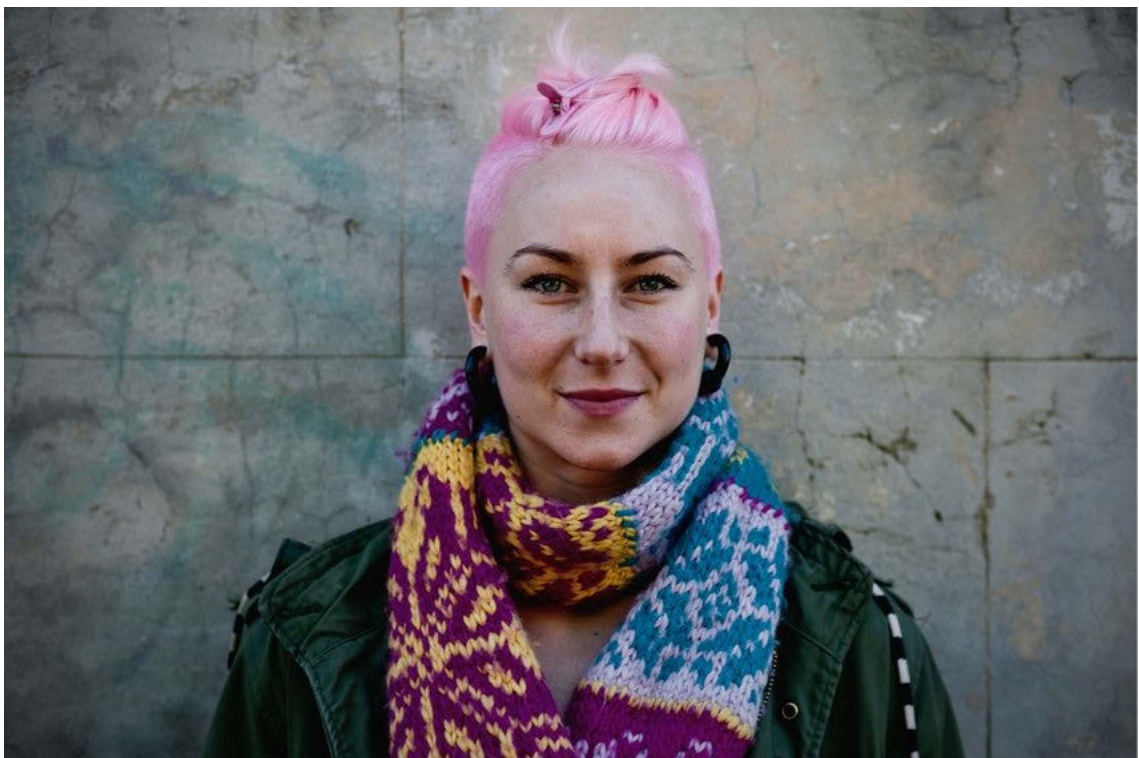

Figure 9 *Anja in Redfern*. **Photo: Jim Rolon 2012**

prove effective in providing technical interest and emotional focus.

Story Five - Andrew Ford

A dedicated composer provided an opportunity to create a portrait piece in the style of an interview. Andrew Ford (Figure 10), a composer of modern music

who was not a performing musician and with whom I had worked previously, agreed to participate in *8 Stories*. It seemed that a segment about a recently written composition that could be YouTube friendly may have furnished me with the chance to understand if the portrait piece format I was developing could work as a commercial segment on the internet.

Fig. 10 *Andrew Ford*. **Photo: Jim Rolon 2012**

With each new portrait piece I was simplifying the structure while hoping to develop a workable method and technique that would work well as a basic starting point that I would then repeat. Andrew Ford's portrait would start with still photographs shown to the soundtrack from the first movement of his composition *You Must Sleep But I Must Dance*.[56] Once Andrew appeared in time on screen, telling the story of how he came to write this music from a simple melody, I introduced the last movement of the composition, which was composed around that same melody. Lastly, the portrait piece ended with the same movement. The closing in time video segment was to give the sensation of walking through woods. Andrew thought up the melody while walking his young daughter in a stroller through his country home-town as he was trying to get her to sleep. This portrait had a strong basic framework, although the sound

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recording of Andrew's interview had problems that needed to be resolved with software.

As Shirin Neshat had discovered, I realized that the use of in time sequences in video provided endless possibilities to storytelling. The creative problem was how to edit and structure these pieces to effectively share my message. Although *8 Stories* was never intended to be a political work, Neshat's working structural economy, which provided visual strength, were principles I wanted to adopt. The beginning still images of Andrew Ford's *Story* references the opening still portraits in Neshat's *Beginning of the Cold Season*[57]. This way of sequencing still photographs works well as an effective device for arousing the curiosity of the viewer.

Story Six - Sylvia Keays

With a determination to undertake the next portrait piece with economy, I produced a short, and succinct segment of the actor Sylvia Keays (Figure 11). The concept was to trap and force the viewer to stare and wonder at the still photographs, with sound. This video segment was intended to make it plain to the viewer that Sylvia acts, and that her portrait was a short performance. The calculation, and hopefully the outcome, of applying this technique was not only to compel the viewer to study the still photographs while listening to Sylvia's monologue, but for a very short period of time, bring the viewer into a dream or zone, intending the portrait piece to exist first as a fictional narrative moment, and then as a revealing one. Complex narrative sequences in much of Neshat's work left the viewer in an unresolved reverie which would not be easy to resolve, much like Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, whereas the viewer may struggle to grasp the concept of "The Zone".[58] In this film, "The Zone" is a place outside of real time; somewhere between dreams and memory.

There is a room at the centre of "The Zone" where, if you are accepted into this space by surviving the journey through the gates, past the guards and, once inside the barbed wire, through the lush landscape littered with rusting tanks and decomposing bodies, where freedom exists inside the enclosure, one's

Fig. 11 *Sylvia Keays.* **Photo: Jim Rolon 2013**

dreams are realized; yet with a devilish twist. Although the room is the last hope of the dispossessed and those with nothing left, material dreams may be satisfied, but through fulfillment via the essence of one's soul, one's untamed or uncivilized desires, hatreds or resentments, resulting in unrestrained circumstances or occurrences. The character "Teacher", who later became "Porcupine", desired, without realizing, not only great wealth but the death of his brother whom he loved. When his dreams were granted his despair was so great that he killed himself, as the story goes. Yet with a different interpretation of this story, "The Zone" does not exist at all, but in the characters' imagination. Living in an industrial wasteland, an extremely harsh environment, the idea of "The Zone's" centre is the last hope for the despondent. This is the story that delivers questions rather than answers. In the film, the character Stalker's prayer provides a revelation without answers. The prayer is an admission of hope in its tone of despair.

Let everything that's been planned come true. Let them believe. And let them have a laugh at their passions. Because what they call passion actually is not some emotional energy, but just the friction between their souls and the outside world. And most important, let them believe in themselves. Let them be helpless like children, because weakness is a great thing, and strength is nothing... (Stalker, 1979)

The written introduction to Neshat's *Before My Eyes,* and the poem which introduces *Beginning of the Cold Season*, provide a similar prayer-like motif which is despairing, or at least foreboding, on the one hand, while possessing faith that there is reason for hope on the other.[59]

In the portrait piece of Sylvia, a short, humorous idea was well presented in the monologue and the delivery. The still imagery served as an enlargement of a theme to support audience immersion or engagement. The despair was in the story while the hope was in the humor. Sylvia provided a believable narrative. I decided to embrace and develop this technique in my last two portrait pieces.

Story Seven - Stuart Sutherland as Subby Valentine

I continued to cast people who in a very broad sense perform. Skill in performance added an additional ingredient to this merged media formula. Stuart Sutherland (Figure 12) appeared for my cameras as the comedian Subby Valentine.

As a writer for commercial television comedy, a comedian on ABC's *Radio National*, and a free lance Master of Ceremonies for stage events, Sutherland performed comedy within a very Australian sardonic genre. Using the same structure as I had in the previous portrait piece, and presenting in black and white because I was of the opinion that stand-up-comedy sits very well in monotone, the result seemed polished yet, due to the subject, idiosyncratic.

The formula succeeded as an immersive short mixed media portrait. Like Neshat, who had "a resistance to anything becoming too fixed" (Goldberg, 2002, p. 67), I felt I needed more intricacy introduced to the structure.[60]

Neshat's still photographs possess a freedom in their structure and her videos are somehow fluid in their very tight editing. Sutherland's Story has a Hitchcock-like economy and it has Marker's feel for a place, yet on viewing the work it seems rigid. This structure would need to be applied loosely to each new subject.

**Fig. 12** *Subby Valentine*. Photo: Jim Rolon 2013

Story Eight - Jamie Hutchings Again

Having completed seven portrait pieces which steadily progressed into a workable, bordering on successful, structure that would be effective in expressing one of Chris Marker's most reoccurring themes of presenting "a history that does not officially exist" (Lupton, 2005, Location: 3299), I decided to produce yet another portrait piece of Jamie Hutchings (Figure 13) which was about his latest work.[61]

This last portrait of Jamie Hutchings would need to be simple, not long, and with an additional layered device to match the depth of Hutching's performance. These pieces must continually evolve with the subjects and with the passage of

time in order to remain original and effective. As I learned during my career photographing stills, each new creative problem requires a new resolution.
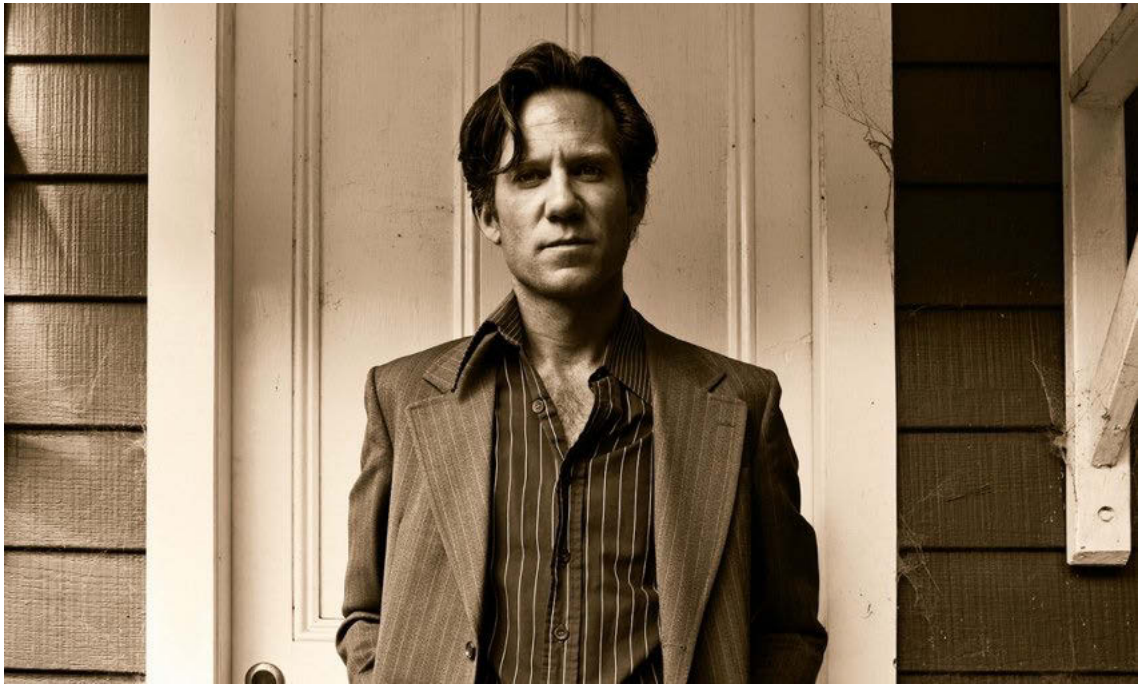
Fig. 13 *Jamie Hutchings*. **Photo: Jim Rolon 2013**

In the time that I have known Jamie Hutchings, the color brown has been his color of choice. It has been the color of least two garments that he has worn at every sitting. Deciding that brown was his favorite color, this last portrait piece was presented in shades of sepia. The hallmark of this portrait piece was the layering of the video segment of Jamie performing over the still image of a dry desert lake, which existed as a motif for Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky,* on which Hutching's musical composition was based. Once again, the structure was that Jamie Hutchings would illustrate his story with just a few phrases about writing words and music, and through a short performance of his song. The result expressed a pronounced portrait of Hutchings, which was better rounded than the still photographs alone without the layered media; and the immersive engagement of moving pictures. Jamie spoke, he sang, he played guitar, and we heard him; we felt him.

The result of merging various media engenders a more effective evolution in digital communication grounded on still imagery. By expanding a photographic

image with sound and moving pictures in portraiture, merging media provides access to more aspects that show how a personality exists in their environment.

Conclusion

We perceive life as moving pictures. Our minds may conceive a still image as a memory of a person or an event, but we experience life's episodes in multimedia via our senses: with in-time sight and sound. The experience of viewing a moving picture provides us the sensation of an event because of its immersive nature. Moving pictures fool us. We study still images in all different ways from outside the photographed event. Diane Arbus believed "that photography tends to deal with facts whereas film tends to deal with fiction..."

> *The best example I know is when you go to the movies and you see two people in bed, you're willing to put aside the fact that you perfectly well know that there was a director and a cameraman and assorted lighting people all in that same room and the two people in bed weren't really alone. But when you look at a photograph, you can never put that aside.[62]* (Arbus, 1972, p.6)

Arbus, as an artist, is cunning and we see that she lives her photographs. She shows the irony and the poetry in real life. Warhol also shows, through his art, the life Americans live. He finds art in everyday life as Cage finds harmony in ambient sound. Like Cocteau, Neshat applies poetry to show inequity. Her work is a beautiful prayer for a better world. Chris Marker understood that history is created by those who write the story. The story changes with time and memory. Lastly, it is the perfect drama that Hitchcock loves. I can interweave variations of their ideas into the extended portraiture of *8 Stories*.

Our expectation of media has changed. The digital machine, which is everywhere, enables all of us, experienced communicators or not, to easily adjust and mix our media to create many designs. In one sense, this is what John Cage means in that "sounds, just by their nature, produce harmony" (John Cage in Haskins, 2012, p.58).[63]Digital media, which provides myriad possibilities, creates an insatiable need for ever-evolving creative solutions. With media platforms now so easily accessible and layered, an editorial

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photographer's strength is in structuring a story with skill, and with multiple devices.

Digital communication encompasses a very different thought process than what is required when working with analogue tools and materials. Film photography is an act of careful and fixed visual image creation. Possibilities are thought of within the limitations of not only the cameras and their settings, but also the slower processes inherent in the materials. It is a very deliberate art: analogue photography is dependent on capture and it is not an immersive experience. The practice of being a digital communicator requires constant change to be embraced. Software evolves quickly. It possesses its own language. With the rapid change of the digital machine, the importance of visual craft, with a connection to the humanities and the world of abstract observations, is difficult to maintain; yet this connection remains essential in order to stand apart from the noise of digital culture. This is what I have learned: to apply my many years of experience in capture to a more versatile means of narrative. *8 Stories* has taught me to shift my visual experience into an always changing platform that never dismisses new storytelling possibilities, whether it is out of time or immersive. I have learned to develop a new language in portraiture by always pondering other possibilities that exist and which will evolve; and change again in shorter timespans. One consequence of this view lies in its discomfort. The development of communicative story structures will be paced differently. Once an application or applications are mastered, the expectation of resolving creative problems in shorter timespans will increase. Are we supporting a world of quantity over creative and technical quality?

New digital approaches to the art of photography relate very closely to how photography's mechanised method weakened and replaced the uniqueness inherent in portrait painting. The critical theorist Walter Benjamin (b.1892) states in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production*[64] that photography contributed to the art of portraiture forfeiting its uniqueness:

We define aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch, which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. This image makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the contemporary decay of the aura…Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. (Benjamin, 2012. p.17)

The ease at which digital applications enable us to take a picture, drastically change a picture, and then turn it into something else quickly, removes the art's uniqueness, its quality for being special and idiosyncratically expressive in any spiritual manner. While photography distances portraiture from the special oneness of painting, the digital machine amplifies this distance into a more commonplace language.

Portraiture as a discipline is no longer a static skill. I feel, however, that there is an advantage knowing the art of analogue photography. The older ways of analogue pre-visualisation still work well in the sense that it is best to have good starting points or good digital files contextually in the art of image capture. The new art of portraiture must be developed using its history as a frame of reference to best understand our new digital tools.

My new language will continue to be developed and it will be eventually utilised into commercial endeavors. The process of constant and rapid change while embracing digital applications is where harmony as a photographic communicator currently exists. We now find harmony as communicators.

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