

VCO 404.1 Contemporary Professional Practice
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The ***Socially Networked*** Photographer

'Facebook - 901 million monthly active users at the end of March 2012' 1

www.facebook.com – key facts, 2012

The proliferation of social networking has to be singularly the largest change to contemporary visual and information based communication culture over the last decade. The desire to be 'socially networked' has not only utterly consumed the younger generations to sate their desire to be connected with their friends for purely 'social' reasons, but it has become an absolute and integral marketing strategy for almost every consumable product, media production, artist, tradesman, government department, private and public service and so on... the list is endless. The uses of the social networking model are equally as endless, vastly surpassing its original 'social' purpose by, on the one hand, offering capitalism the most comprehensive, detailed, up-to-date personal data harvesting tools ever developed, whilst on the other, simultaneously providing an unlimited, uncensored platform for the repressed nations of the world to initiate and promote revolutions. The use of social networking and the internet as a whole has been absorbed into the very fabric of our contemporary societies. Marshall McLuhan's 'Global Village', prophesied back in the 1960's, has evidently been realised; the speed, breath and ever-increasing capabilities of communication technology to facilitate immediate, interactive, global communities to engage politically, socially and economically, has 'revolutionized' the world in which we live. Social networking models in particular have become both liberator of the isolated and oppressed whilst at the same time creating incredibly powerful and aggressively predatory corporations that seemingly intend to surreptitiously control as much of society's needs, desires and choices as possible.

A vast proportion of social networking activity is the sharing and uploading of photographs, with, for example 'instagram', a dedicated one-touch smartphone app offering seamless integration to any of the networking franchises. This investigation will examine the role of the photograph and the photographer in the social network and online communities, not only exploring the uses, the intentions and the reactions but more importantly the 'realities' these images profess to produce; from banal teenage commentary to the horrifying real-time urban spectacular.

1. Facebook.com, *Key Facts*, 2012, NewsRoom page

'Today everything exists to end in a photography' 2

Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979.

The above quote could not be more apt in our contemporary use of photography, especially in relation to the exponential raise of social media and its apparent fascination with 'photography for photography's sake'.

Technical advancements over the last five to ten years have not only made digital cameras easier to use, smaller, more portable and cheaper to produce, but with the convergence of technologies, it has resulted in all smart phones boasting a high definition camera, that via a easily downloaded app or link to a photo steam, allows for immediate uploading. The photographs are then tweeted or 'Flickr-ed' or added to other streams and feeds, which are in turn synchronised with Facebook, Bebo, YouTube, MySpace etc and thus spread globally between users, who then tag, poke, like, unlike, follow, re-tweet and so on... creating a 'virally' perpetual recycling of images that seems to only sate a culture of 'seeing for seeing's sake' 3.

'On average more than 300 million photos uploaded to Facebook per day in the three months ending March 31, 2012' 4

The intervention that the photographer demonstrates when consciously engaging in the act of photography suggests 'that time consists of interesting events, events worth photographing' 5, and although these events maybe worth photographing, are they however 'events' worth 'seeing'.

The original use of 'social networking' was to keep in touch, retrace, communicate with distance acquaintances, facilitate special interest groups, share common themes and so on. However now it seems that many are used far more trivially to simply archive 'memories' or broadcast running visual commentaries of the user's lives [whether these lives are 'real' or decorated versions will be discussed later] with often inane images of their latest latte, ingrowing toenail or drunken experience. Although many users of course do post images that are of interest to their 'friends' or 'followers', the vast majority are 'snapshot' frames of banal occurrences or observations that are only ever entertaining and relevant to the uploader themselves, or to their 'network' for a fleeting ephemeral moment; until the next photograph from another 'feeder' is 'accepted'.

2. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p24

3. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p93

4. Facebook.com, *Key Facts*, 2012, NewsRoom page

5. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p11

These types of photographs seem to offer a 'certification of experience' and 'by converting experience into an image' 6 they become a 'souvenir' of this 'event'. These souvenirs of experience are then displayed to all those who wish to see, who in turn become 'tourists' in the feeder's 'online' realities. The notion of constantly updating your history with new souvenirs of 'experience' eventually renders the feeder themselves as a tourist in their own reality, conceptually engaged in cataloging their existence in which they are vicariously a tourist; the extraction or in many cases the outright substitution of mental memory in favour of capturing it as a digital memory, essentially 'offering a stand-in for actual experience' 7, distances the user from the physicality and intent of the original memory itself; they relive their experiences through the online images not the images of the memories themselves; taking a metaphorical 'tour' through their memories via the archival timeline of their pictorial online 'lives'; 'people should be enjoying their vacations, not taking hundreds of pictures of it and putting them on Facebook.'8

The notion of archiving experience is of course nothing new, we have all seen or have photo albums that we have leafed through, however, the use of a physical photo album alludes to a pertinence within the images, as they need to be selected, printed, ordered and fixed into the album. The album has integrity, as although more albums can be bought and filled, the selection process is still paramount, the images [normally] have resilience to time and shifting context as they have been picked to accompany or embellish a lived experience, they have an inherent hierarchy to other images that were not selected for inclusion, the intention and effort to print, crop and install decrees a degree of provenance. This is the fundamental difference with the 'online album' as they have limitless volumes and an infinite amount of 'virtual' pages to fill, and it is this lack of real life physical constraints of size and storage, that means the users do not need to, and consequently probably don't have any inclination to, select or censor the 'collections' by any criteria.

Of course it is not only the unfettered ability to upload copious amounts of data that creates this 'everyman tourism', but also the instant ability to take a photo and upload it from a mobile phone or computer. Photography in practice originally involved seeing something worth retrieving a camera for, then operating it, then printing it and so on, but now camera technology and the ability to push the images to a network instantaneously, all from the same device, has rendered, in many cases, the art of photography null. Taking images of anything, anywhere at anytime has resulted in this 'selection' process becoming defunct; the immediacy of 'certifying their experience' is an essential aspect of social media; the 'value' of the event experienced is less so.

6. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p99

7. Liz Wells, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p377

8. Robert Lane Greene, *Intelligent Life Magazine*, 2012, p75

This ability to immediately update ones event experiences and for them to be instantly accessed by the following 'sightseers' encourages the 'tour guide' uploading to be even more active and unrelenting; 'through the camera people became customers or tourists of reality' 9. The need to be 'seen' to be active and therefore presumably 'interesting', introduces another aspect of the Facebook style use of photography; that of 'reality'.

'Nothing is more acceptable today than the photographic recycling of reality, acceptable as an everyday activity...' 10

Clearly not all the users of social networking sites use photography as stated above, many millions use it as previously mentioned for genuine intentions, however the majority of the earlier quoted 300 million photographs uploaded daily, I fear fall into the category analysed above. My research into the use of photography via first hand examination of the teenage generation has undoubtedly proven to me, they are a lifestyle statement, and often this lifestyle is false, decorated and deceptive; Facebook profile images are cherry picked for impact and status. A Facebook photographic timeline or collection will rarely include images that depict the user in a depressive or negative light; the images portray a fabricated reality of excitement, exploration, adventure, staged 'folly', the spectacular or the dramatic.

'Users' pages are not a genuine portrait, but a careful selection of photos and updates that amount to an illusion.' 11

Although we, as users and 'friends' or 'followers', appreciate this is not necessarily the reality of the user we are sightseeing, we accept this displaced reality as 'an object of regulated exchange' 12 and are happy to reciprocate with similar non-reality images. Social networking allows the user to escape their dominant or predetermined actual lifestyle and present an alter ego that lives up to their desired view of who and what they are or should appear to be. Ironically the necessity to be 'socially networked' is as important as the images themselves and the 'reality' they emit. To be well connected in the social-sphere users have to be seen to be interesting; the 'event experiences' they deem worthy of broadcasting is the indicator; the criteria on which they are judged. They need to constantly rejuvenate their virtual personas with ever more events to maintain their 'friends' total, to maintain the comforting assurance that people still 'like' their 'likes' [and therefore are worthy], and to remain networked into the posted comments on theirs and their groups' 'walls' that keeps them up-to-date with all the 'vital' events of importance, creating a perpetual recycling of acceptance, and as quoted earlier, a 'recycling of reality'.

9. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p110

10 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p115

11. Robert Lane Greene, *Intelligent Life Magazine*, 2012, p75

12. Liz Wells, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p376

The use of images to dictate or suggest a deceptive reality is of course not a new concept. The Situationist Guy Debord's theory of the 'spectacle' introduces this fifty years ago, alluding to the power that exists in saturating the masses with images as a way of intervening or initialising social, political or capitalist change or control. The use of images to portray a personal 'spectacular' existence is readily accepted by, in particular, the younger generations, as they are utterly acceptant of marketing, promotional, political and consumerist use of social media to sell them products or ideologies, therefore the concept of using a similar model to 'sell' themselves as a commodity, as a product, seems perfectly appropriate. They are utterly at ease with evaluating and making moral or ethical judgements on issues, people and so on solely on selective [or not so] images and what they believe they represent. The more convincing, persuasive or titillating the social-sphere images are, the more likely other users are to accept them and in turn accept the user as worthy; the images have the influence to control the reactions of the viewers; the connotations attached to the images are the power. Social-sphere images exert the exact same pressures as the 'spectacular' imagery distributed by the governing media and capitalist industries... what the image 'says' about the user [the product] is the key to them 'liking' [buying] it; bombard and saturate enough and they will 'follow'; 'Social change is replaced by a change in images' 13.

However of course the quote above by John Berger not only relates to the trivialities of the social-sphere but also to the more threatening socio-political domain. Whilst 'social' use of social networking can render the practice of much of its uploaded photography as self propaganda, the same networking model and technologies can be used for a far 'greater' purpose; citizen journalism and the photojournalist.

The well documented use of social networking as a tool to alert the world to civilian atrocities, oppression and so on in, for example, last year's Arab Spring uprising, demonstrates the more 'positive' and activist uses for instant uploading, viral streaming and accessing global networks with relative ease. On the surface this 'real' documentary product appears to have only positive connotations – carrying 'information about a group of powerless people to another group addressed as socially powerful' 14, namely 'us', the 'democratic' west, in the hope of stirring out governments via our displays of support to act on their behalf. However once again we are faced with a few dilemmas. Photography and in the case of the Arab Spring, moving images captured on phones, serves superficially at least, as an 'immediate testimony' to the facts; the reality? However, it is this perceived validity that causes a paradox as its potential 'truthfulness... encouraged its deliberate use as a means of propaganda' 15. With this form of citizen journalism photography we are continually faced

13. John Berger, *About Looking*, 1980, p60

14. Martha Rosler, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p263

15. John Berger, *About Looking*, 1980, p53

with questions of authenticity of truth, as 'photographs carry no certain meaning in themselves, because they are like images in the memory of a total stranger, that they lend themselves to any use' 16. Although we are morally encouraged to believe what these raw, shaky, sometimes genuinely horrifying sequences portray, we are also mindful of the intentions of the person filming, and of course the fact that we are seeing the footage outside of its original context; crucially we are denied knowledge of what preceded or succeeded the filmed event, who is filming it and their bias and the details surrounding the initiation of the scenario itself. I am not questioning or doubting the 'authenticity' of the footage seen during the Arab Spring, but we can call into question its neutrality and therefore its 'reality' relating to the moment and its 'truth'. This slightly differs again when 'official' photojournalists are used, for example 'embedded' BBC reporters and so on, as although the bias is seemingly negated as the BBC have no obvious military or constitutional affiliation with the uprising, it was often from the rebels' 'protective' shelter that the majority of the footage was gained, and therefore assumptions on what they were directed or permitted to see and the hint of sympathetic bias that would have been inescapable as footage is taken of their dead supporters, creates doubt over its 'absolute' objectivity. Once again we have a mediated series of images, whether it is 'managed' by the BBC or the coalition of rebels; both have selected and edited their packages to suit their desired outcome and intended 'user', both are offering alternative realities in that neither offer the 'absolute' as 'photographs in themselves do not narrate' 17, and in this particular case it is the 'voiceover', whether a news presenter or the voices recorded on the phone, that colours the tone of the account, be it genuinely stressed and frightened on the phone or subtly pro-democracy and anti-dictatorial on the BBC. Both types of footage tarnish us with a somewhat self-satisfying unmerited and misdirected sense of 'knowing' what is going on in the world, that is conversely and ultimately subject to 'spectacular' forces; namely the social and political interpretations of global news and media corporations.

Although not directly linked to the use of social network photography but still relevant to the 'online' communities, the debates surrounding 'spectacular' editorial interference is exemplified by the recent controversy concerning the online 'whistle blowing' network of Wikileaks. Here again we are not so much faced with a doubt to the 'authenticity' of the footage, for example the gunning down of 'civilians' or 'insurgents' [see appendix for YouTube link] by the USA Army in Iraq in 2010, only a cynic would assume the recording released has been 'staged', but it is the assumption of the 'feeder' of the material, in this case Julien Assange, that he is showing us the 'truth', the ultimate 'reality'. Again of course we see a 'reality' of an atrocity, we moralistically, ethically and visually believe what we are

16. John Berger, *About Looking*, 1980, p57

17. John Berger, *About Looking*, 1980, p55

'seeing', but we have to question, as discussed above, the creditability, the neutrality, and therefore the coloured 'spectacular' inference of the 'edit' we are presented with. Somewhat ironically Wikileaks' mission is surely to challenge the 'spectacular' manipulation of the global institutions of government, the military and the news media, yet it has hypocritically applied the same model of hierarchical 'selection' and equally denies the viewers the absolute, transparent perspective, thus mirroring the tactics used by the 'global corporations' it paradoxically hopes to challenge. In the particularly case of Wikileaks, Julien Assange clearly has a 'personal' agenda, and although it may seem worthy and a genuine attempt to uncover and expose the corruptive and sinister elements within governments around the world, his own 'spectacular manoeuvring' by withholding information, his 'trickling' of the released material, his choices of timings and media 'channels' for its display, is equally as manipulative as the 'official' institutions. In a recent interview with the Guardian Newspaper, he concludes that by releasing the material 'people around the world are able to comment on it and put it in context, and understand the full situation' 18, yet unfortunately due to his equally cynical use of 'spectacular power' of selective images, selective outlets and edited contexts and texts, we as a public, have tarnished him with the same Machiavellian influences as the 'authorised' media and governmental organisations. Paradoxically however we are only perceiving this 'smearing' of his intentions through further secondary 'spectacular' interference, and although Wikileaks' initial release of the moving image material on the internet and through social media networks may have been a genuine attempt to bypass spectacular control, his resultant re-spectacular use of the internet and the media as a whole, is equally tainted with manipulative objectives; 'the production of images furnishes a ruling ideology' 19, whether they are official institutions or rogue activists, they are specifically 'designed' to influence power and enforce a predetermined philosophy. Philosopher Jacques Rancière aptly sums up the duplicity of the spectacular issues discussed above commenting 'the mere fact of viewing images that denounce the reality of a system already emerges as complicity with the system' 20.

The use of photography and moving image in the social-sphere or as a tool for activists or socio-political objectors returns us to the previously discussed notion of the 'tourist'. We are metaphorically given a guided tour of the composed 'reality' of the 'other', be that 'other' a friend on Facebook or the unfortunates in an atrocity. Both result in an objectified or 'symbolised' reality; one that has inherent distance that is almost impossible to close, as even the most seemingly naturalistic shot or instant, terrifying frame from the frontline has been imperceptibly 'composed', 'selected' or 'framed' to either purposely suggest or alternatively involuntarily convey a message.

18. Julien Assange, *The Guardian Online*, 2010, 3.23-3.31

19. John Berger, *About Looking*, 1980, p60

20. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 2009, p85

Although the message may not have been predetermined, especially in spontaneous style of image capture, we subsequently as 'tourist' unintentionally, automatically and often unknowingly, layer on our own narrative or context, be it justified or not, as 'any response to an image is inevitably rooted in social knowledge – specifically, in social understanding of cultural products' 21. Our contemporary saturation of such 'instant' images; shaky phone footage from war zones, grainy surveillance recordings, random snapshots of everything and anything, has not only potentially infected us with 'reality' image fatigue, as we are encouraged to 'see' everything for 'seeing's sake' regardless of its nature, context or substance, but also the massive proliferation in the 'act' of taking photographs or film footage has 'set up a chronic voyeuristic relation to the world which levels the meaning of all events' 22. Furthermore our 'social understanding of cultural products', as mentioned above, is constantly feathered with touristic naivety that results in us often misinterpreting our distanced 'sympathy' to the 'other' as solidary 'empathy' with the 'other'. The constant bombardment of 'first hand', 'real' footage from an urban spectacular or a war zone for example 'has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it' 23, blunting our truly subjective ability to empathise as, certainly in the western world, we have remained stubbornly 'objective tourists', as although we 'see' the event, we perceive the 'act' of the photographer or film maker as a non-interventional process, and thus a reality gap is generated, reinforcing the distance to the 'other'; the photograph is representing the 'reality' of the action but in most cases is not actually playing a part in it. However with the Arab Spring for example, much footage surfaced taken by the actual protesters from within the actual time and space of the event, however even though this does seem to bridge the gap to the 'other' as the 'other' is actually engaged in the event, once again we are faced with the fact the 'other' in question chose to take a photograph or film the event; 'the person who intervenes cannot record; the person who is recording cannot intervene' 24.

A final thought on the use of photography within the citizen journalism/photojournalism debate is the meaning we attach to the 'way' a subject or scenario is actually photographed. We accept and expect to see 'reality' shots or film footage of war zones and so on to be awkwardly framed, motion blurred, pixelated or out of focus due to the instant and spontaneous situation the photographer would have found him or herself in, serving to heighten the perceived authenticity of the image [see appendix - fig 1], even though, as mentioned above, the photographer is only 'recording' not actually participating in the event. The notion of extracting or investing a certain degree of meaning from the particular way it is photographed again blurs the distinctions of 'reality' and the 'other', as it is not always the

21. Martha Rosler, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p268

22. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p11

23. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p21

24. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, p12

subject matter that creates the impression but it is the way 'the photographs reproduced it which appealed to the emotions and therefore created the sensation' 25. We now feel we can only accept 'real' photographs if they demonstrate the characteristics of a blurred, jerky jeopardy as they misleadingly reward us with a sense of empathy and realism; placing us 'on the shoulder' of the 'other'; the technical shortcomings of blur, graininess, errant exposure and so on have perversely become conventions in capturing the 'reality' of a spectacle, demonstrating the aesthetic concessions broadcast media 'will accept in its commitment to presenting the 'real' story' 26. Conversely a patiently captured, polished, well composed shot, like the rioter on the front page of the Guardian Newspaper [see appendix – fig 2], becomes more of a 'public declaration' image, designed to articulate the issues in a sophisticated, news savvy manner. It purposely distances itself from the 'other' to firstly reassure the intended target audience of the cultural and socio-political 'distance', ratifying, in this case, that the Guardian readers' 'relative distance has not been abridged; we [the middle classes] are still doing much better than they are' 27, and secondly to, in this case, create an iconic image for the time; the composition, colour grading and selection of that particular image from, one would imagine, many shots of various passing rioters, to capture the 'perfect' stereotypical rioter. The photographer is simply recording, and is making no attempt to appear active or participatory in the event, this shot is designed to attract, sell and encompass the 'decisive moment' that embodies the 'bourgeois' sentiment of that moment... as presumably many 'non-stereotypical' rioters would have walked into frame too.

The evolving use of citizen journalism as a form of photojournalism in recent years has undoubtedly raised the awareness of perceived 'reality' in our news feeds, both online and on broadcast media. However the final taboo of displaying the irrevocable 'truth' is the photography, filming and exposing of 'death' itself. Again, as we become ever more accustomed to the 'virtual' close proximity to the spectaculars of war and urban dissent, the need to present the ultimate statement of the 'real', to either shock the masses into action or to alert the world to unseen brutalities, results in images of the dead and battered becoming more prevalent but subsequently more readily accepted; becoming commonplace. Here the audience theory of 'desensitisation', a refinement of the 'hypodermic needle' model conceptualised by the free thinking cooperative of sociologists collectively known as the 'Frankfurt School' in the early to mid 20th century, suggests that we would [and subsequently admittedly have] become 'desensitised' to shock. Over the last fifty years, the accumulative intensification and readiness to embrace, encourage, exploit, broadcast, utilise and glamorise ever-more shocking and accurately 'realistic' fictional images via films, TV, print

25. Karin E. Becker, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p294

26. Karin E. Becker, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p301

27. Martha Rosler, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p269

and most recently, in computer game design, has in many cases rendered us indifferent to what should be objectionable in 'real' life; for example 'exposé' news reporting and terrifying 'real-life' photojournalism from urban war zones. The original intent of 'documentary' style photography and filming to expose these outrages in the hope to galvanise compassion and support, has been diminished by the 'grey' area that now exists around not only its aesthetic objectives and its 'numbed' essential value, but also its 'feeder's' aims, resulting in accusations of premeditated 'exoticism, tourism, voyeurism, trophy hunting and careerism' 28.

However regardless of its 'spectacular aim' and whether we have been 'desensitised' or not, with these types of images we are neither faced with an 'authenticity' dilemma or a need to question its relation to its 'reality' [in that these images are clearly 'of the dead'], yet we are faced with what we are supposed to feel and how we are supposed to react to this mode of 'ultra-real' images. It could be argued that the images of the dead are not simply to show us the effects of the event, or the trauma of the experience, or even to encourage distant 'touristic' empathy or sympathy, but it is in fact to make us feel guilt, but not a touristic guilt in a 'thank God its them and not us' way, but the guilt we feel [or should feel] as a result of wilfully engaging in tragic voyeurism whilst rarely willing to intervene. It could also be argued that our 'genuine' interest in these images lies in that these events 'threaten the health and security of polite society' 29 and they in fact only serve to 'awaken the self interest of the privileged' 30. Our collective guilt is a result of not only our shared inaction but also the bitter taste of 'self-preservation' that, even after seeing horrific images of death and abuses, renders us 'conscientiously' reluctant to physically intervene, join an arbitrary demonstration, sign up to a protest Facebook group, or even regularly give to a disaster fund. It is only when we see 'images of action, images of the true reality that can immediately be inverted into their true reality, in order to show us that the mere fact of being a spectator, the mere fact of viewing [intolerable] images, is a bad thing' 31, that we feel 'true' guilt. This is certainly true in the western world over the last fifty years or so, as this guilt is inherent in us all, as we are [relatively] 'safe' and distant from the 'others' that may cause destruction, and it is this somewhat self-satisfied 'protectionism' that fuels this fundamental shame that is re-triggered when we see an image of utter devastation or pain. We are all culpable of 'spectating' these types of images since particularly the Vietnam War, with the famous image of the screaming burnt naked girl running down the road but also well before that. The images of death and suffering acknowledge this guilty predisposition and it is this that makes the images, according to Jacques Rancière, 'intolerable', suggesting the only viable reaction to the 'evil'

28. Martha Rosler, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p263

29, 30. Martha Rosler, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p262

31. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 2009, p87

images is one of action, yet as a consumable commodity, the images become routine and we become passive, as the vast majority of those viewing and commenting on the images 'will forever remain spectators of a life spent in the image' 32. As a consequence we have become accustomed to substituting 'action' for mere 'knowing'; confusing the premise that by thinking we 'know' what is going on through the reception of images, we are in some way supporting, helping or highlighting the issues. This effect is known as 'narcotizing dysfunction'; an audience reception theory hypothesised by American sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld, in the late 20th century. It suggests that viewers overdosing or being overwhelmed by a particularly source or style of image presentation [recent 24 hour news coverage of Syria or Libya for example] become steadily more apathetic to the complex issues presented through the visuals, however not 'desensitisationally' as discussed earlier, but more a 'bloating of information'; the repetitive images and the overburdening of information [maybe frequently changing or shifting in perspective] firstly may instill a false sense of 'informed' knowledge; the 'overdosing' may in fact be confusing the viewer's understanding and secondly, they believe the act of 'knowing' about it and maybe discussing it, is enough to placate their apathy to act.

We are 'guiltily' able to walk away, turn off or ignore the images as essentially 'documentary is a little like horror movies... transforming threat into fantasy, into imagery' 33 and that is where, for the most part, it remains; a 'filmic depiction' of the horrendous events, presented to us in the safe, bubble wrapped, conventional form of mediated imagery; 'spectacularly' censored for our western tastes.

The photograph has become commodity, as consumable as food. We pick and choose what to 'see' and what not to, we make rapid value judgements on its validity and authenticity from not only what is 'represented' but also what is not, we are equally effected by the way it is photographed, where and by whom it is presented and by our perceived or not 'tourist' status. Many of the images we produce and see on the internet or push and stream on social networking sites, be it in the social-sphere or as citizen journalism, offer us a 'reality', a reality the uploaders believe to be of 'truth'. However as we have debated, truth and 'reality' are not always possible, compatible or even wanted in a photograph. From the trivial image of folly on Facebook to a horrific scene of the dead, the photograph offers its own bias, it can operate its own context; sometimes intentionally governed by the photographer, sometimes not, sometimes re-manipulated by the 'spectacle', sometimes not and sometimes totally controlled by the 'act' of photography itself; the process can automate an involuntary perception or effect [guilt, for example, as previously discussed] that is unknown, un-designed and uncontrolled by the photographer.

32. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 2009, p88

33. Martha Rosler, *The Photography Reader*, 2003, p263

Ultimately photographs are an 'attempt to contact or lay claim to another reality' 34, and it is the use of the word 'attempt' that clearly defines this investigations conclusions. Regardless of the photographer's intentions, or the subject's motivations, the photograph can never offer absolute 'reality'. As human beings we are incapable of utter subjectivity concerning the act of photography; it may seem imperceptible at the time but we have an original intention of stopping to take the photograph of something that has 'caught our eye', we have an intention to frame certain elements, we have intention to take only a selected amount of shots, we have intention to show it and we choose where and to whom to show it to... all these elements accumulatively degrade the intrinsic original quality of its 'reality'.

We cannot avoid being or becoming a 'tourist' whether we are simply looking at a 'friends' online gallery or 'actively' recording urban unrest.

*Reality only happens when the camera is **turned off**.*

Appendix

Fig 1 – referenced p8



Screen Shot - Libya Street Battle Phone Footage; 1.54s; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ-9gVezzUo> - uploaded 08/ 2011

Fig 2 – referenced p9



Guardian Newspaper Cover: Cover date 9th August 2011: <http://animalnewyork.com/2011/08/rioters-all-in-for-guardian-cover/>

USA Army attack in Iraq in 2010 – referenced p6

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qb7QRYI15Go>



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