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# behold, be still

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## ABSTRACT

Behold, be still illuminates my predilection, that of a portrait photographer, which is driven by a fascination with viewing and collecting the 'other', the male, now extending into this suite of still moving portraits. Through this act and in my art practice, I uncover the vulnerabilities, both for myself and for my subjects, as they are offered for scrutiny on screen to become 'public', unlike their previous position in my photographic archive, which is private. I reveal for the first time my pathology in the drive to collect surrogates and stand-ins, to console the loss and give solace for the absence of one- revealing a latent scopophilia.

Photography histories, specifically portraiture, and the moving image are discussed, focusing on the binaries of the medium/s, their reflective and reflexive qualities, and their inherent ability to reveal and conceal.

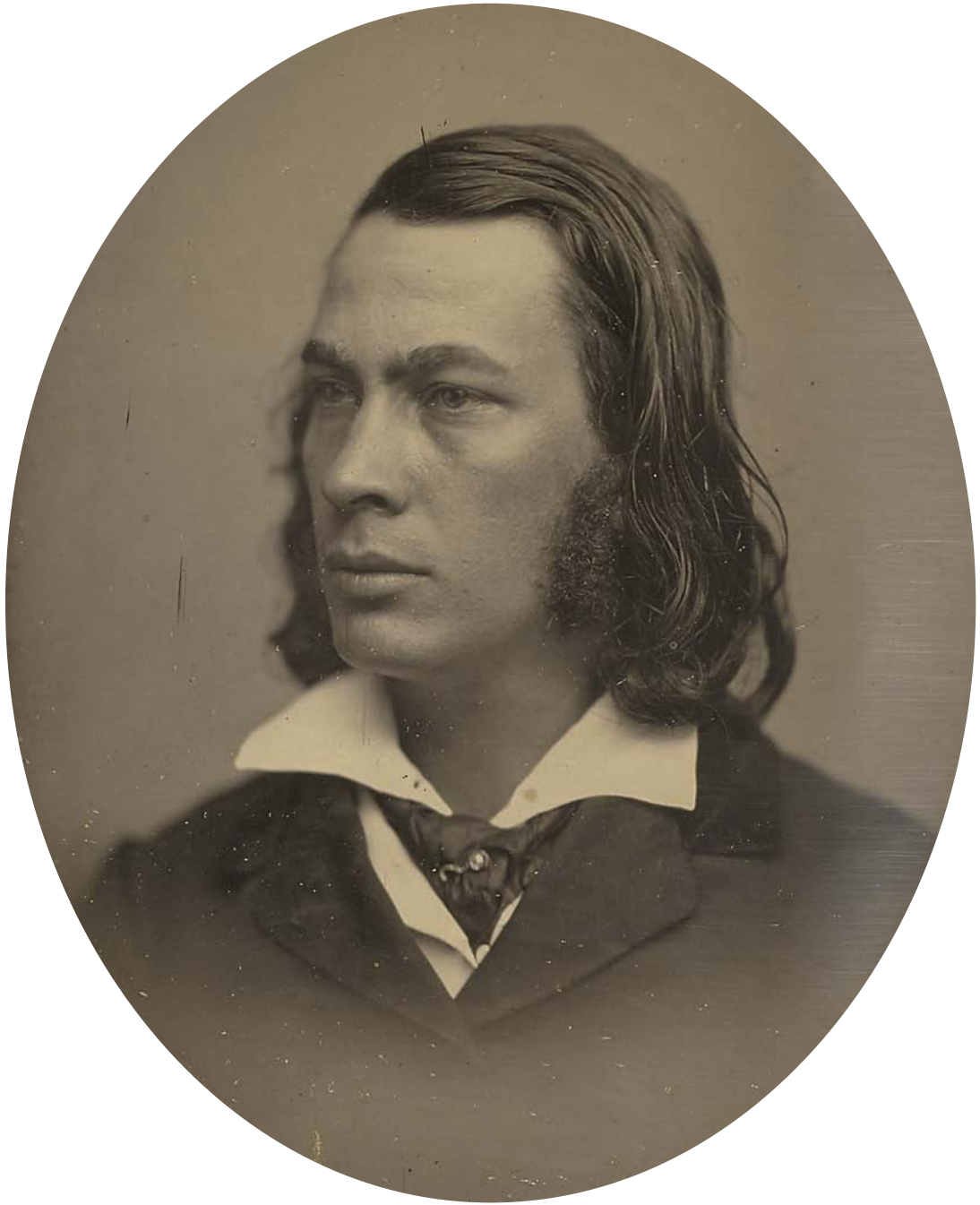
My visual inquiry is an expansion to experiencing the portrait by presenting the sitters as close to 'themselves' via the medium of high definition video portraits. I expel the implications of women looking at men, and review the work of both significant and historical feminine influences and contemporary women artists positioned and working in this territory and who employ both film and photography.

I highlight Victorian women and the melancholic age, where photography is deeply embedded, tracing the origins and lineage to my current work.

I seek to define and locate the notion of a beautiful masculine, investigating what it is to view, receive, and collect between the axis of photography and video via the intimate exchange and operatives of my gendered and privileged gaze. The success is determined by the tension between these two machines and resulting portraits, as the act in sitting for a portrait with the technology of today, renders a more 'accurate' portrayal. From this the moving portrait completes the desire and an opportunity to obtain and possess the beloved after their absence. Crucial issues become apparent as I examine the imprint of the real in the photograph, the camera as a surrogate for myself, and the passive yet consensual subject.

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(Fig. 1). George Lippard. *Photographer Unknown*. (ca. 1850).

*For J x*

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Lastly, I offer gratitude and recognition to my extensive collection of sitters. This work would not have come to light without your untiring generosity, consensus, participation, and collaboration. And finally to extend my appreciation and give credit to my gallant and ever enduring beloved.

*'In our age there is no work of art that is looked at so closely as a photograph of oneself, one's closest relatives, one's friends, and one's sweetheart.'* ,

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Lichtwark. (1907).

*'Thus from thy power,  
inspiring LOVE, we trace.  
The modell'd image, and the pencil'd face.'*<sup>2</sup>



(Fig. 2). Joseph Wright of Derby. *The Corinthian Maid*. (1782-1784).

<sup>2</sup> Judy Egerton, (1990). Wright of Derby, p.132-34. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Joseph Wright of Derby was patronised for his skills as a portraitist by ceramicist, Josiah Wedgwood, who commissioned and purchased Derby's painting *The Corinthian Maid*. Wedgwood's ceramics imitated the ancient vessels as well as borrowing their motifs, and regarded as descendents from Dibutades' first relief portrait.

# behold, be still

## Outlines of Solace and Surrogacy

In this text I examine and discuss the practice of the portrait photographer, as a taxonomist and collector of typologies- one who has an avid fascination to view and receive the gaze of another, whether it be the face of a stranger, foe, friend or lover.

The distinctive and curious human trait of seeking to locate the absent through a photographic image is examined in consideration to the process of picturing the beloved.

I wish to respond to this desire to collect or render a memento of substitution of the absent beloved, which is evident and positioned firmly within both historical and contemporary collections of photography and nestled in my own biography and art practice.

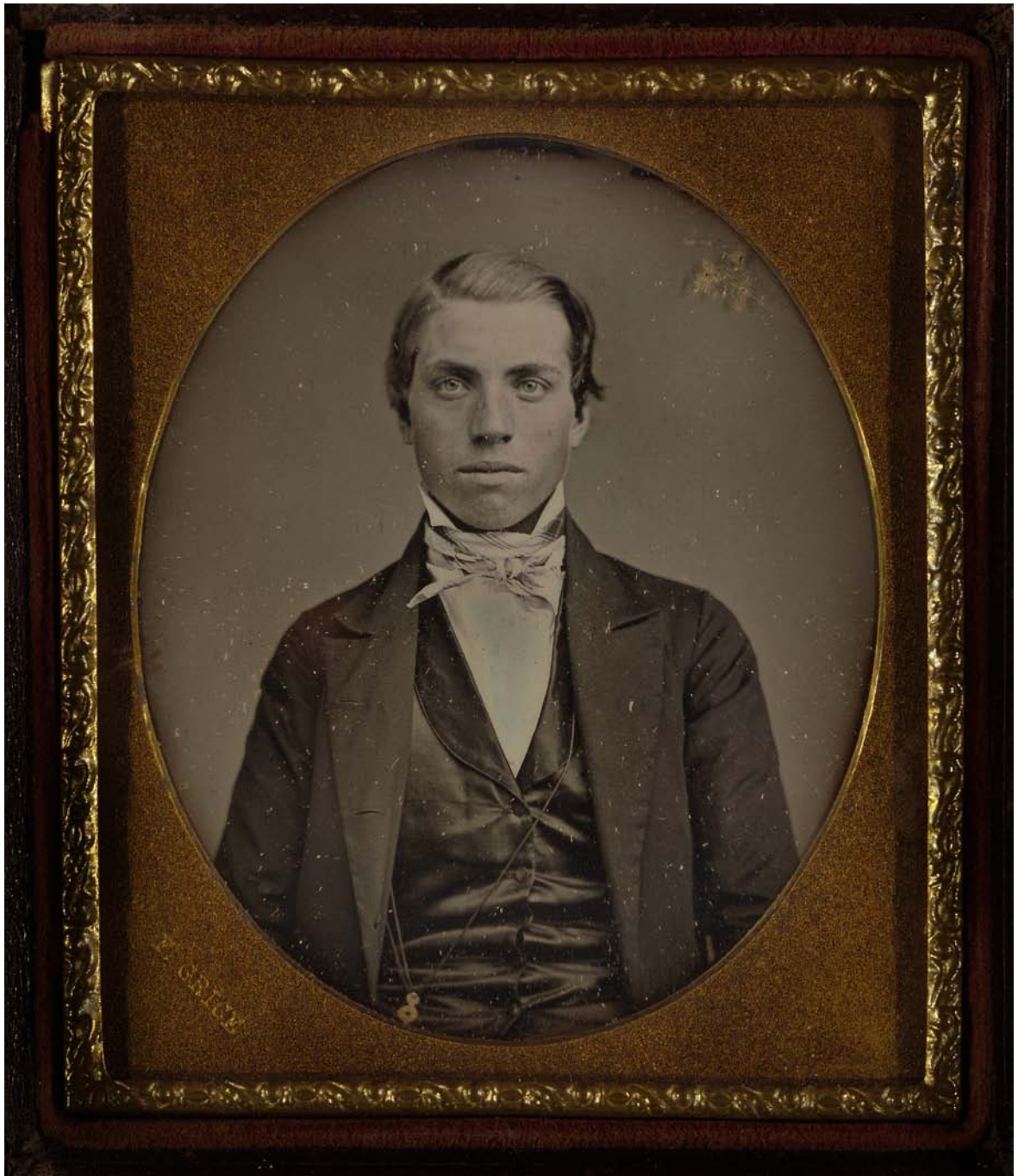
I seek to question why this quest is so inexhaustible, my attachment to possessing a replica of a person, a stand in, now via the medium of the video portrait. With the still moving-image, I explore the potential to conceive and possess a more 'complete' equivalent for this latent absence to be transformed into a readable and animated performance and tangible presence.

My final works re-examine the transaction of a specific gendered gaze and my predilection to picture a masculine surrogate embarking on a collection beyond the fixed photographic portrait.

Exploring the modes of portraiture, critical texts and employing a determined set of parameters, particular concerns were revealed and brought into focus for me to disclose.

I present four key attributes, which have emerged from my practice in order to trace their lineage, illuminate connections, and identify the significant references aligned with my work and this subsequent inquiry.

The Absent Beloved, in which I seek to replace this figure of absence in new portraits. The Photographic Object and its mnemonic powers, where I pay homage to the daguerreotype. The Archive, which emanates from the photographers pathology to collect, and finally to my own Scopic Drive in which I employ and meditate on the two machines- the still and video camera and consider the potential implications of a portraitists feminized gaze and in the acts of picturing the male.



(Fig. 3). Daguerreotype. *Unidentified Man*. (ca.1855).

*The Absent One:*

*Historically, the discourse of absence is carried on by the Woman: Woman is sedentary, man hunts, journeys; Woman is faithful (she waits), man is fickle (he sails away, he cruises). It is woman who gives shape to absence, elaborates its fiction, for she has time to do so.*

(Barthes, 1979, p.39).

## ONE

### The Absent Beloved: Locating the Departed

To begin with the Corinthian Maid, an ancient Greek chronicle from Pliny the Elder, aptly introduces the beginnings of my investigation and draws distinct links to my practice as a female portraitist.

It reveals the lineage of portraiture's beginnings, its antiquated meaning and uncovers also the ancestry and invention of the drawing, and to finally reveal that the history of the portrait originated in love.<sup>3</sup>

The term portrait also originates from the Latin verb *portrahere*, meaning to be 'drawn out', or 'reveal,' echoing parallels and thematics in which I was to unpack and reframe within my ensuing work and research. (Kozloff, 2006, p.9).

This legend retold by Pliny introduces a Corinthian maid deeply in love with a young man and extends to the maid's father the potter, Dibutade, who was the first to invent and ply to his trade, the art of modeling portraits in clay.

Before the maid's beloved was about to depart on a long journey the following day, she was compelled to trace<sup>4</sup> the profile of his face and outline his shadow thrown upon the wall by the light of the lamp, in order to preserve his image clearly before her and as a means of remembering him during his absence. (Batchen, 1999, p.113).

It was through his daughter's drawing of her lover's silhouette where he made his discovery and upon seeing this memorial, Dibutade was able to make a clay impression of the figure due to the accuracy of the traced outline remodeling a face in relief, which he then fired in his kiln. (*Fig. 2*).

This tale discloses some of the qualities inherent in the desire to make a portrait, to hold onto a loved one, to render a memorial, a simulacra or likeness. This simulacra of her lover, became a 'stand in', a surrogate for the Corinthian Maid and as an imprint, reveals the residue of the subject's characteristics from which the tracing originated.

Here the impetus of my investigation reflects on the perceived indexical quality of the portrait and as an object- it offers tangible evidence of a past in which we desire to cling to and cherish- a picture of our own existence via the lives and loves that we have touched.

I had identified a vital connection within my art practice, as my own beloved had departed and was to extend these absences throughout the subsequent decade. The image drawn from the Corinthian Maid, the projection of a loved man is born of desire, and my drive to seek and collect stand-ins gave solace, augmenting my own desire and longing for procuring more male subjects in order to replace the absent.

<sup>3</sup> Pliny the Elder, 'The Inventors of the Art of Modelling'- Book XXXV, Chapter 43, in 'The Natural History'.

<sup>4</sup> 'To dwell means to leave a trace'. Walter Benjamin, 1931. Photography made it possible for the first time to preserve permanent and unmistakable traces of a human being. (Kane, 2008).

My dearest Miss Mitford, do you know anything about that wonderful invention of the day, called the Daguerreotype? – that is, have you seen any portraits produced by means of it? Think of a man sitting down in the sun and leaving his facsimile in all its full completion of outline and shadow, steadfast on a plate, at the end of a minute and half! The Mesmeric disembodiment of spirits strikes one as a degree less marvellous. And several of these wonderful portraits . . . like engravings – only exquisite and delicate beyond the work of the engraver – have I seen lately – longing to have such a memorial of every Being dear to me in the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases – but the association, and the sense of nearness involved in the thing . . . the fact of the *very shadow of the person* lying there fixed for ever! It is the very sanctification of portraits I think – and it is not at all monstrous in me to say what my brothers cry out against so vehemently . . . that I would rather have such a memorial of one I dearly loved, than the noblest Artist's work ever produced.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
*On the Daguerreotype*

(Williams, 1996, p. 2).

A historic and relevant testimony embedded within the canon of photography that specifically heralds the peculiar and cherished object of the portrait- in particular the daguerreotype <sup>5</sup>, caught my attention due to a woman's distinct voice and her pleasure and wonder in the image.

An abundant domain surrounding the miraculous and pioneering invention dominated by male discourse and their scopophilia, and not so laden with annals of a women's opportunity in looking at and desiring the image.

This vivid account of a feminine scopic drive and the joy of a permissible gaze nestled alongside my own pleasures with photography and specifically the photographic portrait.

The letter penned by Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her dearest Miss Mitford in 1856, speaks of her delight in the object, the limitless pleasure that stems from a photographic image and more specifically of the affair and affection we so often have, which transcends the photographic portrait.

It is the period that this appraisal has journeyed and that reaffirms my own origins of joy (and unease), attesting to the photographic portraits inheritance of both its limitation and innate power and through out this text I highlight these prejudices and suspicions embedded within the medium and object.

<sup>5</sup> Daguerreotypes were predominately portraits rendered onto a plate of copper, lightly coated with silver producing a single image, which was not reproducible. After cleaning and polishing the plate, exposure to iodine vapors created a light-sensitive surface that looked like a mirror. The plate, held in a lightproof holder, was then transferred to the camera and exposed to light and then developed over hot mercury until an image appeared. To fix the image, it was then immersed in a solution of sodium thiosulfate or salt and toned with gold chloride. The image was a mirror of the original scene and could only be viewed at an angle needing protection from air and fingerprints so was encased in a hand held glass-fronted box.

The infamous exclamation and eventual prophecy that the daguerreotype would replace painting <sup>7</sup>did in fact occur. The practice and industry previous to the inception of the photographic portrait dominated by the elitist <sup>8</sup> medium of the painted miniature and object of the bourgeois cameo, was to be overshadowed and redundant throughout what is referred to as, the daguerreian era. (Batchen. 2004, p.34).

Following the forthcoming and frenzied adoration of the daguerreotype, initial cautious encounters from Browning's contemporaries is also fixed in this history. It was disapproved by Balzac, 'Mystic, awful!' terrified by such a rendition. Sir Conan Doyle saw ghosts and Nabokov believed photography to be the very origin of deceit and unlawfulness. <sup>9</sup> (Jones. 2008).

In contrast, Elizabeth Barrett Browning voiced only the revelatory joy of the image and followed to adhere that the new technology exceeded the overtly trusted, and cherished miniature portrait and I find this sentiment has endured while looking at daguerreotypes from this age.

There is an almost fetishistic pleasure and admiration for the daguerreotype that originated in the era of (women's) melancholy and romance, which still exists, as the desire to possess a 'replica' and unique object, as was its impetus, was as urgent to what the photograph depicted.

A peculiar scene was revealed in its after-image that offered a sample of the individual and their latent 'self-hood', an equivalence of the real living thing and allowing an intimate engagement. (Lowry & Green, 2006, p.78).

The early photographic process of the daguerreotype was referred to as the 'mirror with a memory' due to the highly reflective surface where the picture plane came to rest and activate the chemical materials, which accurately rendered one's likeness. (Holmes, 1859, p. 738).

Due to the exquisite nature of the photograph itself as an article of beauty, not just the subject rendered but the cased and decorative memento prompted its status as an object d'art and prized possession, for which it is still esteemed.

Countless meditations have been written on the odd and compelling mysticism of the photographic portrait and the way in which it simultaneously authenticates and de-validates a representation of identity. It acts as a binary inciting both an anxiety and jubilation linked to the ideas and actual witnessing of the passing and fixing of time.

Susan Sontag observed photography as being an elegiac and magical art, (Sontag, 1977, p.15). making us aware of the subject's absence and at the same time gives a pseudo-presence- 'weaving together this presence and absence, present and past'. (Iversen, 2007, p. 114).

The photograph had a sense of pertaining a certain sorcery, a token of witchcraft and this notion extended to the collective belief that the daguerreotype possessed talismanic powers and the jewel like and enshrined qualities of the palm sized silvered canvas heightened its mnemonic associations.

Even in this age we are frequently feigned into believing the photograph specifically the portrait, eerily gives us the thing itself as it attempts to replicate a facsimile of the sitter.

<sup>7</sup>The painter Paul Delaroche prematurely announced to the world in 1830 'From this day on, painting is dead'. It is frequently cited statement, uttered as photography was to be made public for the first time, all though he was hasty with the declaration, many miniaturists were put out of business. (Jay, 2004, p.136).

<sup>8</sup>The daguerreotype permitted 'ordinary people' to be immortalised and pictured for the first time, in comparison to the previous commissioned painted or cast portrait which was strictly reserved for a bourgeois clientele and patron.

<sup>9</sup>Gail Jones. (2008). National Festival of Photography Public Lecture. National Library of Australia. Jones considers writers' attitudes to portrait photography, both in being photographed and in viewing images of others.

A Victorian portrait set in a dark and untamed New Zealand, in the midst of colonialisation by British rule, had imprinted itself on my memory. I recalled a particular scene from the contemporary film director Jane Campion's film *The Piano*, as it revealed parallels to my investigations of the photographic portrait and in particular the daguerreotypes distinct and 'magical' traits, which Campion presents in this evocative moment on screen. (Fig. 3). It is also the period and landscape where this view is set and where the directors nostalgic lens stirred a recognition and connection to my own colonial history and as a woman in love. A gendered gaze embedded within the film is also apparent, as a narrated, feminized view from the heroine is offered and from Jane Campion herself.

It has been uttered that photography has the power to turn people into objects that can be symbolically possessed, and in this mise en scène Sam Neil's character peers closely into a daguerreotype of his unknown betrothed, and yet to be beloved. Simultaneously entranced by his own reflection, his gaze shifts from an almost melancholic contemplation of his newly acquired possession, to contemplating himself reflected onto the glass plate, in a strange narcissistic thrall. (Sontag, 1977, p.9).

What triggered my memory from this scene was Campion's almost meditative view of the daguerreotype portrait as it bewitched and arrested Sam Neil's attention after its original inception from a portrait studio, to make this journey to a distant continent and now rest in the hands of its proprietor, becoming an extension of the new beholder.

We see evidence how this cherished object potentially replicated a faithful and uncanny resemblance, a ghostly image, as it stirs and arouses when 'we touch with our eyes' familiarizing ourselves with the person it has and will become from this trace. (Jay, 1993, p. 512).



(Fig. 3). Jane Campion. Stills from *The Piano*. (1993).

The photograph is implicit in its nature in recording a reality that presumes a correlation to truth and as an object enfolded a unique and fixed imprint.

-'For Benjamin, Daguerreotypes retained an aura, an atmosphere for privacy and secrecy, because of their dark shadows or blurred details, due to lengthy exposure times. Their indeterminacy made the subject available to the gaze of the viewer, but with dignity, leaving secrets embedded in the photograph, for viewers to search and discover in their imagination.'  
(Di Bello, 2007, p.20).

Portraits become a testament to a time that out-live the sitter, the photographer, and the viewer by instilling a moment (which is fleeting and temporal), and rendering a time past, revealing a residual trace of the thing that was once there. This echoes Jacques Derrida's thoughts on the 'haunting' of images.

-'It's all about the return of the departed, the spectral is the essence of photography'.<sup>10</sup> (Derrida, 1988, p.34).

I was entranced by this era, a period that I hadn't peered into closely, and began to locate photographic portraits of masculine subjects from the time of Victoria's reign specifically authored by woman. It became apparent to revisit the hallmark of Julia Margaret Cameron's work and to review more closely the parameters she had devised as a woman photographer and portraitist.

Cameron's oeuvre of portraits displays not only the people from this age but a distinctive and feminized gaze revealing a predilection in photographing male subjects, an unusually intimate and bold inquiry from this time.<sup>11</sup>

Her sitters- the 'Great Men' of this age, were studies of her immediate artistic network and close friendships, that celebrated the men of science, letters and the church. The close up, almost life size 'heroic' heads were intended to faithfully record the greatness of the 'inner eminent man, as well as features of the outer man' encouraging a certain proclivity for 'hero worship' and idolatry. (Ford, 2003, p. 66).

Cameron produced nearly three hundred portraits of 'her' men, which displays a unique and gendered exchange between the photographer and her subjects. (Fig. 4, 5, 6).

This focussed study spans the fourteen years of her photographic career and originated as her dearest muse and often-absent husband- another direct link to my work, was (gradually) bedridden or tending to the family's estate in the colonies. (Ford, 2003, p.32). Accompanying Cameron's cherished camera, which was a gift to cope with her isolation and loneliness, was a note that reveals the instrument's intended purpose in promoting this distraction and solace for her beloved's absence.

-'It may amuse you Mother to try to photograph during your solitude.'<sup>12</sup>  
(Ford, 2003, p.32)

<sup>10</sup> Derrida, Jacques. *The Deaths of Roland Barthes*. In Hugh J. Silverman, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Merleau-Ponty* (New York, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> Women and children are the mass of her portrait subjects but 'Cameron's men' hold just as an esteemed position amidst the collections of her photographic portraits. The portraits I present here are not her 'Great Men' but the intimacy and revelation of the beautiful male illustrates these portraits longevity and currency of her gaze.

<sup>12</sup> Transcribed in Julia Margaret Cameron's journal *Annals of my Glass House*. 1874.

A prominent and (almost) lone feminine figure in the history of Victorian photography and within London's predominately male intelligentsia,<sup>13</sup> Julia Margaret Cameron actively pursued her career to be eventually acknowledged beyond the amateur photographic societies.

Her reputation in coercing her male subjects to sit uncomfortably, imprisoned in her glass house, a makeshift studio for hours at a time and to be still often up to four minutes for the exposures duration.

This reveals the commitment and collaboration she demanded from her sitters and I observed parallels in the operatives of my own portrait practice, where I demand similar compliancy from my sitters.<sup>14</sup> (Ford, 2003, p.46).



(Fig.4). Julia Margaret Cameron. *Unknown Man*. 1868-72.

<sup>13</sup> The Cameron's had established intimate friendships with the Brownings, the Tennyson's, Lewis Carroll, Charles Darwin and extensive set of distinguished and influential figures from this period.

<sup>14</sup> 'I want to do a large photograph of Tennyson, and he objects! Says I make bags under his eyes and Carlyle refuses to give me a sitting, he says it's a kind of Inferno! The greatest men of the age, Sir John Herschel, Henry Taylor, Watts, say I have immortalized them- and these other men object! What is one to do?' -Allingham and Radford, Diary, p.87. (Ford, 2003, p. 28).



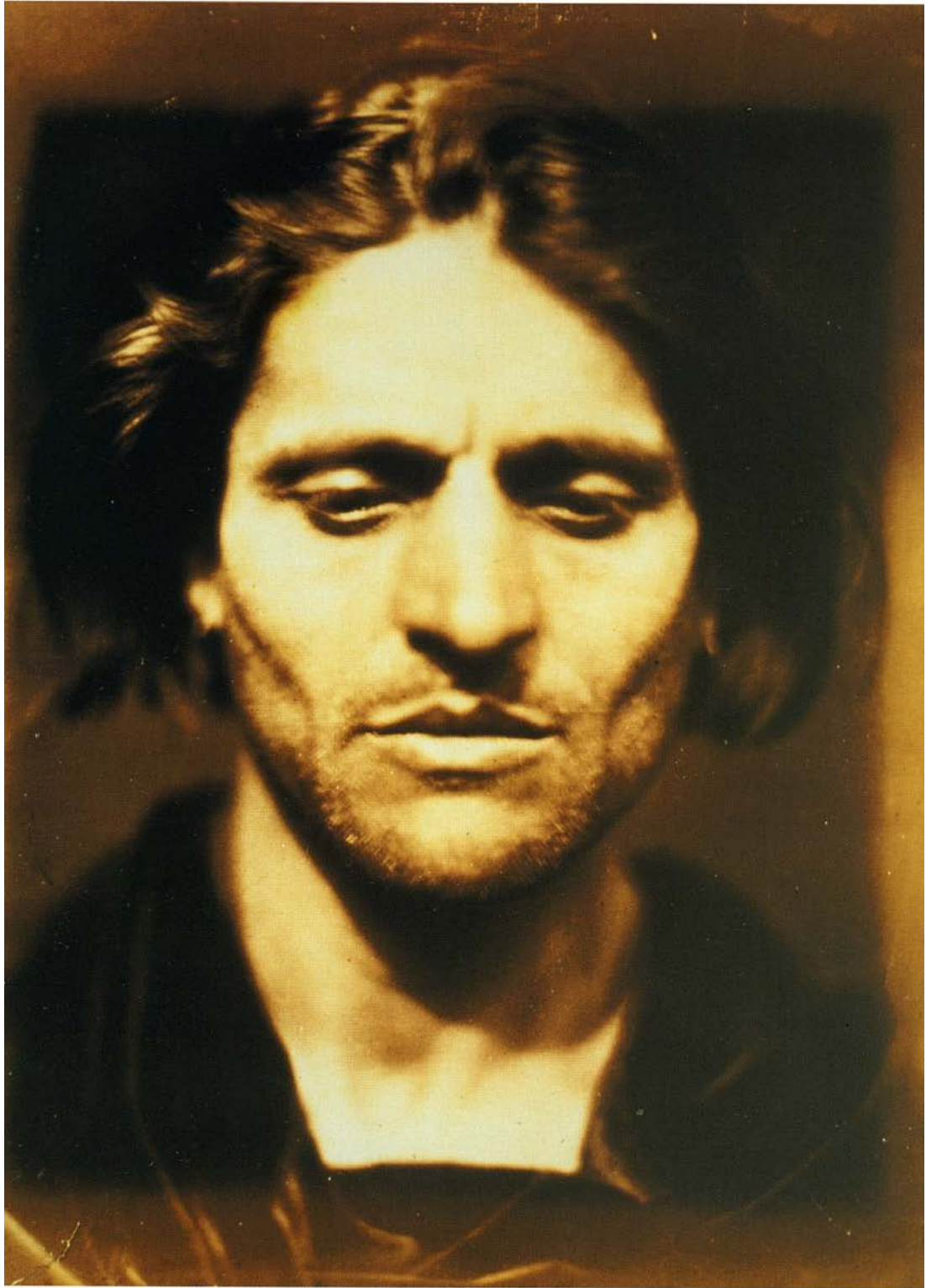
(Fig. 5). Julia Margaret Cameron. *Philip Stanhope Worsley*. 1866.

It is this pleasure in her practice and regard for her sometimes-reluctant male participants that she was driven to collect, which spurred me to reveal my private archive and my 'compulsion' in picturing men.

This negotiation between the photographer and the subject in the 'making' of a portrait, the persuasion, coercion and collaboration is what is unique to the medium and crucial to my art practice and leads me to discuss the specifics of this act throughout the following text.

It has been through these four feminine views- as they discern the woman's gaze, and unabashed voice, their love and desire and a correlation to picturing absence, that buttresses my practice and contributed to my research and in my attempts to locate this untraceable departure, through the substitution and collection of portraits.

'All photographs are at some level, about love and all photographs are triggered, to varying degrees by desire.' (Ewing, 1999).



(Fig. 6). Julia Margaret Cameron. *Iago, Study from an Italian* 1867.

## TWO

### Displaying Masculinity: The Collection on View

A critical concern emerged, for the absence of my cherished subject posed obvious implications and a demand to enlist an understudy or substitution for my original muse.

The compulsion to seek and embark on a collection of 'others' was to perhaps satisfy a 'cure' for this absence, left behind both in my life and within my archive and here the lineage of locating this beauty and boy is considered.

My sample of subjects began from making and collecting portraits of my beloved that extended to recording friendships after his reoccurring absences. This slowly developed to chance discoveries and encounters with unknown faces and strangers in various locales that I was compelled to document though admittedly uncertain of my peculiar drive in this activity.

I began building upon this collection, which now spans over a decade and has been expanding since the first portrait of my beloved was made.

Initially I was unconcerned in picturing a demographical survey of masculinity and it was fairly arbitrary in terms of who I selected to become a subject, though I gave myself one criterion: the boy.

I was not conscious of obtaining a particular 'look', or taxonomy, or following a social index as the archivist and German photographer August Sander's collection was based upon, filling a quota within his exhaustive archives (for which he never satisfied) <sup>15</sup> of 'types' and historical physiognomies. (*Fig. 7*).

I was purely indulging in a quest of locating male beauties but perhaps the similarity I share with Sanders, Cameron and other portraitists I discuss in this text, is this pathology to collect. <sup>16</sup>

*'A photograph can fix a moment of someone's life,  
like a butterfly pierced by a pin.  
The subject becomes a species,  
an exhibition, a taxonomy.'* (Gardiner. 1987).

<sup>15</sup> His catalogue and life-long survey from 1927 to 1945. *People of the 20th Century* depicts a monumental archive (some 600 portraits) which categorizes his subjects and their social typologies: The Farmer, The Skilled Tradesman, The Woman, Classes and Professions, The Artists, The City, and The Last People.

<sup>16</sup> Working also with still video portraiture, Contemporary Dutch artist Fiona Tan pays tribute to August Sanders and his opus *People of the Twentieth Century* for which was the model for her series *Countenance* (2002). Her archive of 21<sup>st</sup> century Berlin residents via the medium of the cinematic portrait, examines the relationships between the viewer and viewed, and of the still and moving image. Tan presented 200 filmed portraits cataloguing their varying professions, borrowing from and yet refiguring Sanders predominately male cast and social archetypes.

This is the route that the photograph can travel, the journey of the photographer's inquisitive, committed nature and the role of inventory when endeavoring to begin a collection, like that of the Lepidopterist.<sup>17</sup> To finally lay rest amidst others, within an archive of curiosity, and an album of delight.

'What is new about a desire', Geoffrey Batchen inquires, 'that already seems so strangely familiar?'. (Batchen, 1995, p.238).

Illustrated depictions of male I had rarely seen beyond the genre and spectacle of fandom and idolatry. The teen girls crush and her collection of the pin-up poster boy was something that was familiar, as I had indulged in this 'pastime'.

These were safe and remote depictions of the male, and operated as the first accessible bridge to view, desire, and gaze at the other in a non-threatening way and idolised the subject, heightening and revealing the fragile beauty in a maturing masculinity.

To view this transition of youth to manhood, the flux of masculinity, the span between boy and man, aroused an interest for which I then focused my camera and gaze upon over the ensuing years.

I was compelled to reframe the picturing of this male for display and public view, no longer clandestinely for my personal archives, though initially I was reluctant to do this, due to the inquiry implicating an autobiographical and libidinal gaze, prefacing my 'taste', and risking its inability to engage a wider and general appeal. In the nature of a confessional study, I began to examine this previously private and intimate act.

I began by examining the look of the male, during the event of a portrait 'sitting' and what this meant. Qualities of masculinity intrigued me, a softness vs. harshness, shyness vs. assertion.

As a portraitist, I had observed these ambiguous gendered traits to be found also in women, but I was curious to picture this other, unfamiliar subject as he presented himself in compliance for my gaze. It became clear to enlist unknown subjects and strangers, to limit the potential expectations and familiarity between the sitter and myself, and to obtain a more 'neutral' portrait. (See Appendix i)<sup>18</sup>

The stylistic and technical parameters for my still archive exhibits considered treatments that determine the subjects and standardize my view by employing the traditional head-and-torso, square format composition and shooting in flat, grey, shadow less light, positioning myself directly before the young male.

The uniformity due to their expressionless faces, presents them enigmatically ordinary denying us access beyond their social mask and direct, unflinching gaze. The wall or façade in which they stand in front of and the attire they have chosen is the only indication of who they are or potentially could be.

Due the grouping and nature of a collection, we scrutinize each portraits detail in an attempt to determine and discern demographics of each individual. As an archive, histories and identities become less important, drawing us in to scrutinize, to ponder, or project.

Photography allows this intimate and unlimited engagement that is heightened by a modulated and fixed way of seeing, allowing 'readings' to take place while viewing the taxonomies.

<sup>17</sup> A lepidopterist catches and collects, studies, or simply observes the species and specimens of moths and butterflies.

<sup>18</sup> Only this sample of sitters from my archive is presented, selected from a survey of more than fifty young men.



(Fig. 7). August Sanders. *Fraternity Student*. 1925.

I became intent in obtaining more ‘personality’ and authenticity from a portrait within the span of the ‘sitting’ therefore opting to explore video and its duration and giving me access to examine the modes of portraiture and of myself as a portraitist. This shift to employ time-based technology exposed a visible intimacy and an authentic rendering of the subject’s identity that contrasts the abrupt, haste span of the still portrait as it captures an all too brief performance in the singular static version. The video camera directs and interprets this transitional space and the transformation device of the machine reveals a more accurate presence of the sitter. The substitution of the absent beloved was better captured in a moving portrait due to the longer sitting required for the videos duration, but also extending the time to view the sitter.

It is here, for the first time I am making my private collection public and I am prompted to briefly regard Andy Warhol’s exhaustive archive that reveals a fascination in the display of the persona and faciality on screen, where he invested in picturing beauty and masculinity via the medium of film and his (whimsical) gaze. The footage and resulting stills from his *Screen Tests* and more specifically *13 Most Beautiful Boys* reveals this penchant for beauty and an all consuming and committed endeavor that never reached completion and rarely exhibited in its entirety outside Warhol’s Factory. <sup>19</sup> (Angell, 2006, p. 245). (Fig. 8).

This crucial example, parallels my own exploits and reveals the nature of the collector and the premise of the archive: it can never be concluded or resolved as there will always be an opportunity for the addition and deletion of its contents. A permissible promiscuity was sanctioned, allowing me an expanded way to look, record and collect. <sup>20</sup>



(Fig.8). Andy Warhol. *13 Most Beautiful Boys*. (1964/65). 16mm.

<sup>19</sup>Warhol created a highly successful pretext for an ongoing collection of film portraits and a concept that allowed him to procure friends, acquaintances and near strangers into posing for his camera where he notoriously added and removed portraits, undecided who was to make his final selection. Forty-two *Screen Tests* of thirty-five men were found and recovered from his archived film boxes, identified by ‘13’ or ‘Beautiful Boy’ and possibly due to censorship at the time were never commercially distributed. The thirteen *Screen Tests* would have a running time of 55 min if screened consecutively. (Angell, 2006, p. 246).

<sup>20</sup>I reflect on the work of American photographer Gary Winogrand’s desirous and unapologetic gaze, an almost pathological drive to collect feminine ‘specimens’ for his notorious archive: *Women Are Beautiful*. 1975.

*'How do I love thee?  
Let me count the ways'.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Sonnett 44. (1852)

## THREE

### A Gendered Gaze: Behold! A Great Beauty

There is a limited visual history in the representation of young manhood and in particular locating notions of the 'beautiful boy'<sup>24</sup> beyond the conventional and conservative portrayals of a typical masculine 'look'. (Greer, 2003, p. 244).

Amidst the histories of the photographic image, examples of the sublime are a familiar subject, as is the desiring and 'othering' of beauty within an image but rarely do these two categories meet- the boy and his beauty.

By locating this beauty in my collection of 'boy's'<sup>25</sup> brought into question the issue of my visual pleasure through a distinct scopic drive and to finally acknowledge and be at ease with a tentative scopophilia.

Historically visual and cinematic pleasures operated and existed for the male spectator and much has been written on the gaze, in particular the scopic operatives of viewing, the look, and regard of the photographic image since its popularity and inception in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Exhausted debate throughout the expanse of almost two centuries has followed resulting in innumerable critiques and theoretical discourse on this previous dominant mode of seeing.

Men look, are active and become empowered in this process of engagement, while women are looked at and are passive. (Metzl, 2004, p.15)

Feminism exposed the one-sided nature of photography, where men did the taking and women submitted to their demands. (Ewing, 1999, p.40).

In a sense I am refiguring this within my work, the young men in my view and before my lens are gazed upon and in turn are both passive and submissive during this odd encounter.

What intrigued me from the photographic portrait sessions and which is extended in the time based portraits, is this distinct active/passive divide that occurs while looking at another man- as a woman.

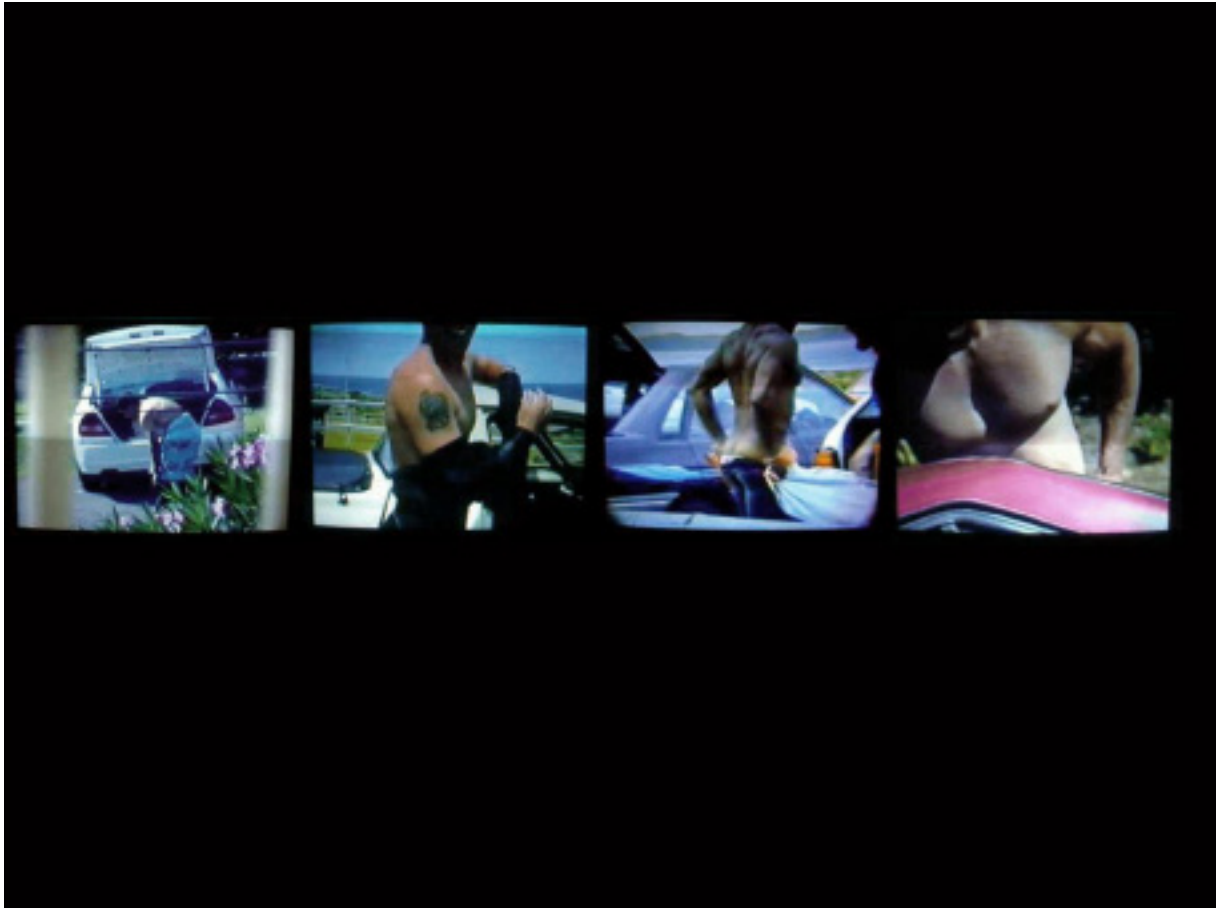
The shift to moving image heightens the reading of this 'living' portrait as it exploits the durational moment offering an unlimited experiential dimension on screen and to receive and reciprocate the look of the male.

Scopophilia is literally a pleasure and curiosity in looking and describes the ways in which previously the male subjects looked.<sup>26</sup> It is a process of discovery and fascination with the subject as opposed to a voyeuristic gaze where the voyeur looks onto a private scene and the observed is unaware of this presence and in being the object of the gaze. (Mulvey, 1975, p. 16).

<sup>21</sup>The male is rarely deemed a beauty or beautiful within most accounts and definitions of literature and non-fiction.

<sup>22</sup>Germaine Greer states, 'A boy is a male person who is no longer a child but not yet a man.' (2003, p. 228).

<sup>23</sup>Freud considered scopophilia to have derived from the male child's preoccupation with a sexual difference and becomes anxiously aware of the 'private and forbidden in his desire to 'complete a sexual object by revealing its hidden parts'. Metzl, Jonathan, M. *The Pharmaceutical Gaze*. Medicine and Media. (2004, p.15).



(Fig. 9). Tracey Moffatt. *Heaven*. (1997). Video. 28 minutes.

*Isn't desire always the same, whether the object  
is present or absent?*

(Barthes, 1979, p.15).

Scopophilia within a cinematic context has larger implications than in the view of still images, specifically within a culture where male viewers have previously enjoyed this socially sanctioned and dominant position of their gaze and privileged spectatorship.

The Victorian period was rife with scopophilia, and by putting my desire in a historical context somehow validated my initial motives. I had attempted to frame my gendered gaze as being scopophilic, and confessing myself as a scopophiliac-ignoring its negative and sexual implications and rebelling against Freud's definition as a perversion.

As I began to research the territory and limits of the term, I realised my work was in fact not entirely driven by scopophilia, though there are traces and I consciously began to suppress its meaning, insisting it was purely the pleasure in looking at beautiful images.

My portraits are not sexualised, as I have focused only on their performance and the beauty in their male posturing that diminishes and dulls a libidinal scopic drive.

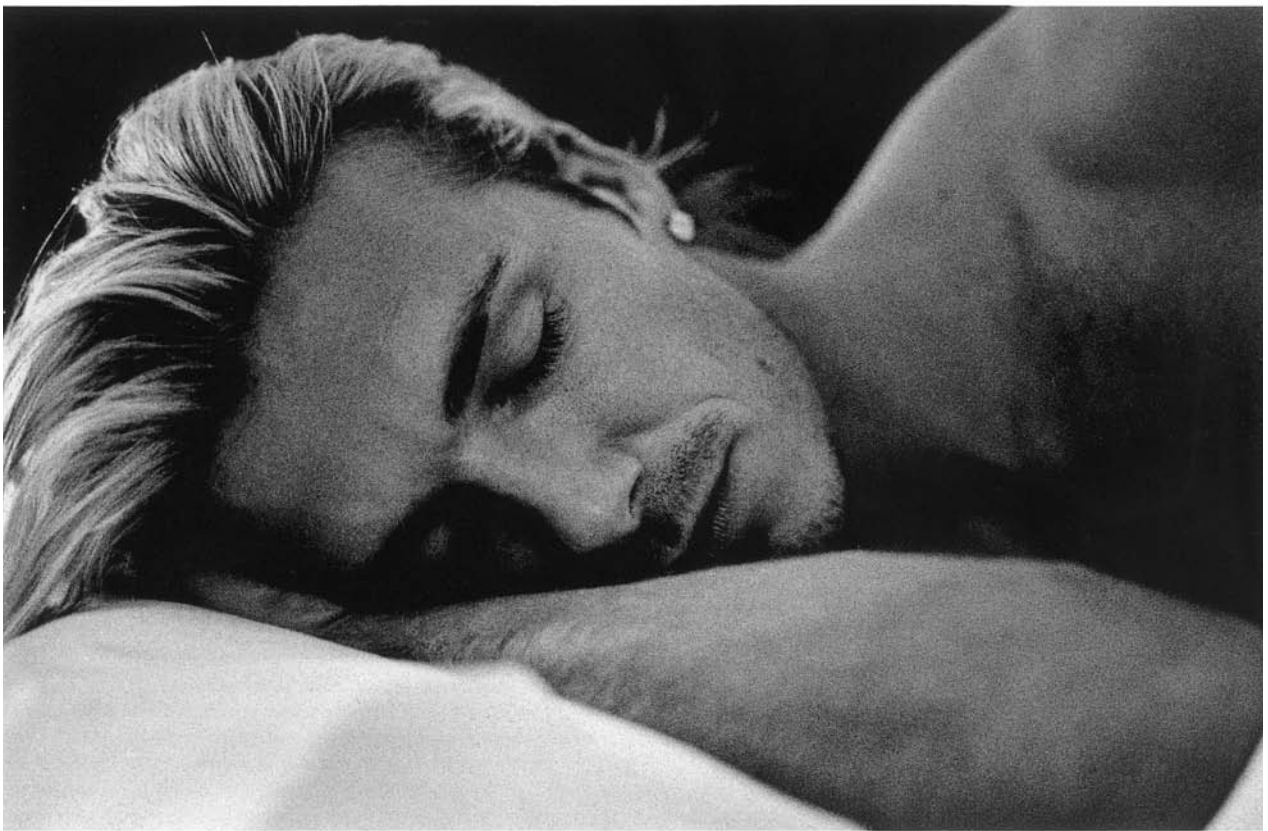
A contemporary example of the reversal of a historical and patriarchal look is revealed in the video artwork *Heaven* by artist Tracey Moffatt where she unashamedly reveals herself as a voyeur and paying tribute to the female gaze while nodding to Degas.<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 9).

Exploiting the visual parameters and genre of amateur video and shooting footage of an emblematic icon of masculinity, the surfer, changing into his wet suit in public Moffatt exploits this power of the look.

By enlisting her friends also in this act of illicitly watching and recording from car windows, she subverts the previously predominate male precedent of desire, the privileged position of a gaze and the pleasure of looking upon the (unaware) masculine subject.

David Company asks, 'Is the gaze of photography essentially fetishistic while film's is essentially voyeuristic?' (Company, 2007, p. 15).

<sup>24</sup> Degas defended his privileged voyeuristic and scopophiliac gaze and approach to painting woman as he described the paintings of his bathers as reflecting the joy experienced by a boy peaking through the key-hole. Eunice Lipton, *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*. (1987).



(Fig.10) Sam Taylor Wood. *David*. (2004).

**M**y scopic drive becomes a reversal of this customary voyeurism that Moffat examines in her work, as the camera is not concealed from my sitters, nor is my gaze. The sitting is no longer a private act, but an obliging performance from the sitters themselves, consenting to sit before the lens and my gaze. I am refusing this mode of seeing by inverting the male act of looking and deliberately enacting a feminized scopic drive (presenting the danger of women seizing the camera) and by opposing scopophilic's traditional gendered connection between an active and passive view.

Through this, I am afforded an opportunity in a lingering stare and intimate exchange without risk or danger as the subjects would never look at me in this way without the camera.<sup>8</sup>

This extended act of looking as the camera permits me to do is a precarious activity that I would not have access to or be able to participate in, without such a device. A primary and traditional example of women's experience and position in the image and film is in her role as spectacle, passive object, and other.

The power associated with the right to looking upon the other as an object historically, was strictly for white bourgeois men but in my view, this privileging has now transgressed into an act of compliancy that stems from my original role as a portrait photographer. (Pollock & Parker, 1981, p.40).

The culture and history of looking, within the parameters of a gendered gaze has been exhaustibly discussed by many feminist and critical theorists and embedded firmly within the discourse of essentialist feminist thought and more recently post feminist film theory.

In turn, these debates have been and are still currently explored by contemporary woman artists specifically working with photography and moving image.

Eminent and renown feminists such as Luce Irigaray identified the potential inadequacies and inequalities of psychoanalytically grounded theory of the gaze and in particular the masculine scopic regime.<sup>25</sup>

Laura Mulvey followed closely and was celebrated for her seminal and pivotal text that acknowledged the dominant male gaze of cinema and the psychological distances between the spectator and screen relationship, which positioned the camera's gaze on the woman as passive object. (Mulvey, 1975).

She identified the operatives of pleasure and its relationship between the male oriented gaze and desire in film and has exhaustibly revisited her original argument, recently identifying cinema to be reconfigured by 'new viewing' via the new technologies of our digital age. (Campany, 2007, p.15).

Kaja Silverman, a central figure in this current debate, extends from Mulvey's original and critical essay, establishing and sanctioning a new position and scopic operative for woman, as no longer the spectacle but as an authority to assert her place as the female spectator, to where her gaze is prominent.

She presents an inverse of the male gaze, specifically within the cinematic conventions and the operatives of looking, where the woman has an opportunity and ability to engage in and employ a privileged scopophilic drive.

A crucial and contemporary influence, and who employs a cinematic and gendered scopophilia is French auteur Claire Denis. She reframes and uncovers the premise of a beautiful masculine and the subject of foreignness in her film *Beau travail*, focusing her gaze on an unseen shell of masculinity that unfolds on screen. (Fig. 11).

Her view, and muted narrative is a cinema of slow and lingering observation, revealing the defining and implicit power of the look: her look, theirs (the male subjects) and finally to ours as the passive spectator.

<sup>25</sup> Renown as a forefront figure in establishing feminist, philosophy, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural theory and for her seminal works, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) and *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977).



(Fig. 11). Claire Denis. Still. *Beau travail*. (1999-2000).

This unknown view of male bodies stimulates a potential libidinal curiosity by heightening the *mise en scène* through a desirous gaze. Denis is acutely aware of the cinema's mastery and ease in proffering such responses via the look and towards the cinematic screen and exploits these conventions within her untraditional story telling. (Beugnet, 2004, p. 4).

We receive certain tensions in the deciphering of masculine beauty on display and an ideal of male posturing is presented, a hardness, and yet a sensuality on the surface of their physiognomy which Claire Denis offers us to regard.

Similarly, artist Sam Taylor Wood's silent gaze is long and slow<sup>4</sup>, and invites the viewer into an intimate space where our attention is focused and mesmerised by the serene and sleeping beauty, David Beckham. A contemporary archetype of masculinity due to his public status as celebrity, and eminent athlete. (Fig. 10).

Beyond the gaze of Wood and the lens, we are offered a privileged and intensely private view. It is not the stereotype of a masculine figure to be still and looked at in this way, specifically Beckham, as we are aware of him not 'performing' his defined and expected 'role'.

- '...the reversal of the look- (women looking sexually at men) violates the rules established by men's power...there is still the belief that men are never passive, they are always about to spring into action.' (Pollock & Parker, 1981, p. 40).

We become transfixed by an unabashed and feminised gaze that intrudes in the subjects' physical space as he sleeps and we observe up close the presence of a passive, vulnerable and inactive male, in an unabashed display of desire and beauty. (Naime, 2006, p.7).

These artists working in the domain of desire, looking and the fetishisation of a masculine subject through the cinematic and time-based image and via a feminine scopophilia, have been crucial in my own approach in establishing particular strategies with which to invest in the still video portrait, while locating the beautiful boy as my subject.

The male, as the central figure no longer holds the position of spectator, but becomes the spectacle before my machine and my gaze. My opting to shift to video portraits alters the distinctive procedure of the gaze and act of looking, and recording as I had experienced previously in the photographic 'sittings'.

For myself, it is an unusual exchange of power- the male as my subject submits to and tolerates my commands and directives, yet in the final image has the authority of his performance and representation.

We receive this triangular, extended stare with the subject through the still video portrait and this type of slow expanded eye contact with strangers elicits fascination.<sup>56</sup> Is it a dare, an entrapment, a threat, an intrusion, a reverie that we witness?

My lineage and position to feminism or feminisms, is as unapologetic to Winogrand's *Beautiful Women* or Moffatt's gaze in *Heaven* and as Denis uses film in the same way as Warhol, simply I like looking at young, beautiful men and my portraits are a product of this feminised exchange.

To admit being a collector, an admirer of beauty, determines me guilty for receiving and experiencing the sheer pleasure of looking at and of making such exposures.

It is my only crime, I have no crooked intentions to conceal, no un-negotiated territory in which I positioned myself before the subject that now in turn is still before our gaze, waiting to be read.

My scopic drive is a permitted desire, a love of looking, a secure and safe way of regarding the visible from the account and distance of a photographic still or screen, it

<sup>26</sup> The artist also pays tribute to Andy Warhol's *Sleep*, the six-hour epic from the late 1960s in which Warhol placed a camera next to a sleeping man, letting it run continuously through out the duration. The word *fascination* has itself an origin in Latin for casting a spell, usually by visual means. (Jay, 1994, p. 11).

## FOUR

### The Permissible Portrait: A Consensual Sitting

**A**s outlined, illustrated collections of males are still relatively rare outside pin-up, fashion, and pornographic modes and a definition of male beauty on the cusp of manhood, and for a woman's gaze is uncharted territory.

To discern how the male is framed and received in the space between photographic and video portraiture was crucial for me to examine the attachment/detachment and absence/presence within an image.

There are often particular and unsaid terms within the operatives of a portrait sitting. A submission and passivity is evident as the sitter is reduced to being inactive and adheres to the various commands of the photographer.

Within the premise of my video portraits I have invested a reversal of this customary dominance, between the artist and the sitter, by offering the young male an opportunity to 'play himself', unlike the strict directives for a photographic portrait where I demand my subjects to 'hold still' and direct their gaze towards mine.

Posing for the camera is becoming more of a diffident and problematic act since the origins of the photograph and its status that followed. We are conscious of the implications of being photographed also taking into account the edit and final selection that is defined in the role of the portrait photographer and the exhaustive problematic issues that ensue from thus. We are thus more cautious (as a portraitists subject) to participate in this act.

To sit in the anticipation of a portrait 'making' is a conflicting act, as it is both an autobiographical and artificial operation. The idealized vs. the mundane, the staged vs. the real self is on display and to be potentially examined, gestures of resistance and in the performance of the sitter are evident and identifiable. Therefore, the version being offered to the viewer is not necessarily an accurate or faithful revelation.<sup>27</sup>

In the still moving portraits, the act and exchange of a sitting is introspective, privatistic yet potentially narcissistic due to the technology and nature of the medium. A version of an edited and projected self is presented, rather than an authentic display or likeness of their 'true soul' due to the sitter's self-consciousness and awareness of an audience watching his posturing.

What is inherently revealed and traced in real time and within the moving portraits, in contrast to the still camera and static portrait complies to this 'life force' due to the oscillation of the sitter.

<sup>27</sup> In regards to what the portrait can reveal the photographer Diane Airbus, whose infamy was in striving to reveal the invisible from the visible from her subjects claimed, 'Subjects want to show one thing but they can't help giving away something else'. (Pultz, Lee, 2003).

The still portrait acts as an index to the one version, unable to reveal the latent complexities of the self as we can never truly know or possess the sitter from the 'aura' of an image. <sup>28</sup> (Benjamin, 1931).

Via the provision of both apparatus' we are privy to receive a constructed façade, a staged performance from the soul of the original though the still video portrait instills intrinsic qualities of the 'real' as it is what we have come to recognise and expect from our belief and faith in the moving image.

The reflexive vs. reflective mode of the moving image and the device of the machine, defines and directs this odd and self-conscious interaction between the observer and observed.

It dislodges any privacy throughout the duration of exposure and recording as it acts as a two-way mirror, revealing the identity and reality of their 'self'.

From examining both mediums I identified analogous rhetoric in their attributes, to be 'rendered' is frequently used within the context, and postproduction of video and is shared by the portrait painter, 'to render a face'. A technical term used in the recording process of video and in its final stages of production is the procedure of 'capturing', which lends itself to the taxonomy of subjects positioned in my photographic archive as my subjects are fixed, captured by my lens and unable to flee from their pose.<sup>59</sup>

The initial high definition video portraits, now the precursor to my final works, employed the same procedure and variables for selecting and 'filming' my subjects as I had used in my photographic portraits, asking for a direct deadpan gaze and to stand squarely against the wall. (*Appendix ii.*)

While I was collecting still portraits for my archive, I asked my subjects to additionally stand and gaze directly at myself and video camera for one minute against the façade.

The results revealed the limited photographic traits- 'nothing' happened only an impasse was evident, the 'action' in only the blinking and breathing of the sitter. I wanted more of their persona via a performance to be revealed. (*Fig. 16*).

The distinct parallel to the inception of sitting for a portrait in the 19th Century where to 'hold still,' shared this length of exposure and it is this tension between the two devices, periods and between film and photography which heightened the currency of my inquiry.

I eventually procured a 40-minute portrait duration from the participants seating them in the privacy of my studio. We witness their pain, discomfort and suffering in the tension of appearing trapped and yielding to surrender in this democratic space. This was too long and cruel, both for my sitters and in the watching of the projected 'exposure'. (*Fig. 17*).

From ensuing tests and experiments, I projected a singular moving still portrait within an oval frame, miniaturizing it to allude further to its hand held origins and an immediate lineage to the daguerreotype. (*Fig. 18*).

<sup>28</sup> In context to my work, I offer Joanna Kant's succinct interpretation of Benjamin's term aura. 'Walter Benjamin makes a careful distinction between trace and aura; the former 'an appearance of a nearness, however far removed the thing that left it behind: the latter an 'appearance of a distance, however close the thing that calls it forth.' (Kant, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> I contemplate the Lepidopterist once more and the procedure for procuring and displaying their specimens.



(Fig.16). Meighan Ellis. *Untitled*. (2008). 1 minute loop.

There is a necessary stillness demanded by the photographer for the sitter to 'stay or be still' and here I point to the Victorian posturing devices, which held the figure and the rigidity of a pose, in order to obtain an accurate render of the subject's likeness.

The peculiar and distinct quality of the photograph is also embedded within each video portrait due to the fixed camera angle, a direct and frontal view and the duration of the long shot. Moving images are predominately viewed across a horizontal plane, so my decision to rotate the frame and camera vertically also underscores the visible photographic traits within my video portraits.

The moving image provides this revealing parallel to the 19<sup>th</sup> century photographic portrait as my subject is now invited to hold his pose for the video camera and to be still for a delineated duration that transpires to the 20-minute time based portraits on display in the final high definition tableaux.

There is a slippage of space, both psychologically and physically when viewing a living portrait, the duration of time between the existence of the moment captured and the representation that directly follows in the watching and observation of a sitting.

The portraitists of the past incited a quiet, deliberate gaze to trace and render an accurate likeness of the sitter and 'still lives', and this stilled and silent motion of the high definition video becomes a portrait of this age.

The moving portrait demystifies the experience and duration of the 'sitting' that only the portraitist and subject is privy to. It is no longer a private transaction presenting photography as having an accordance and compliance in waiting.

The sitter has an opportunity to be 'natural' (or not) throughout the duration of the exposure as they sit for their video portrait, in contrast to the fixity of photograph, which allowed him only brief moment, a fraction of a second, to perform and present himself.

What shifts occur in our gaze and in the comparison of 'reading' a moving portrait, to the still photograph? Do we rely on the movement and stasis in the time based portrait to narrate and reveal the subjects character in contrast to the photographic portrait, where its static after-image lingers.

We are compelled to examine this curious and unexpected clause of masculinity on screen- as the beauty of their boy or man-hood is presented for our scrutiny. The still video portrait presented itself an appropriate mode to give me the opportunity to measure and record this transition and passage of masculinity and to witness their beauty as they stood in for my departed beloved.

Your image reversed will minutely appear  
So delicate, forceful, brilliant and clear  
So small, full and round,  
with a life so profound  
As none ever wore in a mirror before.

George Cruickshank 1839  
(Advertisement for first public portrait studio, Regent Street, London).

-(Ewing, 1999, p.14).



(Fig. 16). Meighan Ellis. *Untitled*. (2008). 40 minute loop.

## FIVE

### Be Still (With Him): Video-types

*The encounter between two disciplines doesn't take place when one begins to reflect on another, but when one discipline realizes that it has to resolve, for itself and by its own means, a problem similar to one confronted by the other.* <sup>30</sup>

(Deleuze, 2007, p.10).

A portrait is simply a portrayal, a record, a view, a likeness, a representation, an imprint, a description, an analysis, a construction, a document, an insight, a testimony, a trace, a memorial, a facsimile of the original thing, the beloved whom has, or is soon to depart but for now, is stilled before us.

The first thing one notices is this stillness, shot in a single, fixed, long take. Real and potentially invented emotion disturbs our assumptions about a male public image and the intimate act of a portrait sitting.

There is a moment of sudden and unexpected arousal when viewing these boys for the first time, as we soon recognize they are in fact 'alive' and returning our stare. Their faint actions break the impasse as we regard the subtle, fleeting expressions and gestures.

Due to the close proximity to the camera, the positioning within the oval frame and the sitters sentient gaze and posture, he becomes the cameo for an unspoken and intimate conversation piece, literally transpiring into a silently scripted tête-à-tête. Their view meets ours, revealing a particular self-absorption and meditative gaze extending to an austere stare, sharing their glances with the viewer and potentially exposing an (un) conscious sense of themselves. <sup>31</sup>

The participants assert the autonomy of 'their picture' unprotected and vulnerable, yet trusting of my motives, revealing the enclosed space between themselves and the screen.

In the duration of the sitting, nothing and no one stands between the subject and the self-reflexive viewer and we are only vaguely aware of the apparatus.

The video discloses the space and time between us and in which he occupies, providing limitless potential in how the present moment can be re-presented and reordered through an observed duration.

Having gazed at the photographer during the recording, the subject is now presented in another space and time and on offer for scrutiny. The relationship between himself, the camera, and my gaze and now onlooker, is revealed as is the distance and space between the lived and original time of the sitting.

The viewer participates and receives his stare and through this extended look, we become aware of monitoring of our own gaze and how one is seen by others via the infamy of an invisible camera.

<sup>30</sup> David Campany. *The Cinematic*. Gilles Deleuze. 'The Brain is the Screen'. 1997

<sup>31</sup> The photographic intimist Francesca Woodman titled her 1978 exhibition: 'A woman is a mirror for a man', a statement I have frequently meditated upon, when I stand before my subjects with my camera.



(Fig. 17). Meighan Ellis. *The Absent*. (2008). 15 minute loop.

The machine as an electronic device defines and directs this interaction and duration of the look and dislodges any privacy from this span of recording due to the *cinéma vérité*<sup>6</sup> or the cinema of truth. (Spielmann, 2008, p. 313).

Fixed onto the sitters physiognomy is one version, his posing becomes deceitful masking the fragilities and concealed traits of his true self and we are reminded of Lacan's theory of vision and the limits in looking, as our 'all seeing eyes'<sup>7</sup> do not and cannot see all.

The still portrait acts as an index to one version, which cannot reveal the latent complexities and inner qualities of a self, we can never truly know or possess the sitter from the aura of their image. The sitters self or sense of self is never actually witnessed and presented on screen revealing an 'auratic presence'.<sup>32</sup> Here the portraits infamous claim in its ability to render an accurate likeness is contested. (Benjamin, 1931).

<sup>32</sup> For further discussion on the idea of the sitter's awareness of an auratic quality and in the depiction of 'their soul' asserting parallels to Benjamin's meditations on the aura of an image, refer to Joanna Lowry *Stillness and Time*. (Lowry & Green, 2006, p.76).

In the video portraits, each persona is in a state of flux as their identity is in and out of character throughout the duration of the exposure, obscuring the visibility of their 'self' that the individual typically conceals.

It is here this performance of the pose becomes a revelation of the subject's masqueraded self and an onslaught of questions arose.

Can the moving portrait configure an 'authentic' and assist in a reading of unknown identities, due to this performance? Can this fictitious staging suggest a truth in the representation of the self as we glimpse a 'sample' of their man-hood?

As the still moving image attempts to capture a 'realism' from the consensual sitter, we witness an almost bi-polar record of what is perhaps 'truthful' and what is convincing. So, does this in turn present itself as an anti-portrait, a replica of the original as the face in turn becomes a screen?

Is this representation 'specific' to their self or only a sense of their self, therefore a stand in of their male posturing?

A lack of intimacy was evident in my preliminary singular, diptych, and triptych time based portraits, due to the scale of the single channel projection that I employed. I also explored other viewing and presentation devices to display the final video portraits, such as 40" Plasma screens and high definition projectors, I was unsatisfied with the detail and quality of the high definition footage that I had meticulously experimented with.

I tested numerous miniaturised versions of the singular moving portraits on various media, nodding to the handheld scale of the daguerreotype, including the Apple iTouch™ and 7" digital photo frames<sup>34</sup> which played compressed moving images, again unconvinced by the resolution of the screen image. This young technology however, excites me to develop further beyond this body of work.

High definition video optically reconfigures the portrait, as it shifts beyond a mere approximate physical likeness due to its ability to render detail, specifically with skin tones, that is fixed in the embodiment of the photograph.

The resolution and clarity was therefore paramount to the final composite of portraits, and to accurately exploit the digital details, and vying for the viewer's attention, the LCD screens were chosen.

The miniaturization heightens the portraits, and the ellipse places the subject into the viewers' path inducing Anorthoscopic vision.<sup>35</sup> We peer beyond the oval and witness this silent tableau vivant through the narrow aperture and by the intimate scale of the twelve individuals within the frame enshrining them to potentially rest within the palm, as the daguerreotype lay. (*Fig. 18 & 19*).

In the animated line up, each pensive sitter is placed before our scrutiny, commanding time to view each performance and physiognomy. I describe the status of all as individual, yet naturally we make comparisons and discernments between the beaus. The line up does not reveal my beloved or other personal motives, and I employed this strategy to move away from the autobiographical, offering a legitimate way to reframe the work as an objective and universal survey.

The final installment of the monitors within the dark and private interior alludes further to a Victorian age and their display cases and cabinets of curiosities, which held collections of photographs, cameos, miniatures, entomological specimens, trophies of taxidermy, totemic objects and other prized artifacts, and were proudly exhibited in the privacy of the bourgeois and (male) proprietors domestic domain.

<sup>33</sup> The Apple iTouch™ is a beautiful (expensive) and appropriate object to replay, touch and regard a 'living' surrogate and is a device I am exploring for a future artwork.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew. M. Colman. (2001). *A Dictionary of Psychology*. -Relating to perception of a figure that is revealed one section at a time through a narrow opening or slit, behind which the figure moves.



(Fig. 18). Meighan Ellis. *behold, be still*. (2009).



(Fig.19). Meighan Ellis. *behold, be still*. (2009).

Though the photographic and video image both depict 'a reality' and share inherent indexical attributes, the way we experience, view and interpret the results yields a conflicting response when we regard the two mediums and attempt to engage in an identical reading.<sup>65</sup> The photograph is often regarded as 'natural' due to its imprint from reality, in contrast to the filmed image, which exploits and interrupts the illusion and allusion to time and the experience of this tangible moment and live-ness.

These filmed portraits expand and slow time and within these often-uncomfortable moments, a lot or little occurs in each scene. The sitter stares out straight ahead, mute, without smiling or otherwise acknowledging my presence and we witness embarrassment, boredom, resentment, curiosity or unease due to the cameras tarnished reputation, the extended duration of holding a pose and the knowledge that they will be on public display. We are locked into and transfixed by originally my gaze, which now shifts to this return of his trance within the vis-à-vis.

The alleged authenticity within the still image prompted me to challenge and question the legitimacy of what the photographic portrait portrayed. The limitations and bias of essentially a manned machine posed obvious inaccuracies and stagnant views in receiving an inactive gaze.

As it was only a static and somewhat redundant likeness preserving only the temporal pose, I was compelled to re-examine these traits of a portrait sitting, to picture this intimacy and authentic 'display' through the video camera, which offered me a new view and approach to record and collect the male sitter. A way in which to reconfigure the mode and performance of the portrait process was to exploit the moving images' potential. In the video, it is a long, stilled look, and we become aware of how we view and accept this moving portrait as 'real' due to the subjects' humanity that is visible in the stilled duration.

This inquiry, the basis of my final work, has been driven by my tireless (and private) pursuit to replace the absent beloved, 'making' portraits of enlisted male surrogates. The drive to seek and collect stand-ins or 'male-types' via the medium of photography and the moving image gave solace for this absence, augmenting a desire to expand and reveal my collection.

The photograph exploits and exudes this notion of replacement as it 'remembers', but in the wake of the absent what remains in its trace that is inherent of the sitter's character?

It is from here where I made a departure from the stasis and limitations of the photographic portrait to explore the still moving portrait.

In a video portrait, we witness this passing of time, it engages us in an active, perpetual here and now and there is a sense of being with these sitters in the present, not looking to a past that the photographic portrait describes- the stillness, a moment lost, which is the embalment of its fixed image.

The object, it is a portrait, which beholds a face.

The object of this desire is male, a potentially (and historically) dangerous figure yet I feel safe because he's not looking at me- he's looking at my camera and becomes my subject.

Though he is the 'other', a curiosity to me, archived, stilled, and received by my gaze, he is an accomplice in this act, as he consents to participate and collaborate. A generous offering in the negotiated exchange and artifice of the portrait sitting.

<sup>35</sup> For André Bazin the aesthetics and ethics of cinema were essentially the ethics and aesthetics of photography.

Photographic aesthetics constitute cinema: cinema is above all photography, a photographic act of the recording and the representation of the real. -Catherine David, *Photography and Cinema*. p.147. 2007.

*Waiting.*

*There is a scenography of waiting: I  
organize it, manipulate it, cut out a  
portion of time in which I shall mime the  
loss of the loved object and provoke all  
the effects of a minor mourning.*

(Barthes, 1979, p.25).

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1. George Lippard. *Photographer Unknown*. (ca. 1850). Library of Congress, DC.
- Fig. 2. Joseph Wright of Derby. *The Corinthian Maid*. (1782-1784). Oil on Canvas. UK.
- Fig. 3. Daguerreotype. *Unidentified Man*. (ca.1855). Library of Congress, Washington.
- Fig. 4. Jane Campion. Stills from *The Piano*. (1993). 121 minutes. Australia, New Zealand, France.
- Fig. 5. Julia Margaret Cameron. *Philip Stanhope Worsley*. (1866). Albumen print. UK.
- Fig. 6. Julia Margaret Cameron. *Unknown Man*. (1868-72). Albumen print. UK.
- Fig. 7. Julia Margaret Cameron. *Iago, Study from an Italian*. (1867). Albumen print. UK.
- Fig. 8. August Sanders. *Fraternity Student*. (1925). Sprengel Museum Hanover.
- Fig. 9. Andy Warhol. *13 Most Beautiful Boys*. (1964/65). 16mm B/W. New York.
- Fig.11. Tracey Moffatt. *Heaven*. (1987). 28 minutes. Video. Australia.
- Fig. 12. Sam Taylor Wood. *David*. (2004). Plasma screen. 1 hour. National Portrait Gallery, London.
- Fig. 13. Claire Denis. Still. *Beau travail*. (1999-2000). 90 minutes. France.
- Fig. 14. Meighan Ellis. *Untitled*. (2008). HD Video, Single Channel Projection. 1 minute loop.
- Fig. 15. Meighan Ellis. *Untitled*. (2008). HD Video, Single Channel Projection. 40 minute loop.
- Fig. 16. Meighan Ellis. *The Absent*. (2008). HD Video, Single Channel Projection. 15 minute loop.
- Fig. 17. Meighan Ellis. *Untitled*. (2008). HD Video, Single Channel Projection. 40 minute loop.
- Fig. 18. Meighan Ellis. *Untitled*. (2008). HD Video, Plasma Screen. 15 minute loop.
- Fig. 19. Meighan Ellis. *Untitled*. (2008). HD Video, Plasma Screen. 15 minute loop.

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APPENDIX i

# **The Archive**

1999-2009

