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# **Documentary Photography and the Fantasy of the Real**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the epistemological shift in my photographic practice from an ethnographic position to that of surrealist documentary. In charting this shift I have consider the use of documentary photography by the historical Surrealist movement ,and, the synthesis of surrealism and ethnography found in the English group Mass-Observation. The photograph's oscillation between indexical record and mystical emanation forms a key position in understanding these two groups belief in the found images ability to describe a repressed reality located in the mass unconscious.

Drawing on the Lacanian model of the Real used by Slavoj Zizek as a tool of cultural critique I suggest a new framework for a surrealist documentary practice. In bringing the methodology of the early Surrealists into a contemporary context I consider the position of suburbia as a new terrain vague in relationship to the fantasy of the Real.