for Ethel

human
camera

LINDSAY SEERS

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Pavel Büchler is an artist, lecturer and writer. Summing up his own practice as 'making nothing happen', he is committed to the catalytic nature of art – it's potential to draw attention to the obvious and revealing it as ultimately strange. Büchler has recently shown in the 9th Istanbul Biennial (2005); *Plug-in*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2006); *The Grand Promenade*, National Museum of Modern Art, Athens (2006) and in solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Bern and the Goethe Institute, Dublin (2006). A monograph on his work, *Absentmindedwindowgazing*, will be published by Van Abbemuseum in May 2007

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David Burrows is an artist, writer and Reader in Fine Art at University of Central England. An element of his practice has been collaboration with other artists and writers including exhibitions with Bank, DJ Simpson, Bob & Roberta Smith and Guerrila Plastique Fantastique, formed with Simon O'Sullivan. His recent short stories and cartoon stories have been published in *The adventures of Victor B and other stories*, *Frozen Tears* and *Magnetic Promenades and other Sculpture Parks*. His recent exhibitions include *We are Plastique Fantastique*, *Staabucks Fukkee is your enemy*, Aliceday Gallery, Brussels; *Popnosis*, Chungking Projects, Los Angeles (2005); *Moonage Daydream*, Praz-Dleavallade Paris (2005); *Mirror Works*, fa projects, London (2004).

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Rufus Eisenbud runs an academic publishing business in Denver, Colorado which specialises in the history of independent scientific research. His book on the eccentric engineer Nikola Tesla, *Tesla: The American Wizard* was short listed for the National Book Awards in 1989. He is the son of Dr Jule Eisenbud, the psychologist who achieved notoriety in the 1960s for his investigations into paranormal phenomena, most notably the case of Ted Serios, who was reputed to be able to create photographic images using the power of thought.

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Chris Frith is Professor in Cognitive Neuropsychology at the Institute of Neurology, University College London. He has pioneered the development of functional brain imaging as an important technique in contemporary neuroscience. His research team has mapped the brain areas involved in will, imagination, memory, face recognition and theory of mind, and, with his wife Uta, he has made important discoveries regarding the basic mechanisms that are impaired in dyslexia and autism. His early monograph, *The Cognitive Neuropsychology of Schizophrenia*, is a classic text and recently he has published a popular science book on the brain and the mind.

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M. Anthony Penwill is a writer on philosophical aesthetics who lives in Edinburgh. His essays on the common origins of scientific, literary and artistic creativity appear regularly in philosophical journals. He is currently working on his first book, *Paradigm & Metaphor*, a history of the dependency on metaphorical tropes in scientific reasoning in the 20th century.

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M. Anthony Penwill

The essays in this volume relate to five films by Lindsay Seers commissioned for a series of exhibitions in Europe between 2005 and 2006. The films – *The World of Jule Eisenbud (Remission)*, 2005; *Intermission*, 2005; *Extramission*, 2005; *Under the Influence of Magicians*, 2006; and *The Truth Was Always There*, 2006 – are ostensibly a progressive biography of the artist, Lindsay Seers.

In the films, a variety of narrators, from cultural critics and theatre directors to members of the artist's immediate family, unfold the tale of a girl who is unable to speak for the first seven years of her life. Then, the child utters her first words – "Is that me?" – when being presented with the first photographic portrait of herself. But we learn that this seemingly innocuous question signals a rupture of consciousness. The girl's prior silence is merely the natural consequence of a curious anomaly of the mind by which she has been unable to make the distinction between self and the world. We learn that she is 'gifted' with truly phenomenal eidetic recall, a perfection of memory so detailed and complete that her sense of past and present, of a difference between a world *out there* and the inner representation of that world, has never emerged. The encounter with her image is thus a kind of birth trauma: after it, her mind can no longer form eidetic impressions. Her seamless unity with reality shattered, the girl makes her first uncertain attempt at communication in a new symbolic order.

But we are told that Seers struggles to master language and seeks instead alternative communicative strategies. The young girl begs for a camera of her own and begins taking photographs compulsively, as if the camera could approximate her lost powers of total recall. However, with the inevitable failure of this project, Seers, now adult, makes the radical decision to 'become a camera', using her own body as an image capture device by placing light sensitive paper directly into her mouth. This is the first of a series of 'becomings' that are revealed in the overlapping narratives of the films.

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In the first film, *The World Of Jule Eisenbud (Remission)*, Lindsay Seers' attempt to become a camera is linked to the curious life of Ted Serios, a psychic performer who claimed to be able to create photographic images solely by 'projecting his thoughts' onto film. The narrator is identified as Rufus Eisenbud, son of Dr Jule Eisenbud, the psychologist who investigated and documented the abilities of Ted Serios in the 1960s. We are told that Dr Eisenbud met Lindsay Seers in Amsterdam and was struck by the consonance between the odd distortions and imperfections of Serios' so-called *thoughtographs* and the mouth-photographs being created by the artist. Unravelling the reasons for Seers' obsessive practices becomes an obsession for Dr Eisenbud.

This narrative, and those which follow, is supported by a variety of image forms which create a rich visual language for the films. Conventional documentary film of the narrator is interspersed with photographs and film footage ranging across analogue and digital media; from mouth-photographs to DV. Often in black and white but with sudden shifts to colour, or still *tableaux* which spring startlingly into life, the imagery is produced on Super 8, Hi 8,

VHS, DV, movie clips from digital stills cameras, and all kinds of still film stocks and formats, including infrared. Beyond this the cameras themselves have been chosen to provide a language for the relationship between the photographer and the subject – whether shot as mouth-photographs, or with a compact camera kept in the pocket, or a medium format camera and tripod, each is used consciously and specifically.

The choice of film stock often serves to create a sense of trust in or suspicion of the reliability of the narrative content and hence of photography itself. To penetrate the mystery of the notoriously uncommunicative artist, Eisenbud has only the evidence of Seers' own eerie mouth-photographs and film footage supplied by a character called Frank Weston, described as "at worst, a stalker; at best, a researcher". Weston's own obsession with Seers is made plain by voyeuristic footage which secretly observes Seers in the cabin of a passenger ferry emerging from a black tent-like structure which is the portable dark room for her mouth-photography. This is immediately followed by a similar scene in infrared of the artist emerging from the tent into a darkened cabin, then clasping a hand over her mouth in preparation to expose a mouth-photograph image. At first, the order in which the two points of view occur suggests that Weston's intrusion may have inspired the artist to film

her own process in infrared, but we cannot know this. Instead, we begin to grow suspicious of the apparent ease with which Weston filmed this private space. Suddenly, the footage showing Weston's point of view as he approaches Seers' cabin and peers through the slowly opening door strikes us as deliberate suspense movie cliché: the artist's brief, impassive gaze towards Weston's lens renders the nature of their relationship and its degree of collaboration ambiguous.

Thus, underlying the narrative structure of the films is a critique of photography as such. The form of the photograph, both semantically and physically, is held up to scrutiny: everything to do with the making of a photographic image, not only its material qualities but its consensus use and definition; the act of photographing; the interrelation between the set of the photographer, the camera, the photographed and the audience – all are explored.

Seers' mouth-photographs and images of their creation suggest that this phase of her work is an exercise in self-portraiture. A recurring image is of the artist gazing into a hand mirror at the image which we know is forming behind the aperture held by her pursed lips on the light-sensitive paper held in her

mouth. The characteristic red colouration of the mouth-photographs, caused by light passing through the blood in the capillaries of the cheeks, leads seamlessly into vampire imagery. On first acquaintance, the sudden appearance of fangs in these self-portraits strikes a comical note, but a second viewing reveals a much earlier reference to Murnau's *Nosferatu* in footage showing Seers in Holland on the deck of a sailing ship donning the characteristic black sack that functioned as a portable dark room. Suddenly, the deeper ironies of the vampire symbolism are picked out: the Undead as a metaphor for the condition of one who cannot forget; in which every event, either joyful or terrible, is always inscribed forever, able to resurrect at any moment – the condition of the photograph.

At the end of the film, the narrator suggests that Seers' attempt to 'become a camera' ultimately fails. The viewer must decide for themselves whether he means as a psychological strategy or as an extended work of performance art. She therefore adopts an alternative communicative strategy: she becomes a ventriloquist.

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Intermission, the second film in the series, begins with a sight gag; the first in a series of delightful absurdities appropriate to the vaudevillian turn in the artist's work. An unseen narrator, theatre director and performance artist Steve Pearl, begins a monologue about dreams. But the first 'talking head' we see is Bill, Seers' principal dummy, lip synching to Pearl's speech. Bill has no operator we can see. Indeed, there are no conventional scenes of a human operator with dummy sat on lap, only a memorable inversion of this relationship in which Seers appears to climb up onto the lap of an enormous dummy. When Steve Pearl eventually makes his own appearance, we cannot help wondering who is putting the words in his mouth.

Pearl relates his first meeting with Seers when she was performing in a theatre in Liverpool with a dummy called *Candy Cannibal*. This dummy appears to be a negative avatar of Seers herself: Candy is a blue-skinned creature; the exact shade of blue that is the photographic negative of the pink of human skin. She does not speak but instead takes photographs with a lens mechanism lodged in her mouth.

When we first see Candy and Seers together, the artist's face is pressed close to the dummy's mouth, which is firing off intense flash photographs of her creator. The sudden illuminations in an otherwise darkened space and the film's soundtrack are redolent of the electrical arcs so beloved of set designers of Frankenstein movies. We wait to see if the artist is destroyed by her creature.

We learn that Seers cannot separate her art practice from her private life. The mouth-photograph technique intrudes itself into her relationship with a boyfriend to such a degree that the making of mutual mouth-photographs seems to replace the act of kissing. Perhaps this explains the devastating effect on Seers of discovering an exhibition of mouth-photographs by another artist at the very same residency in Dublin where Seers first began making mouth-photographs more than a decade previously. This usurpation of a method that both defines her work as an artist and stands in for personal intimacy is the trauma that forces the turn to ventriloquism. Surely no latecomer would dare follow in her footsteps here?

Though Seers clearly has difficulty forming relationships, she has no problem making friends. A sequence of images shows the artist in a flat peopled

by dummies – friends or siblings of her own manufacture. They watch the multiple television screens which clutter the room and take on the personas of the characters on the screen. The strains of a Jackson Five tune explode hilariously on the soundtrack to remind us that Seers' various 'becomings' have real life counterparts far more bizarre. These shifting, proliferating personas are reflected in the emergence of the new dummies, including Candy Cannibal, who takes over Seers' work of mouth-photography. Sitting alone as an exhibit in galleries and museums, Candy's mouth snaps open and captures the images of startled passers-by. The artist has stated that some visitors return after they have regained their composure to be photographed again with a calmer demeanour.

According to Steve Pearl the original dummy, Bill, is none other than Stookie Bill, the fellow used by the inventor of television, John Logie Baird, in his early demonstrations of the new medium. Baird's dummy caught fire in one of his experiments and would have been witness to his own partial destruction. Seers' response to this trauma is to create a two-headed Bill, and later installs a mouth-camera into each head to mimic binocular vision.

But the ill-fated Bill is later stolen in a burglary. This crushing loss precipitates the end of Seers' ventriloquist phase. Has the artist found a voice at the end of it? If the prevalence of rich colour photography in *Intermission* lessens the sense of melancholia and alienation in *The World Of Jule Eisenbud (Remission)*, then the proliferation of autonomous dummies raises the suspicion that Seers has fallen into the classic doom of vents – to be taken over by her uncanny companions.

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Extramission documents Seers' return to her childhood home on the island of Mauritius. The first narrator is Alicia Seers, whom one presumes to be the artist's mother. Family snapshots of the young Seers support this and are juxtaposed with digital black and white footage of the island. But modern shots of domestic spaces are very different. Still images of the former family home are animated by time-lapse motion: doors swing open into empty rooms revealing dark voids beyond; images which are underscored by a Lynchian soundtrack of an ominous drone that never resolves itself. In a film *tableau*, the artist and her mother stand some distance apart in silhouette on a patio; a moving spotlight beam quests across the image, seeming to be the emanation of the artist's own gaze, prefiguring the artist's attempt to 'become a projector'. As the beam strikes the figure of Alicia Seers, she doubles up at the waist as if in agony. The whole film is steeped in a mood of childhood trauma revisited; of light shone on repressed memories and the guilt of parenthood.

Narrative duties are divided amongst three persons: 'Cultural Critic' Guinevere Doy examines the artist's own search for identity, as a third narrator, an unseen 'Art Dealer', links Seers' early work to the unique role Mauritius plays in the history of photography. Mauritius was the home of the 19th century plantation owner and friend of Daguerre, Ferdinand Wöhrnitz. Wöhrnitz visited Daguerre in Paris and returned to the island with a complete photographic studio in packing crates. He used the camera to make photographic identity records of the indentured workers labouring in his plantation. But the photographic portrait of the seven year-old Seers which precipitated the loss of her eidetic memory bears the stamp of the photographer, Fred Wöhrnitz, the great grandson of Ferdinand. Seers' own crisis of identity and objectification is directly linked to the man who invented the identity photo. The narrator situates Seers' mouth-photographs, which bear the traces of her own body in their colouration, their distortions and saliva smears, as a deliberate attempt to achieve "the destruction of photography's perfect surface … and turn it into something much more personal, emotional, a lived experience".

Guinevere Doy takes up the narrative, explaining how Seers' compulsive attempts to reclaim the past ultimately fail. Her voice accompanies a recreation of another childhood recollection: of a French television film crew

filming a shipwreck on Le Chaland beach on Mauritius. A model square-rigged ship appears in a number of the images seen thus far in *Extramission*, a curious *leitmotif* which intrudes constantly into her photographs that echoes other footage of restless sea journeys undertaken by the artist. Finally, we see the model ship foundering on rocks in a mock storm like the final wreck of her first two 'becomings'.

Now comes the new turn in the work trying to create directly with light. Basing her approach on medieval theories of vision, in which light was supposed to emanate from the individual to illuminate perceived objects, Seers attempts to 'become a projector'. Her first efforts in this direction, now sporting apparatus worn on the head, are shown in films which depict the characteristic questing spotlight beam roaming over the environment. We recall the opening scenes of the film in which Seers' projection caused her mother to double up in apparent pain. But no apparatus was visible in this scene, as if the mechanism is not an essential part of the process but merely an enhancement of innate powers. *Extramission* ends with a newspaper clipping from the Mauritius *L'Express*, which contains eyewitness accounts of the projection events which hint at unexplained phenomena.

Though each of these films has appended a disclaimer about the 'opinions expressed herein', *Extramission's* end titles state that the events described in no way constitute an accurate portrayal of the artist's life or work. Indeed, *Extramission* has a *cast* list. The possibility that the narrative voices are make-believe is truly unsettling. It's a testimony to the power of the biographical structure of the films that the viewer finds themselves wanting to believe in the content. These doubts demand corroborative evidence: web searches throw up reassuring confirmations that the artist Lindsay Seers has indeed exhibited work exactly as documented in the films we have watched. But some are so peculiar that they raise questions about the veracity even of this evidence. The website of The Grand Theatre in Blackpool, the so-called National Theatre of Variety, announces that the Grundy Art Gallery has commissioned a new DVD called *Under the Influence of Magicians* that documents "the odd coincidences that connect the artist and her ventriloquist aunty (Barbara Seers) to Cyril Critchlow (a Blackpool magician and theatre historian) and to the history of Blackpool's

entertainment industry". Can this possibly be true? Was there really such a thing as a Midget Town, a popular pre-war attraction in Blackpool? Was Barbara Seers' only rival as a lady vent exposed as a transvestite, leaving Barbara the sole female ventriloquist act by default?

Under the Influence of Magicians marks a turn from predominantly biographical concerns to social history. It interweaves historical photographs of characters drawn from the history of Variety performers in Blackpool and sideshows on The Golden Mile with the professional career of Seers' aunt, who started out as a magician's assistant before taking up ventriloquism. Theatre historian Cyril Critchlow, a former magician, recollects the popularity of 'midget' performers as variety acts in their own right, whom he saw as a young man in the 1930s. Interest in 'midgets' grew to such an extent that a Midget Museum attraction was opened, filled with artefacts and implements designed for persons of small growth, and entire troupes of diminutive persons were kept

MIDGET MUSEUM

The WORLDS LARGEST
COLLECTION OF
MANUFACTURED MIDGET
ARTICLES

NEARLY
2,000 EXAMP
OF INTRICATE SKILL
MINUTIVE AR

MIDGET MUSEUM
ADMISSION

in employ. In response, a local ordinance was drawn up to prevent the exploitation of 'midgets', but an archive group photograph of *Chaffer's Wonder Midgets* shows that most of the so-called midgets appear by that time to be children made up to appear adult in years. Fantasy, misdirection and a playful reliance on the credulity of the audience are in the artist's blood.

Barbara Seers met Cyril Critchlow in the 1950s whilst working as an assistant to her magician boyfriend Arthur Fisher, though her brother, Peter Seers, Lindsay's father, had already met Critchlow in the Navy. Images of the seafaring tradition in the artist's family runs strongly through this film: her dummies wear seamen's caps and when Seers finally performs with her aunt she does so dressed in naval uniform.

It was in Blackpool that Barbara saw Bobbie Kimber's act, the glamorous lady ventriloquist who had appeared in a Royal Variety Performance show. However, Bobbie Kimber was in fact Ronald Kimberley. When he was exposed in the press as a man in drag, his career as a vent was ruined. A 1970s comeback appearance on Hughie Green's popular *Opportunity Knocks* programme garnered more interest for his drag act than his skill as a ventriloquist.

Thus the way was clear for Barbara Seers to become the only legitimate female ventriloquist, though her first stage appearance was quite *impromptu*. We learn that one night Bobbie Kimber "had the most dreadful row with Augustus Peabody, the dummy" and refused to perform. Barbara, being of small stature, took to the stage as the dummy. Cyril Critchlow, like many magicians a capable vent, voiced the dummy's part unseen in the wings whilst Barbara's husband fed her lines from beneath the stage.

This separation of the controlling vent from the autonomous dummy is a recurring theme in Lindsay Seers' work. Her typical performance dummy is a two-headed creature whose internal workings enable the dummy to move and vocalise without ongoing intervention from a human operator. In breaking the link with the thrown voice, Seers risks reducing her creatures to mere animatronics, yet such is our cultural familiarity with the ventriloquist's dummy that to see one is to imagine that the vent *must* be somewhere nearby, unseen to us. She summons up, in effect, the problem of the missing voice of her own early years. This absence of the human operator exacerbates the dilemma reported by people who have interacted with vents in performance with their dummies: not knowing which 'person' to address. This problem is resolved almost universally by the layman by treating the dummy as a separate entity distinct from the vent: the very illusion a skilled ventriloquist strives to create and which the third party 'goes along with'. But to witness Seers or others interact 'in good faith' with one of her dummies is to have a sense not of shared illusion but of shared psychosis.

As Barbara recounts her own version of the artist's mute childhood, we are shown Seers' childhood drawings from Mauritius, detailed renditions of locations glimpsed only for a few seconds which testify to the power of her eidetic memory. Barbara had long retired from ventriloquism, citing emotional and psychological disturbance caused by her relationship with her dummies. Only the opportunity to perform with her niece drew her back to the stage at Blackpool's Grand Theatre, rendered in Seers' photographs as a sumptuous palace of dreams in red plush and plaster ornament.

For Barbara their joint performance becomes a cathartic process related to the death of Barbara's mother, Lindsay's grandmother. The coincidental links between their lives revolving around ventriloquism strike Barbara as predestination. We see a modern Blackpool sideshow, Psychic Sarah, a coin-operated soothsayer, the replacement in an electronic age for what would

have been a human performer in the heyday of The Golden Mile. We remember the opening shot of this film, a close-up of a crystal ball in one of Cyril Critchlow's archive photographs of a sideshow fortune teller.

As the end disclaimer rolls we hear the voice of the manager of the Grand Theatre in conversation on the telephone. Lindsay Seers has left one of her dummies in a box in the theatre. "No we can't get it right away, we have to wait for the interval," he says. "It's currently enjoying the performance."

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The Truth Was Always There is Seers' most technically ambitious film. It is presented as a split-screen narrative that traces the skein of connections between

her family and Lincolnshire's role in the history of medieval philosophy and alchemy. It is also the most unnerving: tales of magic, cryptic symbols, secret society initiations and medieval charnel houses are offset by a sophisticated soundscape which rustles and rumbles like the upwelling of the unconscious. Somehow the most innocuous imagery – a solitary tree in a field, a nesting swift, a ruined tower in a landscape – take on an atmosphere of dread.

Science writer Philip Ball outlines the map of Lincolnshire's connection with alchemy and natural magic. Robert Grosseteste (1168-1253), Bishop of Lincoln, is credited with inventing many of the empirical concepts later developed by his protégé Roger Bacon (1214-1294), the medieval alchemist and proto-scientist. To the east of the line which connects Leadenham and Sleaford lie the ruins of Temple Bruer, a preceptory founded by the Knights Templar. John Dee (1527-1608), the Elizabethan mathematician and occultist, held a rectorship at the nearby town of Leadenham not far from Woolsthorpe, birthplace of Isaac Newton. Dee was engaged in the search for the Enochian language, believed to be the original tongue taught to Adam by his creator, which Dee claimed was being taught to him by 'good angels'. Dee visited Temple Bruer to study its layout in the hope that the design of the building would assist his understanding of coded knowledge encrypted in the plan of the Temple of Solomon.

But the film begins with a recurring image: a road journey along one of the Roman routes near the towns of Leadenham and Sleaford, where Seers' mother settled after the return from Mauritius. The voice of Alicia Seers, the artist's mother, is heard describing the death of her father shortly before Lindsay was conceived and the profound sadness which his death caused. Voice wavering, she wonders if something of her melancholy was transmitted to the unborn child. This endless journey through the flat bucolic landscape, filmed in black and white, is like a repeated elegy for Seers' sorrowful quest into her own past.

The split-screen technique is used to dazzling effect in the juxtaposition of images of the curious geometric designs which adorn these historical sites with Seers' own cryptic drawings. The narrator speculates that Seers displays an adept's understanding of arcane knowledge. The various drawings filled with alchemical tree symbolism and geometric mysteries echo both John Dee's investigations and those of Robert Fludd (1574-1637), the

Rosicrucian and follower of Paracelsus. One striking dual image is of an *orrery*, a mechanical model of the solar system, against a representation of an annular eclipse (in which the moon's silhouette does not completely obscure the sun's disc but leaves a bright halo or annulus). As Philip Ball explains Fludd's Neoplatonic notion that light was the primary substance, the sliver of light forming the annular eclipse divides and rotates until it forms the shape of an alchemical ideogram inscribed in the stones of Temple Bruer. These symbols were believed to be carriers of occult knowledge indecipherable to all but the initiated. This seems to be exactly how Seers regards her childhood drawings after the expulsion from her eidetic Eden. Her family could never fathom the key which would decrypt her alternative modes of communication.

The narrator draws out the connection with Fludd's theory of light and Seers' later attempts to create objects out of light through 'becoming a projector'. We witness this event in a field in Leadenham at twilight, as Seers crouches with her head enclosed in projection apparatus. What we see is a sequel to a reconstruction of a Newtonian experiment to create a tree using alchemical means which the modern viewer will recognise as the chemical formation of a *crystal tree* in a laboratory flask. In the climactic moving image, we witness the miraculous appearance of Seers' own alchemical tree. The soundtrack of the film plays an important role here. A female voice uttering a wavering drone, which recalls Ligeti's haunting music used in Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, is set over an immense aural landscape of the ominous susurration of the wind of an approaching storm. The last word belongs to Alicia Seers: "… it brings to me very great sadness at the things this child has had to encounter through her life".

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Pavel Büchler

Eyes of Others, the title of Lindsay Seers' exhibition at the Gallery of Photography in Dublin, could be generically applied to almost any visual display. Any picture is above all an incitement to looking, a catalyst for what the eye may see. It guides the gaze: it may deceive the eye and play tricks on our minds by stealth, but it can do nothing unseen. It is surely the others' eyes – the eyes of viewers, onlookers, beholders – that make images do their work. Why is it then that from the mouth of Lindsay Seers, an obsessive picture-taker, the phrase sounds so strangely ambiguous?

On the one hand, Lindsay produces images for our consumption – she takes photographs for us, or on our behalf, and lets us observe what they do; on the other, her project involves a conceptually different kind of taking, or 'intake', in which she alone seems to consume the visible by taking possession of it. She seems to apprehend the visible as though it was already a fully formed image intended 'for her eyes only' and with she herself its agent, arbiter and custodian. In a recently published text, *My Life as a Camera: A True Story*, Seers describes her identification with the image as a result of a perceptual compulsion whose origins and deeper meanings are now lost to memory. "All I can say," she writes, "is that I wanted to keep the pictures that went inside me." She goes on to explain how, in her picture-taking urge, she would drape her head and upper body in a black light-tight sack, insert a small piece of photographic paper into her mouth, then pull the sack off and using her lips as a shutter she would take the photograph – or in her own words, "let the image in".

The dark interior of the sack was a place out of sight. Hidden inside it, preparing herself blindly to summon up the image by an act of ritual devouring, she felt invisible to others. "When I emerged from my black sack in city squares," claims Seers, "passers-by would stare through me; they had not seen me, they had not registered me as part of their world, so to them I did not exist." There were no signs of recognition, no eye-to-eye contact, the onlookers would not return her stare, they would not smile, stop and pose for her like people pose for a camera – or, like the crowds on Boulevard du Temple unregistered in Daguerre's first photograph, they would move on just a little too

fast for a photographic encounter. And when they seemed to acknowledge her, like the group of Irish priests who waved at Seers from a terrace in a Dublin park amused by the spectacle of what seemed like an animated cassock, she would disappear again into the darkness of the sack to pray unseen for a few moments longer.

Her unobserved but constantly observing existence confined Seers to a solitary and somewhat parasitic dependence on the world in which others seemed to live their lives for the sole purpose of being watched. She had "become a vampire" who fed on looking, "watching with (her) whole body", her "eyes drinking in the details that were being printed in (her) mouth". When she parted her lips to kiss a lover, she felt his image fall onto the back of her throat. "Even the idea of a kiss mutated into a kind of cannibalism."

Lindsay Seers' 'true story' is told in the first person singular. Of course, what can a story told by someone who aspires to life as an embodied camera be other than an autobiography?

How does a camera, even an embodied one, write its autobiography? The story of a camera, a recording device supposedly vested with an indiscriminate memory, is likely to chart the course of a life rather like an inventory, a running account of facts from which a fiction may be constructed but which in itself is merely a progression of discontinuous data. Made up of arbitrary fragments, coincidences rather than anecdotes, such a story could never amount to a narrative and would barely suggest a latent possibility of significance or meaning within the surplus of minute detail.

Moreover, the camera's own story must necessarily reflect the condition of its 'invisibility' in the image world as one of a constant self-denial against all evidence of subjectivity, of the cover up of traces of self-aware discretion, choice and responsibility. It must be an impassive chronicle of pure circumstances, not an evaluation of the causes and consequences of deliberate acts. It cannot describe a passage of life shaped by experience and twists of fate but merely discrete unconnected experiences in the face of necessity.

The story of a camera, referenced in every photographic image, is a story of predestination. The possibilities of the camera's engagement with the world and its expressive powers are predetermined by its technical functions. The camera, rather like a ventriloquist dummy, can only do what we can do with it.

But, at least according to Vilém Flusser, because the camera is designed to operate 'automatically' we can only do with it what the 'apparatus' is pre-programmed to do. By the same token, our responses to photographic images are equally automatic, controlled by the camera's 'program'. "There is," Flusser insists, "no space for freedom within the area of automated, programmed and programming apparatuses."

In a photograph, the camera must always register itself, declare its presence and its complicity with the depicted event. Every photograph is a picture of Flusser's 'programmed apparatus'. But in the contemplation of photographic images the residual presence of the camera must be eliminated by the very act of looking, its tell-tale traces knowingly and benevolently overlooked by even the most inquisitive and attentive viewer. This is how we are programmed to look at photographs. This is the condition of photographic imagination, without which there would be no pictures, no stories, no fantasy, no fiction, no pleasure; only information, cold facts and figures. (Or, to put this differently, the invisible presence of the camera is what we recognise as a fact in every photograph; but fiction demands a resistance to the factual.)

Using her own body rather than a technical contraption, becoming a 'living camera' herself rather than a camera operator, emancipated Seers from nothing but the conventions and limitations of choice permitted by the 'photographic apparatus'. The more completely she identified with the image, the more the image conditioned all her actions and the more these actions seemed to have become involuntary and 'automatic'. She believes that she was "possessed", not really in control of her bizarre behaviour. She had to obey, do what a camera has to do, to fulfil her desire for photographs. Yet there is a release in this submissive gesture. It lies in the implied erotic fantasy: she gives herself, her body and her being, to photography, she becomes invisible for the voyeuristic gratification of others and at the same time, she redeems her own self-obsession from narcissism.

Seers' project presents a strange self-portrait, made up of disarranged bite-sized fragments of an internal world which, in turn, is entirely constructed from our own perceptions. Just as Seers' pictures enter 'inside her', so they also seem to remain outside, like breathing; both inside and outside the body, always

between inhalation and exhalation. Her thirsty all-consuming gaze is an inward gaze but it can only see what our imagination, fantasy and desires make visible when we look at photographs. The story she tells is her own but she never appears as its true protagonist, rather she is a persona in a photographic scenario. It is a testimony, an eyewitness account of self-aware attention to the features of her surroundings, but in telling us what she saw, Seers only introduces us to a make-believe world. The instant she enters the picture, as it were, there is nothing more to see.

There is a long tradition or self-portraiture, going back at least to Jan van Eyck, where the artist is depicted with a mirror, the one indispensable tool of the self-portraitist's trade as well as the most persistent emblem of photography. On the cover of the publication which brought out Seers' 'true story', there is a picture of the protagonist in a vampire guise: a wig and a denture with a pair of protruding teeth. She stares with her eyes wide open into a hand-held looking glass, its reflective surface turned away from us. Our perspective leads us to a conjecture as to why the expression on Seers' face suggests surprise, even a mild shock. It is well known that a vampire cannot see her likeness in the mirror – but how can we be sure of such an established fact in a work of fiction?

స్త్రా

Lindsay Seers

Looking back is a privileged position. I can see now how the influence of photography had overwhelmed me. Only now can I understand that the photographs I produced were not just documents. The ritual and process of making them was hidden to most. This masked their true significance, much as a talisman used for magical incantation can only be understood by the adepts who have been initiated into it – only then can the transmutation take place. It has become obvious to me that those photographs were portentous. This was written into them in their making; the very act of making them altered the future and so foreshadowed it. Even if, when I made them, there was a lens in the aperture which forced the light into images, that lens was more like a crystal ball than a magnifying glass; what materialised required translation. Even the photographs from orthodox cameras had to change their meaning when they stood in a set with all these others.

Our first family photograph, one such conventional photograph, dated 1910, of Tom on his wooden Royal Navy ship (hanging in my great grandmother's parlour) did not merely fall back in time to depict an already lived past but it actively propagated a future. Tom never returned from sea and my father never knew him but he could see how much he looked like his great-uncle. It was that photograph alone which instilled in my father's mind that he should become a sailor himself. He saw the projected future of himself promised in that romantic sepia world. So after the independence of Sri Lanka he found himself to be a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy based in Mauritius. The British needed a radio-relay station in the southern hemisphere and, as my father was a radio operator, that was how I came to be born on that island off Madagascar in the Indian Ocean; instead of in a red brick terrace in a dull English Midlands town.

It's not uncommon to be a child growing up in a former colonial outpost, but what was perhaps odd was that I didn't speak until I was almost eight years old, when we left the island. There seemed to be no cause for this mute condition but now I understand it as a symptom of my eidetic memory, more commonly known as photographic memory – although that name is

misleading, as it is quite unlike photography. Eidetic remembering is not the flat frozen blink of the camera: it is almost hallucinatory in its sensual intensity. Its lucidity is so sharp as to be overwhelming, a stupefying overabundance of detail in all of the senses simultaneously. Memories explode in the head, at times debilitating and painful; it is difficult to convey the potency of this.

      I recall (without choice) a scene of my mother and me on the beach; I can see her face as it was then, before the lines had deepened into folds. I can remember every single shape her hair made as it blew in the wind; every visible hair, wrestling through a strand. I saw the widening of her pupil, the black pushing aside the curtain of her brown iris as she turned to look at me. My reflected face was stationary within the movement of her eye; my own features bulging as in a darkened convex mirror; my fair hair caught up in the same turbulence which disturbed hers. Beyond us, the palm trees were describing that same invisible force; the strain on the strips of sharp leaves pinned at the centre, shaking like a cheerleader's pom-pom; the greens oscillating between the light underbelly and dark top skin. There was the voice of a boy selling wares from his bicycle basket; the pattern of the wicker; the topography of the pale scar on his right leg. As he cycled through the shade of the trees, the sun struck him with dappled light punctuating his atonal chanting with a random rhythmic illumination. The whole cantata was set to the rush of waves on the sand. Odours fluctuated (depending on the shift of the breeze) between eucalyptus and our coconut-scented sun cream; then for a moment a blast of roasted peanuts intermingled, the scent spilling from the paper cones in the boy's wicker basket.

      I didn't need to speak in those years. There was simply nothing to say and no time to say it: there was no space to speak – that would halt the next unfolding moment. Everything was immediate and present. It was as if I was in a kaleidoscope, a bead in the mesmerising and constantly shifting pattern. Everything was in flux, every single moment and every single object rewritten at every turn.

On the occasion of my seventh birthday my mother took me to have my photograph taken by an old European man called Wöhrnitz in the town of Vacoas. He lived in a wooden house, colonial in style, surrounded by a veranda with ornate fretwork around the gables. The fading wooden house we visited was raised on stilts, as was common there, given the tendency to flash floods and torrential rain. This visit was to change everything. As always, I can recall every aspect of the event faultlessly; his cuff button in mother of pearl, chipped on one side, the thread stitched in a cross through the four holes loose and looping away from its catch.

Despite the intense brightness outside, the room struggled to be lit by lamps emitting an inadequate yellowed light dim compared to the sunlight that spilled through the slats in the shutters. I sat in the dingy room in my party dress while huge moths singed themselves in puffs of dust on the lamps. I was the centre of attention, my most feared position. The photographic flashes followed. The only similarly intense flashes of light I knew was the lightning that preceded the tropical hurricanes. Then we would sandbag the doorways waiting for the whirlwinds to hit. In the storms even the birds fell silent in that pause between light and thunder. Perhaps metaphorically that silent but portentous moment existed in that room in other ways – in my sudden need for pretence at expressing happiness for the purposes of the camera's lightning. The photograph that followed brought on a storm that raged on in later years in more covert ways.

Given the look on my face in the resultant image, it is odd to think now that happiness was an emotion that I never rediscovered until years later. The suddenly forced smile in the photograph was my first ever attempt at fakery. The photographic flash signalled a closure; the shutter fell on that light like a guillotine. This was the pivotal moment at which everything changed, although at that snap and flash I was blind to this.

It was literally months later that the picture appeared. There had been some processing problem – the work had to be sent to Africa to be produced and then the postal ship returning it was wrecked upon a reef. I had forgotten about the whole incident with Mr Wöhrnitz but the result came anyway. The paper image, black and white, was like night vision, except at night we still sense the spectrum of the hidden sun reflected faintly from the mirror of the moon: even if

it is not fully perceived, we feel a residue of colours, their warmth emanating from the mystic silvered planet. Colours are not so entirely absent from the world as they are in a photograph.

My mother handed me the image. It shocked me. It was as if I had never seen myself before and at that moment a rupture occurred. It is difficult to explain. I had never considered myself an object in the world. I was locked in a kaleidoscope, in which I was equivalent to everything else. I was a shard in that mirrored pattern in which every part is continuously recast by the whole. Now suddenly it was as if I was ejected from that kaleidoscopic world, thrown to the outside of the long tube. Now the pattern only changed if I used my hand to turn it. Under the slow grind of friction, the sluggishly shifting order juddered into new relationships that must now be manually forced. I felt a sudden introspection. For the first time I became lost to inner thought; a voice rattled on in my head and the outside seemed to close down.

I lost awareness of the perpetual moment I used to inhabit and thought backwards and forwards. That was the day I began speaking. It was not a relief to me, but to my mother and father it was as if everything had "come right". To me it was the reverse. This turning point was even more deeply punctuated by our sudden departure from Mauritius, which followed only days later. There had been hushed arguments, a meeting in a hotel with a man we knew in England; a jeweller and antiques dealer that my mother had worked for.

I remember looking out of the back of the bus as we left. On the other side of the blue cloud of exhaust fumes was my father; our dog Sandy ran after us barking and I think my father was shouting at him, but the deafening grind of the engine, blasting in through the windowless vehicle, smothered their sounds. I could see from my father's body that he was crying. It was much later that I felt the loss. We didn't know then that we wouldn't see him again for more than five years.

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My camera

At Orly airport, there was a new father waiting for us, the same antique dealer. Life changed so much; Mauritius took on the quality of a remote dream.

We lived in Paris for a short time. As I said, my eidetic ability vanished, replaced by language. By the age of nine I had turned ferociously to photography.

My new father bought me my first camera, eager to make a good impression. He had the idea after accidentally discovering, beneath my bed, a mound of scrapbooks, housing my collection of found photos. The books were too full to close, cockled with glue and falling open. The collection was carefully organised into themes: people, products, plants, planets, disasters, death and so on.

When he bought me that first precious camera he had not foreseen how much my project would intensify when I became both director and producer of the photographs. There was a trace in the way that the camera recalled events that reminded me of some qualities of my former condition. I was frustrated at how little information I could retain now. At first this new activity brought some relief.

Every detail of my past was still in me, but the present was vague. Even the moment I was in hardly existed, blocked out by thoughts of other things; imaginings, anxieties, half-phrases repeated and answered in new ways. Whereas before I had remembered everything that I thought and felt, every contingent detail, now it was as if I was living in a fog. This fog started to move backwards.

The camera collected what I had been unable to hold on to. Admittedly the process of photography was joyless and compulsive to me. I knew also that my stepfather deeply regretted the gift he had chosen for me and held himself responsible for the obsessive problems which emerged in me. I could not be separated from that two-eyed camera. Wherever I went I tried to make a document of being in that time and place – not in terms of composed scenes but in terms of details which, when my eyes turned away, dissolved instantly from my mind.

My photographs defied sense for anyone but me: pictures of plastic on the scullery floor, its milky folds against the pink skirting tiles; an unremarkable ceiling light; the point where a chair leg struck the floor. There was no aesthetic ambition: the images were entirely about retention, nothing to do with artfulness; just the simple desire to recall.

Yes, perhaps they were right, this photographic project did escalate beyond control – it occupied most of my thoughts and most of my actions. The camera was the only reason for being. Yet despite my dependence on it, somehow, its faults began to irritate; the arbitrary and artificial frame carved into a scene like a lie.

Finally they forcibly took the camera from me. I was banned from using it or any other similar device. I submitted to this; in the end it was a relief to stop.

There was some displacement; it could not simply disappear. Without photography, without my camera eye, I took solace in reflective objects. The first attachment came from a silver teapot on a café table. I sat for hours in the café on the corner of our street in Paris. I didn't have much to do without the camera. I found I was drawn again and again to looking at the reflective pot. It was an argent eye on the table gazing at the other objects which were resting with their eyes shut. The matt white ceramic cup took little heed of the world in which it stood, but the pot watched everything running across its form; a small world map passed through it in which I was set in context – it looked back at me.

Those mirrored objects watched without blinking; they were self-reflexive, vigilant, they shone out in a room, like the sudden shock when a sleeping face opens its eyes, and changes the whole space with its consciousness.

I had a lot of time to think when I stopped photographing. I spent long hours in the café. I can't recall the circumstances now: I suppose he spoke to me and, through regular unarranged meetings at the same table, we became friends. He was a writer, Philip Ball. Phil was interested in most things so it seemed and knew something about almost everything. He was researching cathedrals at the time. I had never read philosophy, art theory or any photographic theory, but he introduced me to many new ideas. In some ways by living through photography much of what I read was familiar to me. He nurtured in me a newfound interest in ideas.

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PHILIP BALL

For a time, painters forgot what it was they were supposed to be doing. Or perhaps it is fairer to say that it was their audience who made this error, and the artists merely neglected to point it out. At the beginning of true naturalism, masters such as Michelangelo and Titian could be praised for their 'realistic' depiction of nature without losing sight of the inherent artificiality of the process. Giorgio Vasari's bluntness would surely have offended 19th century aesthetes:

> "A painting, then, is a plane covered with patches of colour on the surface of wood, wall, or canvas filling up the outlines spoken of above, which, by virtue of a good design of encompassing lines, surround the figure."[1]

Alberti asserted that painting "aims to represent things seen", but he left no doubts about the artificiality of doing so, for his treatise *On Painting* begins like a textbook by Euclid, full of geometric projections and tracings of rays. "Painting represents the intersection of a pyramid", he said with cold precision,[2] and his sort of painter would not get far without being a mathematician too.

All the same, it was not hard to see in the 16th century where painting was liable to end up. No one in the Middle Ages would mistake a painting for reality, but neither did they feel that the absence of proportion, perspective, light and shade or temporal distinctions mattered. Pictures were symbolic encodings of moral realities. That was an essentially Platonic view, for it hardly mattered whether a picture resembled nature in minute detail if nature itself was deemed to be only a corrupted manifestation of a more transcendental truth.

An eloquent indication of how things changed in later centuries is the frequency of claims that abstraction was a consequence of photography – that painting had to reinvent its goals because the photograph usurped the task of depicting *reality*. There is actually no strong case to support the former idea, but nonetheless it is true that some artists and critics implied the latter even at the time that photography was invented as a practical technique. Fox Talbot

suggested that the photographer's aims coincided with the artist's by calling his 1844 book of images *The Pencil of Nature*. Seeing Daguerre's plates in 1839, the French painter Paul Delaroche concluded that "from today on, painting is dead".[3] How strange, and depressing too, to think that painters had come to regard themselves as literal transcribers of nature.

The problem for photographers was then that they were assumed to have taken over this role that art had constructed for itself. In a curious way, photography perhaps reminded the world of fine arts that it was not so determinedly naturalistic after all – when Manet, an enthusiast of photography, employed a kind of photorealism of figure and lighting in his *Olympia* (1863), the immediacy of the image was deemed shocking – "so clear, so explicit, so formal, so crude", as one critic put it.[4] That explicitness was to become the preserve of the photographer.

It is probably significant here that photography emerged as a practical technology precisely at a time when, and in a place where, art had capitulated to extreme realism: that is to say, in France and England in the early to mid-19th century. It was, of course, a particular, stylised *type* of realism that the painters of the Académie des Beaux Arts practised, exemplified by the crisp lines, flawless brushwork and muted tonalities of Ingres and David. The bright, one might say more photographic, outdoor scenes of Corot and Courbet were considered rather avant-garde – although of course they were themselves revealingly characterised as the Realists. In England, meanwhile, Constable was proclaiming that "painting is a science and should be pursued as an inquiry into the laws of nature". Why, then, he asked, "may not landscape painting be considered as a branch of natural philosophy, of which pictures are but the experiments?"[5] In another era, it is far from obvious that Fox Talbot and Constable, and Daguerre and Ingres, would have been seen as striving for the same thing.

To mistake the photograph for reality was, however, not fully possible while the images remained monochrome, as Vilém Flusser has pointed out:

> "Early photographs were black/white, unmistakably attesting to their origins as being abstracted from some theory of optics. With the

progress of another theory, chemistry, colour photographs became feasible. It appears as if early photographs had extracted colour from the world, and that subsequent photographs were able to re-introduce colour to the world."[6]

By mimicking appearances more closely, colour photography deepened the confusion between what Flusser calls *projection* and representation. Creating photographic colour demanded a whole new raft of technological apparatus, particularly good primary inks and filters, and with it came a new set of ways in which the 'real world' was unwittingly manipulated and transformed. Art historians, alert to this subtle deception, insisted even in the 1960s that photographic images of paintings used in teaching should be rendered in black and white – where the nature of the projection was more explicit – rather than in treacherous colour. As Flusser says:

> "Colour photographs are on a higher level of abstraction than black/white photographs. Black/white photographs are more concrete, and in this sense are 'truer' than colour photographs. Or the other way around: the *truer* the colours of a photograph become the more mendacious they become. They hide their origins as theory more effectively. What obtains for the colours of a photograph also obtains for every other element in the image. They are, without exception, transcoded concepts pretending to have impressed themselves automatically on surfaces, concepts pretending to come from the world *out there*."[7]

Two things are clear here. First, that a considerable amount of equipment and technical procedure must intervene between what is *out there* and what is shown in the image. And second, that no amount of improvement to that equipment and processing can mitigate its consequences – indeed, to Flusser, that only makes matters worse, deepening the intervention even while

helping to disguise it. When we lose sight of the artificiality of this process, according to Susan Sontag, the result is that:

> "A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture."[8]

Perhaps the image, the idol, that needs shattering is that of the camera as an eye. The modern compact camera invites this illusion: we put it to our eye, like a mere lens, a kind of spectacle that merely sharpens our vision while at the same time freezing it forever, insisting that what it delivers is not itself a technological object but a memory. The *camera obscura* was arguably more honest: a *darkened room* of shadows and illusions, an echo of Plato's cave. By making the image-forming cavity not the eye but the mouth, Lindsay Seers not only alludes to this function of the darkened space as a place where images are constructed (as opposed to recorded), but also hints at the fact that what is happening here is a translation. Photography is a language, it has a vocabulary.

The problem is that because this language sounds so familiar, we think we grasp it at once, without apparent effort: it looks as though there is not even any translating to do.

At the same time, making images as Seers does looks (perhaps it really is) an uncomfortable process. Holding film in the mouth reminds us of the discomfort, not to mention the unease, of having dental X-rays taken. The film emerges with tooth marks, looking misshapen, the image blurred and distorted. We cannot avoid asking how it was made, and then thinking about what that process must entail. We wonder whether the world that enters through the mouth is really the same as that which passes into our eyes – and if not, why not?

The history of the *camera obscura* – the prototype of the pinhole camera – is instructive in revealing that the question of what it does is not uncomplicated. The phenomenon of optical projection of an image through a narrow aperture was mentioned by Aristotle, and in the early 11th century the Arabic philosopher Alhazen described the earliest *camera obscura*. He explains that, during a solar eclipse, the sun's rays passing through a small hole in the darkened room throw an inverted image of the crescent-shaped arc onto the opposite wall. This was the recommended way of studying an eclipse without damaging one's eyes, and is discussed by Roger Bacon in the 13th century.

A better, sharper image is produced by inserting a lens into the hole. This was first described in 1550 by the Milanese physician Girolamo Cardano, and the lensed *camera obscura* was widely popularised eight years later by Giovanni Battista Della Porta of Naples. Della Porta's book was so well-known during the 16th century that he was widely thought to have been the inventor of the *camera obscura*. Significantly, he recommends its use as an aid to artists:

> "If you cannot draw a picture of a man or anything else, draw it by this means; if you can but only make the colours. This is an art worth learning. Let the sun beat upon the window, and there about the hole, let there be pictures of men, that it may light upon them, but not upon the hole. Put a white paper against the hole, and you shall so long sit the men by the light, bringing them near, or setting them further, until the sun casts a perfect representation upon the table against it. One

that is skilled in painting, must lay on colour where they are in the table, and shall describe the manner of the countenance, so the image being removed, the picture will remain on the table, and in the superficies it will be seen as an image in the glass."[9]

David Hockney is convinced that painters had already been using such aids – the *camera obscura* and its relative, the *camera lucida* – for at least a century by then. He claims to detect their influence, for example, in the complex compositions of Dieric Bouts and Jan van Eyck from the early 15th century, and he ascribes the increasing realism of paintings since the Renaissance to the use of such mechanical devices. Whether or not that is so, the technology certainly existed. To assume, however, that artists were only waiting for a means of fixing the image so that they did not have to resort to the tiresome business of tracing and colouring it (or conversely, that they saw the dread spectre of their own redundancy in such an innovation) is to misunderstand their intentions. These devices were strictly aids – there was no art in them. Joshua Reynolds, one of the academic conservatives of late 18th century art, declared that:

> "If we suppose a view of nature represented with all the truth of the *camera obscura*, and the same scene represented by a great Artist, how little and mean will the one appear in comparison of the other, where no superiority is supposed from the choice of the subjects. The scene shall be the same, the difference only will be in the manner in which it is presented to the eye. With what additional superiority then will the same Artist appear when he has the power of selecting his materials as well as elevating his stile [*sic*]."[10]

Convinced that their aesthetic judgement could always improve on nature, Reynolds and Ingres would have seen little to fear from the photograph.But histories of optical devices and aids in art tend to overlook an aspect that bears on Flusser's thesis: the instrumentation itself. In the 18th and 19th centuries, mechanisation had rendered the machine commonplace and familiar. All kinds of routine human tasks were by then conducted by machine; *painting* could be

yet another. That was not the case, however, when Della Porta wrote of the *camera obscura*, and it is not incidental that his description appears in a book entitled *Magiae Naturalis* (Natural Magic). Della Porta was a disciple of the burgeoning tradition of Neoplatonic natural magic, which held that nature is pervaded by occult forces that mankind can learn to manipulate through magic. This was not superstition, but a kind of proto-science, for natural magicians believed that there was a perfectly rational theoretical basis to their 'art'. Certainly there was no reason to doubt the existence of occult forces, for the effects of magnetism and electrostatic interactions were well-known; in due course Isaac Newton added gravity.

Those who engaged in the practical and mechanical sciences were widely regarded as magicians – this charge was levelled at Roger Bacon, while the likes of Cardano and Della Porta were able to be perfectly open about their enthusiasm for magic, although they denied that (as some suspected) it invoked the assistance of demons. Even the printing press was at first thought to be some kind of diabolical machine that copied books by fiendish means. An association of imaging with magic remained during the 17th century – the German mathematician Kaspar Schott's description of a portable *camera obscura*, for example, appeared in his 1657 book *Magia Optica*.

The earliest 'photographers', then, were magicians who used mechanics to control occult forces. Far from being seen as a neutral reproduction of the visual world, their images would have excited both wonder and distrust. To have truly imprinted an image of the world onto a white sheet would have been to manipulate reality using magic. (It has been speculatively suggested that the image on the Turin Shroud was created by a primitive form of chemical photography.) Contrast this with the blind faith that we now tend to place in the scenes that the photograph offers, as Flusser describes:

> "It seems as if the world signified in technical images is their cause, and as if they themselves were the last link in a causal chain connecting them without interruption to their meaning: the world reflects sunlight and other forms of light which are then captured on sensitive surfaces – thanks to optical, chemical and mechanical processes – and the result

is a technical image. It thus seems as if they exist on the same level of reality as their meaning. It seems that what one is seeing while looking at technical images are not symbols in need of deciphering, but symptoms of the world they mean, and that we can see this meaning through them however indirectly. This apparent non-symbolic, *objective* character of technical images has the observer looking at them as if they were not really images, but a kind of window on the world. He trusts them as he trusts his own eyes. If he criticises them at all, he does so not as a critique of image, but as a critique of vision; his critique is not concerned with their production, but with the world *as seen through* them."[11]

The reason for this lack of critical faculty, Flusser says, is that the mechanics have become invisible, in the sense that they are trivial: anyone can press the button of a camera.

"He who shoots photographs needs only to follow the instructions as given by the camera. These instructions grow more and more simple as more and more technology is applied to the apparatus. This is the essence of democracy in a post-industrial age. And this is why the snapshooter is unable to decipher his photographs: he takes them to be images of the world which have been produced automatically. This leads to the paradox that the more people shoot photographs, the less they are capable of deciphering them. No one believes that it is necessary to decipher photographs because everyone believes that he knows how to make them."[12]

This disconnection from the machinery is likely to be increased by digital photography, since there is no longer the ritual of removing the film and treating it with chemical solutions – or even of having someone else do that in a far-off place – before we can see what the camera *shows*. Indeed, Seers suggests that "the modern camera is a kind of decoy; it looks just like the older technology but bears no resemblance to it in essence". The magic of the *camera obscura* has been turned into *information* encoded in electronics.

Flusser worries that this distancing from process gives photographs a false air of authority and objectivity:

"Such a lack of critical attitude towards technical images is dangerous in a situation where these images are about to displace texts. The uncritical attitude is dangerous because the *objectivity* of the technical image is a delusion. They are in truth, images, and as such they are symbolical."[13]

Of course, it is unlikely that we will remember to treat 'technical images' for what they are by somehow imagining that they are the products of natural magic (even bearing in mind that during the Renaissance natural magic was almost a synonym for science and technology). But since the more user-friendly technology becomes, the more we become complacent about the fact that it plays a role at all, it is as well sometimes to be presented with it in its cruder forms, in which it produces results that are less polished, less reliable, less apparently easy to interpret. It is good to go on punching pinholes in shoe boxes.

And yet one can find another sharp reminder that photographs require *interpretation* at the other end of the technological scale too. The problem with the photograph is that it tends to present us with images that look familiar. We don't need to think about how they were obtained because we can jump straight into the scene (if, indeed, we are not already in it). This is very different from the challenge facing the astronomer, looking at photographic plates or (more often now) digital images from charged-coupled devices of objects in the cosmos that they have never experienced and can never do so. There are impossible things in these images: jets of gas that appear to be travelling faster than light, star-like entities that blink on and off with clock-like regularity or throw out more energy than entire galaxies. Sometimes it is utterly unclear what is being *seen*: are these clouds of dust glowing or merely reflecting starlight? How does one distinguish a neutron star from a black hole, both spewing out X-rays as they pull apart the matter that falls into their gravitational fields? Distances are hard to gauge: is this a dim galaxy nearby or a bright one farther off? And more often than not, astronomy 'sees' outside of the visible

spectrum, in places where our eyes have no training: in radio waves or gamma rays. What is invisible at one wavelength stands out like a beacon at another: hidden worlds come into view at the turn of a dial.

This ambiguity of the very big applies equally to the very small. When the Dutch textile merchant and lens grinder Antoni von Leeuwenhoek peered into the microscope in the 1670s, he found a new world, populated by *animalcules* that no one had ever suspected were there – "so various", he said, "that 'twas wonderful to see". Each time the lenses got more powerful and the scales smaller, the new and the unexpected came into focus. But for that very reason, it was mysterious and hard to understand. Now the electron microscope – seeing not with light at all, but with beams of electrons behaving as waves instead of particles – routinely probes the world of subcellular structures, where individual large molecules may appear as fuzzy blobs. What are they doing? Which is which? Our vision is cloudy, and we have to make guesses and suppositions, and then find other ways of testing them. Never in any of this can one afford to forget how the images are being taken. Light ceases to focus if the focal point is smaller than its own wavelength. Electrons can give sharper photos, but at the risk of frying the specimen. Lasers provide monochromatic light that may set one molecule glowing while leaving another cold. And compared with the subject of the images, the machinery is huge – it is like photographing a flower with a Kodak the size of a mountain.

Under these circumstances, what Polish photographer Wieslaw Michalak says of his own discipline is necessarily the case: "Reality and fiction cannot be unequivocally distinguished from each other by a criterion of truth. The *truth* itself is a projection of our current knowledge and information." Such a difficulty of interpretation is precisely what Michalak would like to see acknowledged in his own discipline:

> "The medium of photography and the act of photographing overcome an artificial division between science and art. Visualisation is the beginning of a new mode of interaction and communication. The debate about the documentary nature of photography comes to an end."[14]

Of course the camera never lies; it is we ourselves who do the deceiving.

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1. G. Vasari. (1960). *Of Painting*, in Vasari on Technique, trans. L. S. Maclehose. (Dover, New York), p. 208.
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LINDSAY SEERS

My next clear memory may have been some years after the confiscation of the camera. Time is skewed around the order of events – but I feel the next significant moment occurred when I bought three metres of dense black fabric from a market stall, from which I made a large black bag. The resulting sack was like a half body-bag; it fitted my standing figure to the waist. It was wide enough to allow free movement of my arms, without disturbing the lightproof grip of the elastic closure.

I have no memory as to how I came by the other equipment, but this was the practical beginning of me 'becoming a camera' (although the urge had been latent in me for a long time). If my previous photographic activity verged on compulsive, this new act was a full-blown obsession. I have no idea where it came from; it was as if it acted through me, a kind of possession. Like a somnambulist waking from sleep, I would find myself in the middle of a gesture I had not known I was making.

The new process became an extended ritual that I had to enact. I would need to prepare light sensitive paper. I always did this at night: nocturnal, I spent hours in dark cupboards, cutting and wrapping the mouth-sized paper, storing it in light-tight boxes; meanwhile, my head was empty of thoughts.

All I can say is that I wanted to keep the pictures that went inside me. I had been silent all of my childhood, dumbstruck with images and with the spectacle of the world. Now I was struck dumb in another way – with a mouth gagged by the paper images. I adapted the simple idea of the pinhole camera to my body. My head became the camera body and my lips the shutters. I clothed myself in the sack and then put the prepared paper in my mouth. I would pull the sack off and open my lips to allow the image in. Trapped upside down, it appeared on the paper against my throat: a tiny image, blurred and red, coloured by my blood – tinted by the light passing through the blood within my cheeks. Everything was bathed in the red light of my body.

I had left home, broken contact with my family after endless arguments and refusals to accept the way I had chosen to live. I wandered aimlessly in Europe, (Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, and Dublin). I was not ashamed to photograph in public places. When I emerged from my black sack in city squares passers-by would stare through me; they had not seen me, they had not registered me as part of their world, so to them I did not exist.

I found myself in ludicrous situations. One day I was in the formal Gardens at the Royal Hospital in Dublin. I had been wrestling in the sack for some time. I had cut all the paper a little too large. It wouldn't sit between my teeth properly; it fell flat on my tongue where I needed it to be gripped in my molars, vertical, to catch the image. Tilted, it made images into an anamorphic blur, elongated and distorted beyond recognition. It was perhaps twenty minutes before I finally had the paper in place. I emerged into the sunlight and raised my hand in front of me. As my eyes drew into focus, beyond my hand I saw that there were over a hundred catholic priests in full dog collared regalia, standing on the terrace above the garden; they must have come to a meeting at the Great Hall at Kilmainham. They were all looking at me. They had seen me raise my hand and had all started to wave at me enthusiastically, their black frocks lifting and swaying with their gesture. Perhaps I wasn't such a bizarre sight for them? I didn't really know what to do. I didn't want to lose the photograph I had struggled for – I just went back into the sack and waited until I felt they had gone. My frightened eyes were wide open but sightless in the black of the sack. I was afraid that they might

come over, perform an exorcism on me, believing me to be possessed. I suppose in a way I was possessed.

At this time a documentary photographer became interested in my behaviour, my life as a camera. His name was Frank Weston. He followed me doggedly and photographed me. I often lay on the ground to take the photographs, since the photographs needed that stillness. There was something melancholic about this action.

He would silently watch me from a distance, waiting, shooting me. Maybe there was something comforting in his presence. I would be struggling, ashamed by the perversity of the ritual but driven to it all the same – dedicated to its odd clumsiness. It had a strange effect on my appearance: my mouth would distend and bulge, sometimes drooling with the foreign object jammed in it.

I would struggle in the dark sack, emerge almost gagging on the paper: lying there, still; suddenly looking intently at the world, holding my breath, frozen, sensing the image falling into me. This sensation was almost eidetic – watching with my whole body. I was positioned so peculiarly in the event, my eyes drinking in the details that were being printed in my mouth. That marking of time on the paper inside me always came too late. Those little pieces were charts of how my body was united with the image of the moment I was witness to, but as soon as the image was formed, that union was over; evidenced but no longer physical. The photographs relentlessly mapped the loosening of the union. Just lying there was like being victim to the passing of time.

I spent years locked into this process, drifting: decisions became difficult. I made dozens of alchemical drawings and used them like fortune telling cards. It seemed as rational as any other way of deciding what to do (it absolved me of responsibility), so I followed the cards – they led me to Amsterdam. I journeyed to Holland by sea as they had suggested.

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Amsterdam

My memory was failing more and more, as if it had burnt out in the intensity of my experience of childhood. I needed to retain this journey, the pilgrimage to Amsterdam, so I photographed it with my body. This is how I can make myself recall – by writing images inside of me.

I think it was when I got to the dock in Newcastle that I became aware that he was following me again, the photographer, Frank Weston. He was strange company. I pretended not to see him. I didn't understand why he came; I didn't care. At times perhaps I did want him to be there, but only at a distance and without acknowledgement.

I boarded the ferry for Holland. In the DFDS Seaways cabin I prepared my chemicals: the revealers and fixers. I took my photographs in the cabin, corridors and from the decks. This process had become my way of thinking about being in a place. During the night I left the cabin door open so that my watcher could observe me. I'm not sure why. My own loneliness perhaps? He watched me, the flash of his camera filling the room. It didn't matter; my self-consciousness was the same whether observed or not. I watched myself in any case, more intensely than any other could, my internal surveillance was never turned off. I observed myself looking at myself. The act of being a camera was purging, a compulsive enactment which reified a process that I lived abstractly.

It was morning when we reached Ijimuden; I was up all night and saw the sun rise from the top deck of the ferry.

I had come to Holland to stand on the shore and look out at the place from which Warwijck embarked to accidentally discover Mauritius. The ships left from Texel on 1 May 1598, the flagships *Amsterdam* and *Mauritius* (and six others). The island itself was named after the ship (in turn named after the *stadholder* Maurits, son of William of Orange). I suppose the sea looks the same as it did then, except that every expectation of what lies beyond it is entirely different for me now than it was to them then.

I would stand there to look out on their sea.

I took a fast ferry to Amsterdam from Ijimuden and then travelled to Texel by train from Amsterdam. It was the first occasion that the persistence of Frank Weston became intolerable. It was so very evident and so very evidently unwanted this day; I tried to make this clear to him but he chose to ignore it. The wide-open spaces forced us to be there together. I resented him now. I resented him recording me more than anything else. He was beginning to appear in my own images – they were becoming like a portrait of him.
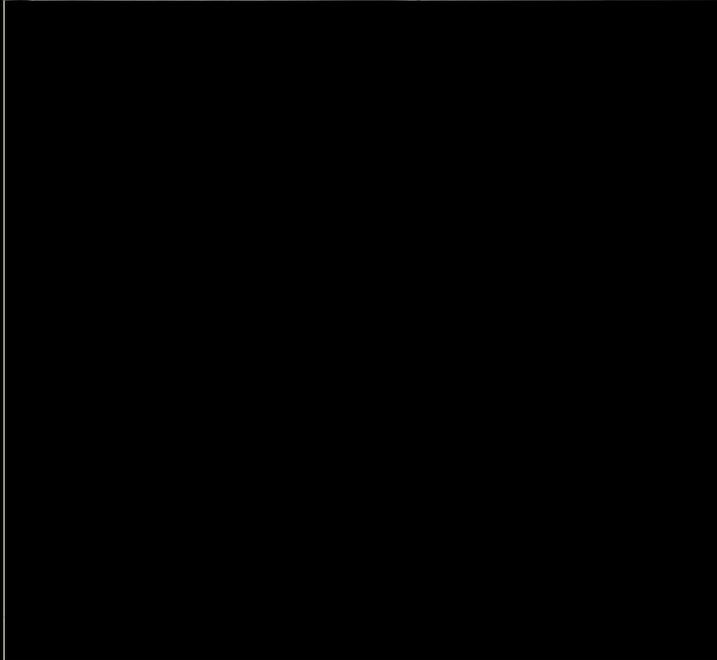
I'd never really considered the collection of images that my stalker must have had by this time. I'd never even thought of them existing; I had only acknowledged the act of his taking them; it had ended there for me. But during this trip he had been so present – filming and photographing

constantly, more intrusive than before, far more visible. I started to ask myself how I felt about the existence of these images, and what he might be doing with them, why he wanted them. It came over me strongly, the existence of this hoard of documentation of my activities. It was as if he had part of me. I could not allow this to continue. It had, after all, been made without permission, stolen. Perhaps I had consented by not acting to stop him? Had I actively encouraged him through my passivity? I'm not sure now but the existence of all those images of me (beyond my control) began to disturb me. It wasn't as if I could talk to him about it, make an agreement, discover his intentions; it was far too late to break the silence now. I needed to get the material away from him.

I spent some days in doing nothing that would interest him. I saw him hanging around, waiting, and watching. I needed to go home, I needed to get those images and I needed to stop him following me.

I caught the ferry to England from the Hook of Holland. He followed. I knew that on this ferry all luggage was taken into the hold. I knew what luggage he carried. When the ferry docked in Harwich I asked the steward at the ship's reception to make a call for Frank Weston, asking

him to wait at reception for an urgent message before disembarking. Whilst he waited pointlessly on the ship, I took his baggage from the conveyor belt in the port. I removed the pictures of Holland from his luggage and returned it to the revolving belt. I caught the first train to London and managed to lose him.

It was not long after this event that Weston passed his entire remaining collection of images to Dr Jule Eisenbud, a man who studied me (as he had Ted Serios) in a more scientific fashion in later years. The reasons for this exchange of my works are not clear to me as yet.

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RUFUS EISENBUD

From Serios to Seers? It's hard not to think that Lindsay Seers was the ideal surrogate for my father's fascination with the psychic performer, Ted Serios. Of course, there was no suggestion that the strange photographs produced by Seers, no matter how unusual, had anything of the paranormal about them, but I think my father genuinely believed that her images would prove every bit as effective in revealing the mysteries of the unconscious.

My father was Dr Jule Eisenbud, a Denver-based psychoanalyst interested in paranormal phenomena. His most famous case concerned a former Chicago bellhop called Ted Serios, who claimed to be able to make photographic images appear on film inside sealed cameras using the power of his mind. Ted was the subject of my father's book *The World of Ted Serios*, published in April 1967.

Ted's *schtick* involved the use of Polaroid cameras. Using a small device called a gizmo, which was basically a tube of black paper about an inch across, Ted would *focus his thought* through the gizmo pressed against the front of the camera and tell the operator to press the shutter. By projecting his thoughts he appeared to be able to make mysterious images appear on the film, which became known as *thoughtographs*.

Ted came to live at our Denver home in the early 60s, when he was a middle-aged alcoholic. It's hard to know what was true about Ted Serios – we know he had been in a correctional institution as a young man and later served in the merchant marine. He was working in a Chicago hotel when he agreed to be hypnotised by a man called George Johannes – Ted's psychic powers supposedly date from that experience. Ted developed a talent for *clairvoyant viewing* of hidden or far off objects, and he and George Johannes immediately put the gift to work looking for hidden treasure. It was George who first gave Ted one of the new Polaroid cameras and asked him if he could get the images from his head on to photographic film. That's how the *thoughtographs* started.

Ted Serios came to my father's attention through Curtis Fuller of the Illinois Society for Psychic Research, who insisted that my father investigate the phenomenon. This he began to do, with all the scientific rigour of which he was

capable. However, Ted was the antithesis of the calm scientific approach. Unfortunately, Ted's powers seemed only to work when he was intoxicated, so he had to be plied with beers throughout the whole experiment. These sessions could go on for 5, 6, 7 hours at a time, as rolls and rolls of film were fed into the cameras. Try to imagine this loud, foul-mouthed drunk, who had actually moved into our family home by that time, careening around our living room, waving his arms, often stripping off his shirt, shouting obscenities, then suddenly pressing his head against a Polaroid camera held by my father or some other researcher and yelling for them to press the shutter. It was pure theatre!

More often than not, nothing would appear on the film. Sometimes the film would emerge exposed pure black or pure white, which my father, strangely, considered a success. But on a few occasions something truly remarkable would show up on the film: views of strange people and mysterious places, often weird pictures of recognisable buildings. Sometimes Ted would try to create a *thoughtograph* of a well-known landmark, like the local opera house, and instead get a 'near miss', a view of an adjacent building, for instance. Sometimes the images would be odd composites of two recognisable buildings, exhibiting the merged architectural features of both.

My father was never able to catch Ted out in any deception and could offer no explanation for these events other than psychic abilities. To us kids, Ted was the ultimate entertainment, some sort of anarchic magician. When he disappeared after six years of being part of our lives, we were distraught, my father especially so.

With hindsight, it's easy to dismiss all this as naive. The experiments with Ted Serios were about as far away from 'controlled' as you could get. Ted's reliance on the mysterious gizmo, and the sheer hucksterism of the performance, look to us, post-David Blaine, like the classic misdirection of an illusionist. But you have to remember that the 60s was a time when society was more or less convinced that the human mind had untapped potential, not just the counter-culture but the scientific community as well. Even the military, both in the West and the Soviet Union, was conducting serious research into the possibility of paranormal phenomena such as psychokinetic abilities and clairvoyant viewing.

So there was a definite sense of *déjà vu*, twenty years later, to go

home to Denver to visit my folks and find Lindsay Seers' weird photographs all over the place and the artist herself drifting around the house like a ghost. Of course, there was nothing paranormal in the way Seers made her photographs, but the parallels with the other-worldly images that emerged from Ted's Polaroids were striking. I also learned that Seers had also used hypnotism in her work, though this wasn't the trigger for her interest in photography but merely a way to tap into the unconscious. Perhaps this is what interested my psychoanalyst father.

My father met Seers in Amsterdam in the mid-Eighties. He was attending a colloquium in the city and Seers had gone there to research the discovery of the island of Mauritius, her birthplace, by Dutch explorers in the late 17th century. My father told us how he was walking along the Zwanenburgwal on his way to the Rembrandthuis museum when he suddenly noticed a tiny piece of exposed photographic film on the canal path. Although distorted and in negative, the image was quite recognisable as the view along the canal by which he was walking.

The echoes of Ted's *thoughtographs* were still in his mind as he approached Rembrandt's house and suddenly discovered the source of the image. Standing opposite the famous landmark, just emerging from a heavy black cloth sack, with tiny bits of photographic film strewn around her feet, was Lindsay Seers. She was in the act of making *mouth photographs* – by placing a strip of film in the back of her mouth and holding a small brass aperture in her lips to admit light, Seers was able to make negative images as if her body had become a pinhole camera. The black sack was a portable dark room in which to prepare pieces of unexposed film and later to fix the image on the film. I witnessed something similar in Denver the first weekend I met Seers, though by then the black sack had evolved into a light-tight black tent out of which Seers would emerge by squeezing her body through a tight iris-like opening. You didn't have to be a trained psychoanalyst to see the primal associations.

Seers was an itinerant recluse, a drifter with little time for anything except her own peculiar obsessions, and didn't form relationships easily. But my father's mix of professional curiosity and the connection with Serios, whose history fascinated Seers, seemed to draw her out. Suddenly, my father found

himself listening to her bizarre personal history. What emerged was a childhood on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean but one spent entirely unable to speak: Seers was a mute, apparently due to some undiscovered early trauma. She also possessed an eidetic memory, the ability to recall events with perfect accuracy. Later there had been the encounter with photography, which seemed to coincide with the belated onset of language at the age of eight. There's some suggestion that the onset of language coincided with a falling off in her powers of total recall; hence the compulsive need to make photographs to record her memories. After various forays into conventional photographic techniques, this culminated in the attempt to make her own body into a camera, and hence the mouth photographs.

My father left Amsterdam a few days later with the beginnings of a collection of images Seers had made in her own body. Some the artist gave to him, some he continued to find littering the streets of the city. Not all were of Amsterdam – Seers had been travelling aimlessly through Europe and there were images of Berlin, London, and Dublin. There was reportedly a whole series of Paris which had gone missing in strange circumstances upon which Seers would not elaborate. The images fascinated him – a weird travelogue of well-known landmarks and nameless buildings; evidence of sea crossings on boats and ferries; odd photos of trees. In exchange, he left Seers with an open invitation to visit Denver.

Back in Colorado, my father began to study the images in more depth, aided by erratic dispatches of more images from Lindsay Seers bearing postmarks from towns and cities from Europe to Asia. There would never be a return address. He became increasingly fascinated by the idea of the images Seers created as being unmediated expressions of her psychic landscape. Whatever the apparent subject matter of the picture, there was a very strong sense that the images were somehow revealing her inner mental states. A series of pictures of Berlin were full of echoes of momentous political changes, yet marked by absences, negations and a sense of coming late to the scene of an event which one has just missed. There is an overwhelming sense of solitude in the heart of even the busiest cities and psychological isolation in the architectural wasteland of the traveller's hotels and eateries.

About this time, the imagery changed. I think she had been gripped by melancholy, a morbidity apparently induced by the constant use of the shroud-like black sacks. Matched pairs of images were being created: one a third-person view of Seers as victim of some unknown crime of violence, the other the blood-red mouth photo looking back from the victim's viewpoint. This work grew out of a fascination with macabre true crimes, especially those of Jack the Ripper in Victorian London. There was a popular myth at that time that a victim of murder could retain a retinal image of his or her assailant, burned into the back of the eye as it were. Victorian forensic scientists made attempts to photograph such images, which became known as *optograms*.

I remember my father telling me the letters had become increasingly tortured, to the point where he started to worry about Seers' well-being. Seers sought respite from her dark moods by moving to a restful English commune in the Chilterns, residing in a strawberry-coloured mansion and taking long walks in the surrounding woods. But her musings on the strange sanguinary nature of the mouth photos seem to have invoked a full-blown shift of personality. There was something in the blood-red colouration of the photos taken in the mouth which naturally made one ruminate on the cause – haemoglobin.

The images themselves were now a little more conventional; obviously the mouth photography technique had been discarded. They tended to show Seers adopting a Gothic persona, often sporting vampire fangs. The images tended to be colour self-portraits, often showing Seers gazing at her own reflection in an antique hand mirror as if observing her own transformation into a vampire.

But sometimes, photos would arrive which seemed to show a much lighter side to Seers' personality. Some featured Seers in a Darth Vader helmet. Was this tongue in cheek? Later discussions with my father pointed instead towards ever increasing alienation. Seers had retreated behind the opaque Vader mask in flight from her frail transparency, as revealed in the translucent mouth photos, which she now abandoned. Walking around towns and cities in the mask, she announced to all her journey to 'the dark side', garbed in the ultimate 'character armour'. Then Lindsay Seers arrived unexpectedly in Denver.

A few days before Seers turned up at my father's house, unannounced, he received a disturbing visit from a man identifying himself as Frank Weston.

Weston's claims to know Seers were backed up by his own collection of Seers photographs, which he showed my father. He claimed he would follow Seers on her travels and collect discarded photographs from city streets, trains and planes, hotel rooms, restaurants, anywhere Seers might drop them. He had brought a small suitcase full of this material, which he said was just a small proportion, "for personal use", of the whole archive.

However, it quickly became obvious that Weston was himself a photographer and filmmaker but with only one subject, Lindsay Seers. He showed my father pictures and snippets of videos of Seers in various public places in the act of her strange photographic ritual. But some of the images were disturbingly voyeuristic, such as Seers glimpsed through half-open hotel room doors. How did Weston come by these pictures? Was he some sort of quasi-official documentary maker or what we would now call a stalker? My father decided to withhold judgement because Weston had brought the astonishing news that Seers was in Denver and would almost certainly pay my father a visit. He would ask her about Weston himself.

When Seers turned up on my father's doorstep that first time, some six or seven years after their first meeting, she exhibited, according to my father, signs of "post-traumatic shock". Days passed before she was able to speak,

which she passed compulsively making photographs. But she was unable to talk about what had caused her distress.

It was then that my father learned more fully about Seers' mute childhood, in which the compensations of her extraordinarily rich eidetic memory, her power of total recall, had simply rendered language irrelevant. It was as if her inner life was so replete that communication with others was superfluous. She described the experience of eidetic recall as "a stupefying overabundance of detail in visual images" exploding in the memory. She likened her silence before the intensity of this almost hallucinogenic replay of any given moment to that of a movie goer transfixed by the overwhelming spectacle – "imagine being in the most fully immersive IMAX theatre ever", she told my father, "and then multiply that by a thousand". The obsessive taking of photographs began here. Seers reported that the imagery was utterly mundane; nothing which you would think a subject worthy of photography, just endless

shots of everyday items as if trying to catalogue the entire inventory of every building she entered.

When my father strayed onto the subject of Frank Weston, Seers became severely agitated. She was obviously aware of Weston's constant presence in her life, dogging her footsteps and intruding into her most private activities. She seemed to hold the kind of beliefs associated with primitive societies as far as photographs of her taken by other people were concerned – that the image stole or trapped the soul. Most strangely of all, for the longest time Seers never managed to capture Weston on film during his own voyeuristic acts; then eventually he begins to appear in the images, menacing and omnipresent.

I think Seers' visit became as much a consultation as a conversation with my father. Even if no formal therapy took place, Seers may have benefited from my father's ability to accept her on her own terms. When I recall my own meeting with her, I remember someone even more intensely strange than Ted Serios, but with the same aura of someone possessed of a mysterious gift, barely understood. Her odd wanderings about the house and the obsessive making of images seemed to have its own logic. Although it was practically impossible to have a normal conversation with her, the images left about the house during her visit were, in fact, quite communicative – if gaining an insight into what it must be like to live inside the other person's skin is the aim of 'communication'.

The last images she made during that visit to our Denver home, which are still in my father's possession, are of inconsequential household objects and scenes, all shot from a low angle – obviously by someone lying on the floor. Then she was gone, without a word of farewell. The last news my father had of Seers was a call from an old friend who lived in Nevada – he had seen a flyer advertising a ventriloquism act in a small Las Vegas theatre house. My father flew there to try to catch the act, but when he arrived the last performances had been cancelled and Seers had disappeared.

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LINDSAY SEERS

Tracing origins was not what I had thought it would be when I set out for Holland; there was no catharsis, no revelations, and no new-found sense of direction or purpose. The pilgrimage achieved little except a strong conviction that I had to escape my situation (and Frank). I disguised myself with a wig and another name and went to a commune I knew of - a beautiful strawberry Gothic mansion house in the heart of the Oxfordshire countryside, nestled in woods. I settled for a while. It was time for change. I needed to change. I was tired of the endless feeling of loss that came with my life as a camera. All the struggling with light and dark became tedious; waiting for the light to come or to go; for sunshine or moonlight; the suffocating black capes and sacks; the isolation of the act; and the blood in the images – the blood-coloured photographs. There was something vampiric in aspects of the life I had been living.

The vampire kiss was loveless. I moved to suburbia and tried to have a more normal life. I worked in a fashion chain store in the High Street.

I met a beautiful-looking man, a customer in the shop. I had become very preoccupied with an idea about how the small opening in the mouth, formed just before a kiss, makes an aperture through which the image of the lover falls. This inverted portrait falling cannibalistically onto the throat (as if about to be swallowed) foreshadows the intention of the kiss itself. My kisses took the form of photographing him with my mouth.

Perhaps applying concepts to kissing is reductive? He seemed to think so. My attempt to lead a normal life (and the relationship) didn't last.

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Originality

I had a recurring dream for many years, about being an artist. In the dream I would have made an extraordinary work. It was my masterwork, which surprised even me in its exuberant originality and astonishing monumentality. That complete, I would walk into a gallery and there it would be – my work – but not mine, by someone else, someone famous, the work identical in every way, but not mine, erasing me. This would bring on a terrible feeling of despair. I was always relieved to wake up from the nightmare.

   Unfortunately – as was the way with most of my dreams – it turned out to be a premonition. It was only by chance I saw the work of A.H. in Ireland. I was just passing through. I had gone to see an old friend; the museum was shut but she let me inside its thick stone walls. I had no interest in A.H., but I was there and the friend offered. We wandered around the many corridors and galleries; I was distracted, not interested in the clumsy work. Then, there it was, small and easy to miss in the morass of stuff, it shouted to me across the room – an image taken in her mouth, hanging in the very building I had enacted the same process hundreds of times. It could not be more identical – the round hand mirror, the pinhole, her short hair, the same in every way, except for the author and the date (hers five years or so later). It was like a physical blow to the body when I saw it. I felt a terrible collapsing nausea. It was as if that process and its results had made me exist and then it had been taken from me. It was the dream made real and despair followed. It stopped me dead. Maybe she saved me from myself with her inadvertent theft. I stopped being a camera. I took up ventriloquism.

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Ventriloquism

My Aunty Barbara (we call her Dame Barbara) is my father's sister. She was born with innate theatrical tendencies, and had become a ventriloquist in her early twenties. Initially she ran away from her family home in Sleaford at the age of seventeen to become an assistant to her magician boyfriend Arthur Fisher. They travelled around finding work where they could in working men's clubs and small local theatres/village halls, camping out in the cheapest B&Bs. It was when they were performing at Coronation Street Theatre, Queen's in Blackpool (run by manager-proprietor Cyril Critchlow) that an incident with a female ventriloquist called Bobby Kimber occurred that caused Barbara to find herself performing as a ventriloquist.

Kimber had an intense relationship with her dummy (Augustus Peabody) and the dummy seemed to have some kind of hold over her. Alcoholism and the act had destabilised her a little and she suffered from monumental mood swings, depressions and occasional hallucinations. Bobby and Augustus would have long and violent arguments; it is not so unusual for ventriloquists to suffer this kind of delusion. On that particular night Bobby had not shown up for her act (later it transpired that this was the result of one of these self-destructive arguments). Cyril, a magician and founder member of the Blackpool Magician's Club, was an itinerant showman and got Barbara on the stage as a stand-in. Fisher fed lines to Barbara from beneath the stage and Cyril (like many magicians a ventriloquist himself)

threw the voice of the dummy. The *ad hoc* act went down extremely well and Dame Barbara adored the limelight. Kimber then taught Barbara the art of the trade and Barbara became one of the few female ventriloquists on the circuit. In fact, within the space of a year Barbara became the only female vent in England as Bobby Kimber was exposed as a transvestite and turned out to be not a woman at all. Kimber's case was truly shocking to his/her fans. The first Barbara and Cyril knew of it was through headlines in the press – no-one, least of all Barbara had suspected that Bobby was a man.

It can take someone dying to feel the gravitational pull of the blood bonds, ties that otherwise one may have spent a lifetime trying to loosen. My grandmother, bedrock of the family, finally gave up her struggle with the debilitations of age and passed away.

I'd lived with her as a child in Sleaford, Lincolnshire when my father was at sea and my mother was in Africa. It was trying to find some way back to my grandmother (Barbara's mother) that made me ask Barbara to come to Blackpool and perform with me. We had not been particularly close despite the proximity of many family weddings, picnics and Sunday dinners. Stories filtered down through the relatives about the outrageous Dame Barbara. It seems

that over the years she had, like Kimber, become adversely affected by performing with those anthropomorphic dolls: after a bout of extraordinary behaviour she had to quit performing in order to break the depression – and the excessive drinking.

When I asked her to perform it was extremely difficult for her to get her dummy, Sailor Bill, out of the attic and get back on the stage with him, but like me I think she needed to exorcise some ghosts (and what better way to do it than with those harbingers of wayward spirits – vent dolls). I forced her hand and finally she agreed to come.

In Blackpool, Aunty Barbara and I fused our acts – me with my 'performance art work' and her 'variety style' theatrical approach. I'm not sure what the audience would have made of it. The only measure I have of it was seeing Steve Pearl in the audience. He seemed to be smiling in the right places. Steve was a performance artist and poet who I knew in the 70s; he has written and spoken about my work. He makes a great deal of the connection between me and Stookie Bill (the ventriloquist's dummy that John Logie Baird had used to demonstrate television in that same Soho building in London in 1926). I did have a dummy called Bill whose character was based on the idea of being the first subject of television (but I was well aware that this was not the dummy Baird used, as Steve has suggested!). My Bill was a compelling 'cheeky boy' and we worked together for a very short time in some out of the way places in Germany and Ireland. He was a constantly shifting array of characters which were absorbed from TV, which he watched incessantly. But eventually I had to keep my distance from Bill; I left him in Bar Italia, Soho. I was not strong enough emotionally to withstand him. It was in Soho I had started to meet other artists for the first time, such as Dave Burrows, Mark Hutchinson, Annie Whiles, Ole Hagen, Mairéad McClean and Caroline McCarthy. I have no idea what they made of me.

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DAVID BURROWS

Becoming Analogue

How best to comment on the recent films of Lindsay Seers which present the history of her life and work through the anecdotes of family and acquaintances and the views of professionals? Is it best to comment on the commentary, to analyse each memory and theory in relation to the images that pass before our eyes, so as to root out the facts? Probably not, as there is little in Seers' films to help clarify whether the views expressed are playful mystifications or vital clues for understanding her life's work so far. That the actual events and performances documented in the films are bizarre and strange further tests any reasoned assessment. For example, *The World of Jule Eisenbud* introduces a young Lindsay Seers who tries to transform herself into a camera; in *Intermission* the artist is seen living amongst ventriloquist dolls; and in *Extramission*, Seers transforms herself into a projector.

So, how best to appraise these films? There is nothing else for it but to accept that the performances and works cited in the films have an imaginary dimension, one that is vital to any comprehension of the various objects and manifestations produced by Seers. It is not that these fantastic tales frustrate any objective understanding of Seers' practice; what is perplexing is that to distinguish fact from fiction is to resist the *ethos* of her work.

There is an irony to this conclusion. Not only are Seers' films presented as documentaries, they are also concerned with the analogue – the copy and the production of indexes, (signs that are physical traces that evidence something has existed or taken place). In fact, Seers' early work, in which she attempts to become a camera by placing light-sensitive paper in her mouth and forming an aperture with her lips, can be seen as an attempt to become the primary indexing machine that, in part, defined the 20th century. It should also be noted that Seers' ventriloquism is a practice situated between animating, mimicking and indexing. Seers manufactured the alter-ego Candy Cannibal who features in *Intermission*; a doll with a camera in her mouth that snaps at the heads of the curious. The malevolent-looking Candy Cannibal, with her blue

face and white hair, is herself a colour negative of the artist. And in becoming a projector in *Extramission*, Seers is seen to take the form of another machine. While Seers is concerned with the indexical, it is clear that her interest in indexes and photography is far from utilitarian.

It is to the complex relationships of the index, memory and identity, developed in Seers' films, that attention needs to be paid; a relationship that is at odds with many of the approaches of her contemporaries who apply the camera as a tool or recording device. Indeed, in viewing Seers' films, it becomes clear that an instrumental use of the camera is a problem rather than a solution for forming a relationship to the past.

The photograph is the index that wounds

Photography, which fixes the impression of light, is an indexical sign employed by many and not just by artists. And while many of us have learnt to distrust photography as a purveyor of truth, the authority of the photographic image has not diminished in either everyday culture or contemporary art, even as the analogue is replaced by the digital. It is the capacity of the indexical sign to conjure up or point to a world, thing or event that captivates us. This is a quality recognised by Rosalind Krauss who, in *Notes on the Index: Part One*,[1] identified indexical processes employed by artists troubled by the arbitrariness of signs produced by abstraction in modern art and design. Krauss identifies this embracing of the indexical by Marcel Duchamp in particular, as a manifesting of a "trauma of signification".[2] Importantly, the index arrests the arbitrariness of the sign as it has a physical relationship to its referent; the index is always fixed in relation to something that is always after, absent or past. Krauss' essay also details the indexical practices employed by avant-garde artists in the 70s. For Krauss, such practices were 'empty' of meaning and included casts, bite marks, body prints, holes dug in the ground and cuts made into buildings as well as the recording of events through film, photography and text. It is the temporal gap between the photographic or indexical record and the referent that is of concern for Krauss, a gap that is made apparent by avant-garde artists and that allows for a deconstruction of presence. Krauss is not the only theorist to proffer this view. Hal Foster in *Return of the Real* argues similarly that the abstraction of capitalism and new technology is met by indexical practices in the 60s and 70s as a kind of realism or way of marking the *Real*, Jacques Lacan's term for that which always escapes representation or the *Symbolic*.[3]

Seers' use of the index is somewhat less orthodox. Firstly, she is less interested in deconstruction or registering the *Real* than in producing indexes to explore the way memory and the past and identity are manifested in the present. Secondly, it seems for Seers that it is the index, in the form of photography, which induces rather than assuages trauma: it is a glimpse of a photograph during her childhood in Mauritius that might be the source of all her troubles. In

Extramission the artist's mother recalls that her daughter did not develop the capacity for language as other children did. It was only when, as a young girl, Seers saw a photograph of herself and asked, "Is that me?", that she entered into language. Her mother, excited that at last her child had spoken, called her father to tell her the good news, but another voice speculates that this might be the origin of all Seers' problems. The commentator also reveals that the photographer who captured the young girl's image was Fred Wöhrnitz, the great grandson of Ferdinand Wöhrnitz who, after meeting Daguerre in the 19th century, famously returned to Mauritius with a camera and pioneered identity or portrait photography. An irony then, that Lindsay Seers is shocked into entering the world of language by identifying herself as an image on a piece of paper; an act of identification with an external image that is suggestive of the *mirror phase* theorised by Jacques Lacan,[4] in which a child develops a self-image through *mirror images* and the utterances of others.

It seems that an idyllic existence on the Island of Mauritius was ruptured. The mute Lindsay Seers was able to conjure up every detail of the island, not photographically but as perfectly recalled sensory experience: the island's smell, texture and sound as well as visual phenomena. One commentator describes this ability as eidetic memory and another explains that Seers ceases to be a recording mechanism when jolted into speech and into a state of agency. The implication is that once Seers is torn from the world of sensations and recognises herself as separate and other to the world she becomes an alienated, melancholic individual. She is scarred by this experience which fuels her desire to become a camera, a fantastic solution for recapturing her childhood relationship with the world, to become once again the body that registers and recalls sensations.

If the commentators in the film are correct, the adult Lindsay Seers is engaged in a desperate bid to resolve the breakdown and separation of matter, memory, image and sign produced by the photograph. In this endeavour it is clear that her encounter with the photograph removes her from the realm of the durational and introduces her to a world divided into specific identities and where the past is archived off from the present. Far from exploring the index as a means of either documentation or deconstruction, as outlined by Krauss, Seers seeks an indexical process that is transformative.

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The World of Jule Eisenbud

The World of Jule Eisenbud is a complex story that chronicles an episode in the life of Lindsay Seers through memories of the son of a scientist who studied the artist. But before Seers makes an appearance in his tale there is a prologue, a paranormal detour. Sitting in a sun-filled office, the son recalls his father working with Ted Serios, a man capable of making a *thoughtograph* – a photograph made by the projection of a mental image onto a Polaroid: a paranormal index. We are introduced to this extraordinary man through black and white photographs in a *photo-roman* sequence reminiscent of Chris

Marker's film *La Jetée*.[5] The series of still images serve as a document of the supernatural process of the *thoughtographs*, but as the stills pass before our eyes the son reveals that Serios was an erratic performer and a drunk who moaned and swore as he willed the *thoughtographs* into existence. The son states that he was deemed by all except his father to be unconvincing but we never learn if Serios was a fraud. Instead we are told he disappeared without trace, leaving a hole in the life and research of Dr Eisenbud.

A consideration of *La Jetée* and other films by Chris Marker provide an important comparison with Seers' work, as both are concerned with memory, desire, time and the power of images. In Marker's most well-known film, *La Jetée*, two images from childhood haunt a defeated soldier who travels backwards and forwards through time. Two memories propel him through time, which the soldier does not realise are connected until the very end of his life. They are the image of the woman he will fall in love with and his own death at the hands of the enemies of his country. These two images – the beautiful, smiling face of a woman at the end of a pier at Orly Airport and a man running towards the woman and then collapsing – will shape his adult life.

La Jetée manifests Marker's concern not only to explore the powerful hold memory has on the present and future, but also the relationship of images, memory and fiction. As Jacques Rancière has observed,[6] Marker's films raise two questions: what is memory and what is a documentary? Rancière's answer is developed through an analysis of Marker's *The Tombeau d'Alexandre (The Last Bolshevik)*.[7] He claims that the film is not a preservation of the memory of a fellow filmmaker Medvekin, despite the use of existing film footage; rather it is a self-conscious creation and construction of a memory. For Rancière, Marker's films reveal that memory is fiction; that is, an assemblage. This is not to say that memory and documentary are false, inferior to some true record or experience of events. As Rancière remarks, memory is not a store of recollections or information in an individual consciousness but the collecting and ordering of signs, images and traces by many: a collective construction.

Humans in the 20th century, with the advent of photography and film, have for the first time produced a plethora of indexes and information which memory must be created against. It is this problem, the problem of abundance and

the impossibility of the one true story that Marker addresses and that Seers also presents us with. Speculation about whether Lindsay Seers exists or not often enters the mind when watching her films: not in the sense of whether she actually exists, though her story seems implausible at times, but in the sense of her existing as anything beyond the memories and inventions of others. When watching *The World of Jule Eisenbud* there is little point in debating whether the anecdotes concerning Seers hold water, or whether Ted Serios and his *thoughtographs* ever existed. Seers shares an insight with Marker. Importantly, her documentaries embrace the idea that personal history and identity, like all history to a greater extent, is nothing but a series of impressions called forth by images and objects.

This view of history as a collective assemblage is playfully confirmed by the inclusion of a disturbing detail in *The World of Jule Eisenbud*: the artist is herself often photographed by another. In *The World of Jule Eisenbud*, Seers is followed by an obsessive called Frank who stalks the artist and photographs her strange antics, creating a second body of images that detail her performances and that becomes another strand of her work: Seers exists in the lens of others, she is a performance artist caught in a stalker's archive.

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Intermission

The title of Lindsay Seers' film that narrates her time as a ventriloquist suggests a break or interruption. *Intermission* suggests time out from a project or practice depicted in *The World of Jule Eisenbud* that, if we follow the reasoning of commentators in *Extramission*, originates in childhood. In *Intermission* we learn that after abandoning the practice of becoming a camera she resurfaces in public as a ventriloquist and that she went through a period of living with dummies and dolls. But *Intermission* is not so much a break as a continuation of earlier themes, albeit through an oblique shift in focus.

It is not just that *Intermission* introduces Candy Cannibal, the double and negative of the artist, which confirms this conclusion. It is the information that Seers resides with ventriloquist dolls and that Seers and her dummies, both

at home and on stage, mimic and copy entertainers that they see on television. Once again, there is more to Seers' project than copying and mimicking. The dolls are inanimate objects that Seers must animate to converse with. In this episode of the artist's life, the voice and thoughts of others are Seers' own voice and thoughts. A subtle eliding of the boundaries between self and other was at play in the Seers household. As one commentator explains, ventriloquism allows Seers to manifest a multiplicity of identities. And in an echo of the trauma of her childhood, we learn of Seers' fascination with Stookie Bill, another doll with an important history. The doll was famously filmed by John Logie Baird for the first television transmission but unfortunately caught fire. Bill, we learn, saw his own flaming image on a screen and witnessed his own destruction.

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Fleshy analogue machine

Seers is interested in how cinematic and photographic technologies shape notions of identity and memory; a concern reinforced by the appearance of Stookie Bill and the relating of a traumatic experience on Mauritius to the birth of photography. But it would be a mistake to think that the investigation of the relation of photography to history and identity is the only relevance Seers' work has for us. She is keen to explore memory too, as a vital and living process that is interrupted or 'assisted' or made instrumental by the photograph. Returning to the advent of Seers' initial encounter with photography, outlined in *Extramission*, her shock at seeing her own image might be seen less as a traumatic event and more as the emergence of a problem: how to be reconciled to a world where a durational existence is banished, and matter, memory and the past are frozen and archived.

In relation to this last concern it is worth considering the work of Henri Bergson, the author of *Matter and Memory*,[8] who like Rancière, concludes that memory is not the storage of information. Rather memory as recollection is induced by attention to matter, in that recollection occurs when our attention is relaxed or distanced from habit and images are attached to matter. As Elizabeth Grosz has commented in *The Nick of Time*,[9] memory is matter for Bergson and it is through recollection that we see the present from another perspective. And as Grosz further comments, matter forms an image that is neither an idealised representation nor a material *thing in itself* but something half-way between: a perceived image that is always moving and changing.[10] In Seers' films, it is the photograph, employed as a document that captures and fixes images, that adds another, problematic dimension to memory and matter.

Perhaps it was the shock of encountering stilled or captured matter that generated the process observed by Dr Eisenbud: the act of Seers repeatedly behaving like a camera. Just what Dr Eisenbud makes of this practice is never revealed but there is strong opinion from more than one commentator that Seers is damaged and that she is a compulsive, obsessive neurotic. This opinion might be considered disappointing as it is a view often formed of much unconventional behaviour. The flip side of such a psychoanalytic diagnosis is Deleuze and

Guattari's concept of a *line of escape*.[11] Not an actual flight through physical space, though her films reveal that Seers is forever travelling, but an internal movement, a transformation akin to a man metamorphosing into a beetle: an escape from convention, habit and the human. Seers, in becoming a camera, wraps her body around a technological process and transforms herself.

Deleuze notes in *Cinema 1* that the camera is inhuman,[12] in that, as the film director Vertov declared, the camera *sees* the world as the human eye cannot. It perceives the world in a way that is inhuman. When thinking of Seers' becoming-camera performance we might ask: just what is it that the camera-mouth *sees* or perceives? And, is this *seeing mouth* human or inhuman?

The process that Dr Eisenbud witnessed, the light-sensitive paper discs and film being placed in the mouth to make a photograph, mirrors the taking of the host into the mouth in the Eucharist. Seers' performance brings to mind the placing of pale wafers or bread on the tongue which, according to Catholic doctrine, become the body of Christ. However, the moment of transubstantiation in Seers' strange practice differs from the Catholic ritual. Instead of melting into flesh the small disc in Seers' mouth forms an image, which is developed and fixed later. Does her mouth register a transformation? It is not just to the foggy photographs that we should look for evidence of metamorphosis, it is to the process itself, in which an analogue process and flesh are made one: Seers becomes a Fleshy Analogue Machine.

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Extramission

More than one commentator in her films remarks that Seers leads a sad existence. Not only does her life consist of nomadic travel, she always lives hand to mouth and is never in one place long enough to form lasting relationships or to call a place a home. And in *Intermission* we learn that Seers disappears after a burglar robs her of Stookie Bill. It seems Seers is fated to live a melancholic life of failure and loss. However, *Extramission* is somewhat more optimistic in tone than her other films. We learn that Seers takes a journey to Mauritius, the island she grew up on, and that she endeavours to take up a new form, to 'become a projector'.

The relief declared by her mother at this news is perplexing at first; after all, there can be little difference between explaining to a friend that my daughter thinks she is a projector rather than a camera. It is only when thinking about the difference between the process of ingesting the world and spitting out an image and the casting of a beam of light onto matter, that an understanding of the breakthrough can be made.

Extramission presents documentation of Seers performing as a projector, standing in front of a model ship and a curtain and in a forest, emitting a beam of light from her head. The act of projecting light demarcates an area that becomes an image, a different kind of indexing perhaps to photography that we could think of as pointing. The illumination, for a brief moment, isolates matter and produces an image, concentrating our attention on that which might be overlooked, relaxing our attention as we register the qualities of the illuminated scene. Seers chooses the images she wishes to create: sites and sights that induce memories for the artist. But no archive is produced. Each image is singular and never to be repeated as the images are, so to speak, 'in real time', surrounded by currents of air and subject to winds and the movement of the earth and moon. The images move and change, as does Seers the projector. In *Extramission*, the projected light produces and image which is experienced finally, once more, as alive, as durational.

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RENCONTRE

Lindsay Seers,
d'images en imagination

AU premier contact, voilà vos repères chamboulés. Avec ce culte avéré des "grandes" théories, Lindsay Seers fige le temps. L'arrête l'espace d'un instant. Celui décisif où elle révèle qu'elle a formaté sa vie pour se transformer en appareil photo !

Métaphore, métamorphose, méconnaissable. De l'Anglaise sage aux cheveux coupés courts, elle devient l'égérie d'un univers où les images bougent. Durant ses "représentations" qui durent une vingtaine de minutes, ce commissaire d'exposition, explique hors du cadre. Fait de sa bouche un objectif.

prend réellement conscience de son identité, d'où sa véritable "naissance" sous les tropiques.

À l'époque, la fillette a sept ans. Un visage angélique avec une petite moue boudeuse enfermée dans le mutisme. "J'étais une mémoire photographique qui stockait sélement le détail que je ne voulais pas le laisser de parler." Sept ans : âge de raison. Chiffre porte-bonheur, numéro fétidans. Pour son anniversaire, la mère de Lindsay décide d'émerveiller le regard de sa fille. Déclic qui aura l'effet d'un électrochoc. "Quand j'ai vu la photo, je me suis rendu compte que je ne faisais pas un avec le monde, que je n'étais pas l'un et ce processus insépérable objet."

Lacet dans notre cerveau. Freud et Lacan se sont pas indissociables à la démarche de Lindsay Seers. "Oui, je lis ce "mouvement" aux Beaux-Arts." Titulaire d'un BA Fine Arts de la Slade School du University College London, elle a décroché un MA en Fine Arts du Goldsmiths College de l'uni-

La photo se nettoie rien de la société, du poids, des odeurs des gens et des choses. Il me fallait à tout prix reposer ça ailleurs." Devenir elle-même appareil photo. Et concrétiser sa démarche en consignant son histoire par écrit. C'est le mois prochain que sortira My life et a camera, dans les colonnes de la revue spécialisée Verdienères, Mint and Nim.

Une telle densité de questionnement ne pourrait pas s'arrêter aussi brusquement. "Au bout du compte, la photographie ne l'intéresse qu'avec images du passé." Lindsay Seers envisage désormais à une "existence" de projection. Une nouvelle métaphore des images de la vie qu'elle est venue penser à Portage, l'atelier de travail de l'association fayence.

Mine GROËNE

Lindsay Seers, avant et après transformation en appareil photo. Objectif : restituer la texture, l'odeur et le poids des choses.

Epilogue

Sometime in the future, a figure, the artist Lindsay Seers, sits upon a chair facing a screen. Two beams of light are emitted from her eyes and pool on the white fabric before her. The light travels, via mirrors, from a video projector under her chair to her head gear that focuses the emission. Suddenly colours appear and then images flicker and become visible. Seers talks and narrates, remembers and speculates. Lindsay Seers has developed a new form: a cybernetic body that transmits her own thoughts. She has produced her own *thoughtographs*, *thoughtographs* which are not fixed on film and paper but fleeting and fluid illuminations. Lindsay Seers performs one more transformation: the Fleshy Virtual Machine!

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4. Jacques Lacan. (1977). *Écrits: A selection, The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I*, translated by Alan Sheridan. (London, Routledge).
5. Chris Marker. (1962). *La Jetée*, 35mm black and white film. The film presents a series of black and white stills that tell the story of a defeated soldier who is sent back in time by the victors of a terrible war. The war has destroyed the means necessary for sustaining civilisation. He is chosen for this role as he has a strong childhood memory- the beautiful, smiling face of a woman at the end of a pier at Orly Airport and a man running towards the woman who then collapses. After mastering travelling back in time his captors send the soldier forward in time to beg for help from the men and women of the future, arguing that if no help is given civilisation will die out and they will not exist. On successfully completing his task the soldier escapes back to the past, to the woman he has fallen in love with and who has haunted him since his youth. At the end of the film he races toward her on a jetty at an airport. Before it is too, late he sees his enemy who shoots him. Only then does he realise that he witnessed his own death as a child.
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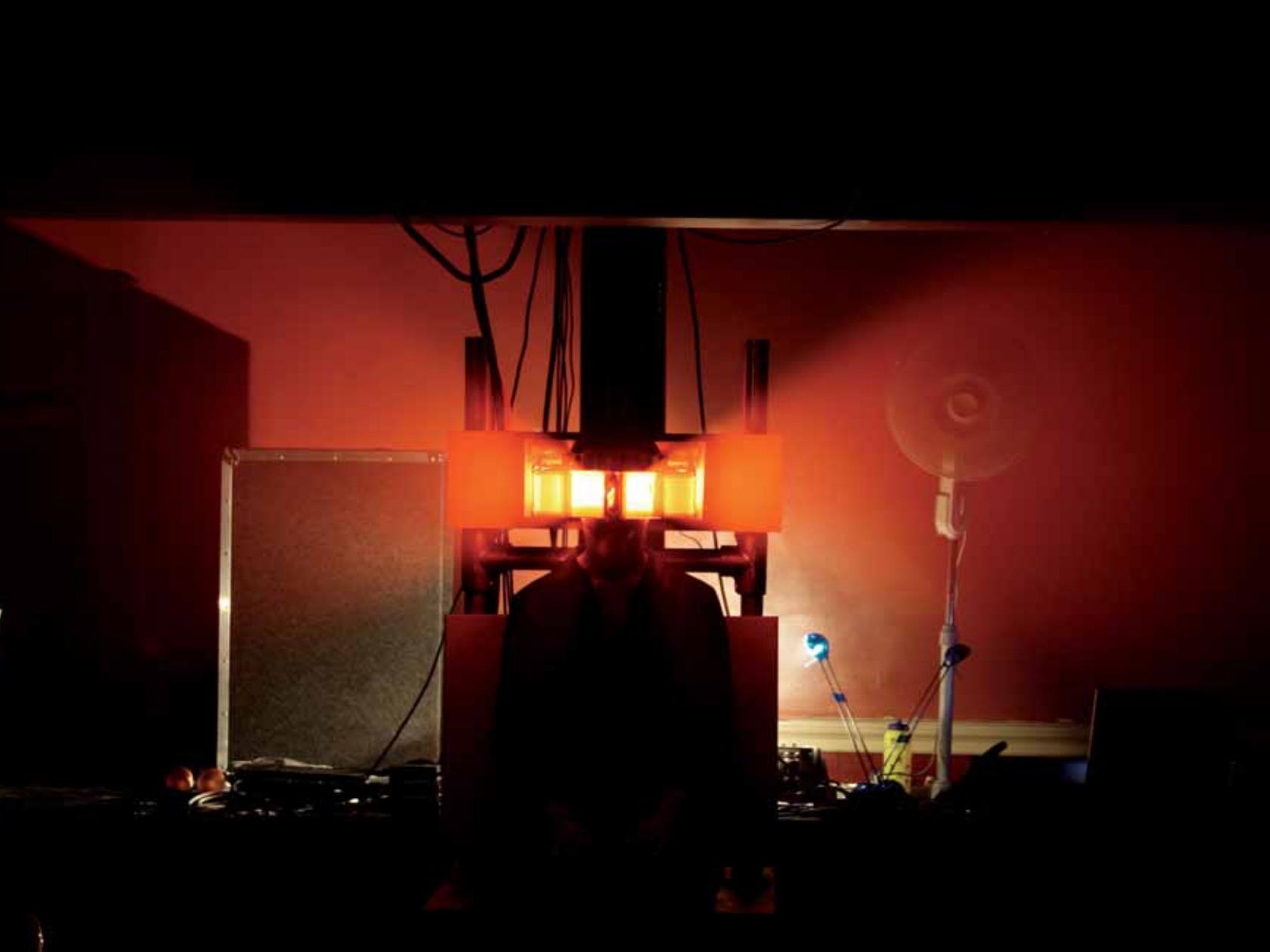
LINDSAY SEERS

Alchemy

The occult was never far away from the things that I had become involved in; the history of ventriloquism and photography had more than a few brushes with necromancy and magic in their hundreds of years of evolution. A friend I mentioned earlier, Philip Ball (who had first introduced me to formalised theoretical ideas), had written a book on the alchemist Paracelsus, (which I had read), so when I saw the carvings at Leadenham I had some idea what they were.

The association of photography to alchemy was not wasted on me. But I had established my own rituals and talismans before immersing myself in the history of actual alchemy. I think the church in Leadenham (a village near my grandparent's former house in Sleaford) altered my relationship to the idea and potential of symbols. I understood in them the possibility of the photograph as a talisman; as a means of altering the course of things.

There is a plaque in the grounds of St Swithun's in Leadenham drawing attention to the fact that the 'Queen's Sorcerer' John Dee, had held the rectorship there for some twenty years from 1565. The whole area is rich in associations with the occult, alchemy and cabalistic study – Newton, Grosseteste and Dee were all close by, even if they were separated by epochs of thought on the subject. There were carvings on the church. One dated 1706 was alchemical and seemed to relate to *The Key of Solomon* (a hermetic text whose origin and date is unknown) and also to the cabalistic *Tree of Life*. Similar wall drawings are also to be found in Temple Bruer, three miles east of Leadenham, where there is the remaining tower of a Preceptory of the Knights Templar. This Preceptory was built on the floor plan of The Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which in turn was built on the ruin of the legendary Temple of Solomon. Newton was not alone in believing that encrypted in the geometry of the plan of the Temple of Solomon was the key to unlock the secrets of the universe.

I performed my own alchemy in the field next to the Leadenham church where there is a tumulus left by the Templars – its purpose has been lost but its form remains.
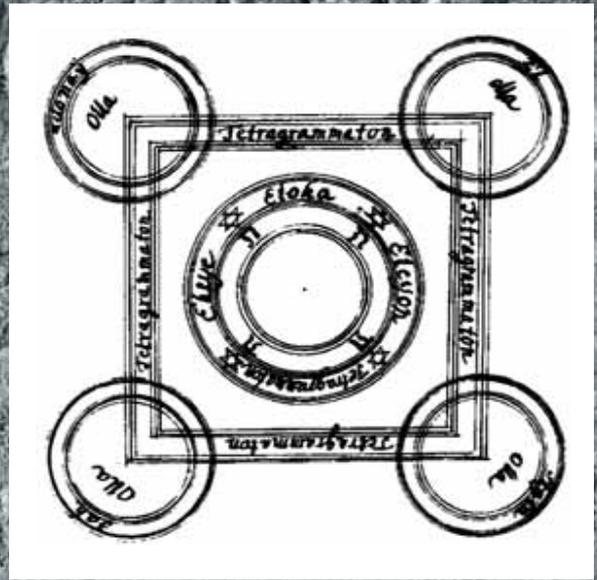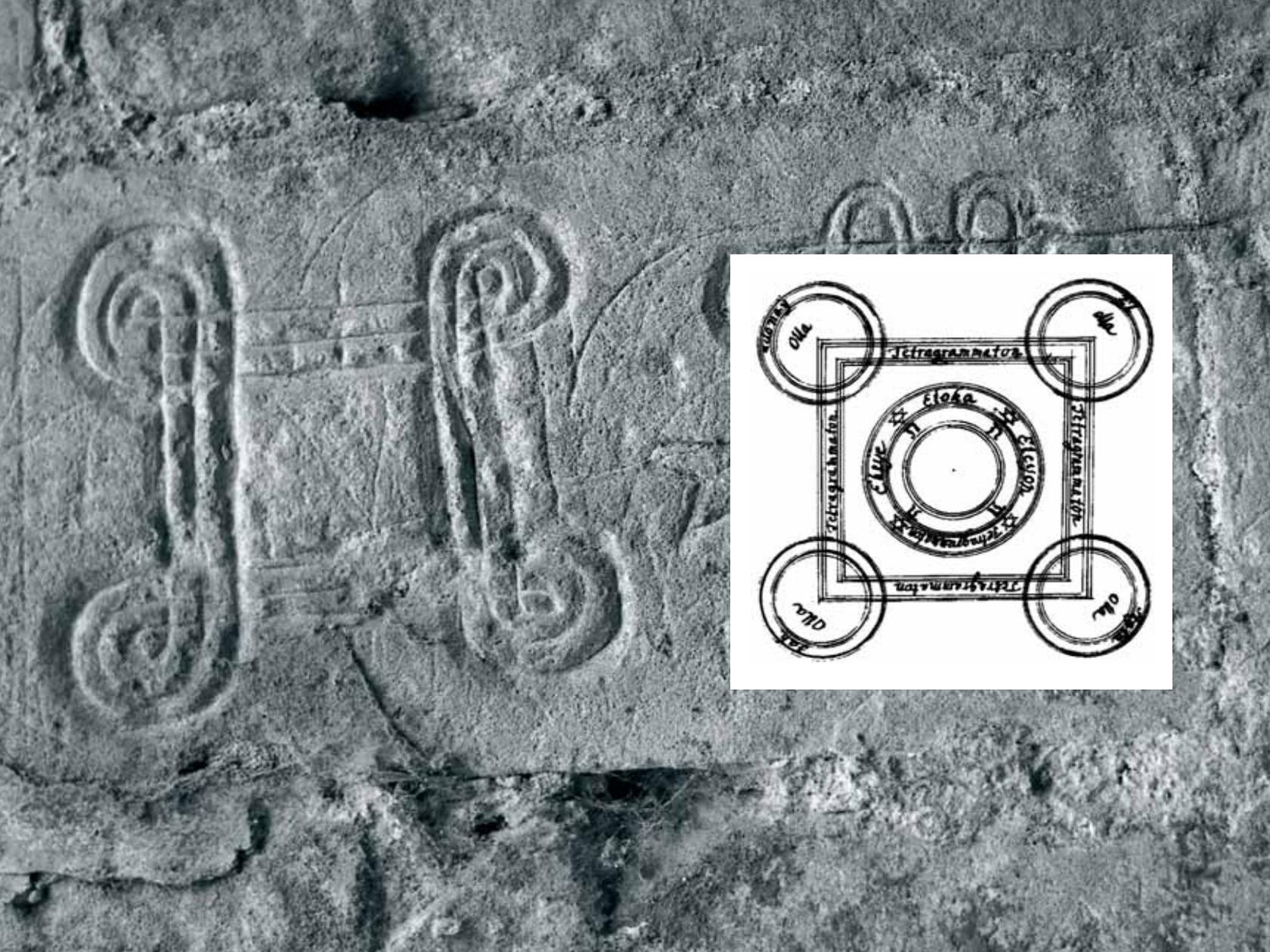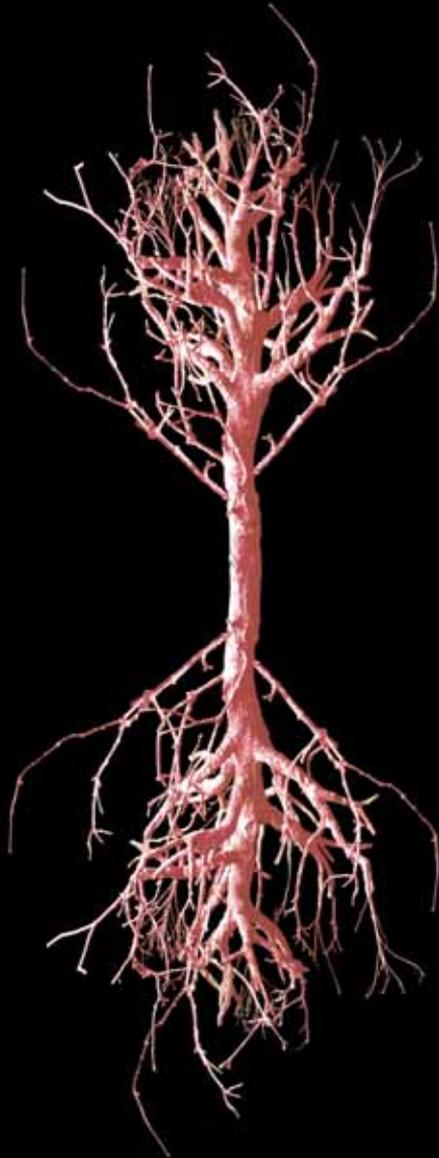
CHRIS FRITH

How do we find out about the world? The macrocosm

How to discover the true nature of the world around us has always been a fundamental question for philosophy. But sitting and thinking was never enough. Perhaps the most important legacy of the English Renaissance was the development of the scientific method for discovering the truth about the world. The development of this method starts with Robert Grosseteste (1168-1253), bishop of Lincoln, and culminates almost 400 years later with the founding of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge in 1660.

Grosseteste described a cyclical process of "resolution and composition". First we use observations to generate a universal law about the world, then we use the universal law to predict particulars. Both stages of the process must be verified through experimentation. These ideas were further developed by Roger Bacon (1219-1294), a student of Grosseteste. Bacon described a cycle of observation, hypothesis and experimentation and also emphasised the need for independent verification. To aid independent verification he recorded his experimental procedures in precise detail.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) gave detailed proposals for a scientific method based on induction: "which by slow and faithful toil gathers information from things and brings it into understanding". He rejected the scholastic approach in which deduction was based on authority. Like Roger Bacon, he describes a cyclic process, "the ladder of intellect", which runs upwards and downwards from axioms to experiments and back again from experiments to axioms. He also emphasised the importance of negative instances for the disproof of hypotheses. Francis Bacon's proposals were a major influence in the founding of the Royal Society. His image has pride of place in the frontispiece to Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* of 1667. The motto of the Royal Society, *Nullius in verba* (don't believe what people tell you, however authoritative they may be), reflects Bacon's rejection of authority as a scientific method. Ten years after its founding, Isaac Newton (1642-1727), another

Lincolnshire man, was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. In his hands the scientific method magnificently demonstrated its value in creating a new and better understanding of the world of gravity and light, with major practical consequences for navigation and the design of optical instruments.

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How do we find out about the world? The microcosm

So far I have talked about a macrocosm of understanding. Science is a cultural enterprise, which advances by the united endeavours of many people sharing their knowledge and ideas. But in each one of us there is a microcosm. From moment to moment our brain also has to find out what is in the world.

I am not a camera
Long ago it was thought that the eye sends out rays that touch things in the world, but now we know the eye passively responds to light falling on the retina (but see p.142). This causes neural activity, which is then transmitted to the rest of the brain. There is a wealth of information in these neural signals. Different neurons in the retina respond to different colours. The pattern of activity across the neurons in the retina gives information about shape and motion. This information is fed forward through the brain, becoming more and more abstract until, for example, there are neurons in the temporal lobe which can recognise the faces of particular people. This feed forward model presents the brain as a very clever camera. Unfortunately, there is much evidence that this model is wrong.

For one thing there are at least as many neural signals, feedback signals, which run the other way from higher brain regions back to the senses. What are these signals for? Also there are many examples where what we see, what we think we know about the world, is wrong. Consider, for example, the Ponzo illusion.

The upper horizontal line appears to be longer than the one below, but as you can check with a ruler, they are exactly the same length. The problem for the feed forward model is that all sensation is ambiguous. The same visual

signals striking the eye can have more than one cause in the world outside. Is this a two-dimensional figure with the diagonal lines coming closer together at the top? Or is this a three-dimensional figure with the diagonal lines only appearing to come closer together as they recede into the distance? The signals arriving at our eyes are not sufficient to decide which is the correct interpretation. But our brain has learned to deal with a three-dimensional world where the *real* size of an object depends on how far away it is.
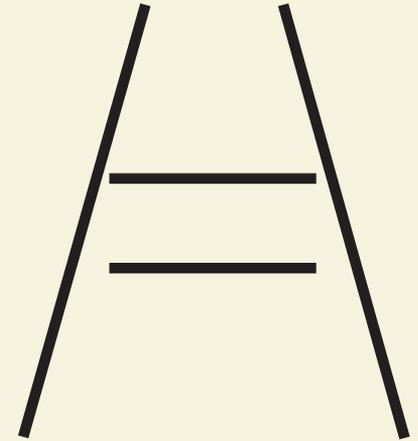
The two rectangles may be the same size on our retina, but they are different sizes in the world. How we interpret the signals from our senses depends upon our prior expectations (that the world is three-dimensional) and our prior knowledge about that world (that parallel lines appear to get closer together as they recede into the distance).

I am a projector

The figure below illustrates how the feed forward or bottom-up approach to finding out about the world cannot work.

Jack and Jill event up the hill
The pole vault evas the last event

In spite of the fancy script you can read these two sentences with ease. You will probably not have noticed that graphic symbol for W in *went* and *was* is identical to the graphic symbol for EV in *event*. The local sensory input cannot resolve this ambiguity. We can only know that the word in the first sentence must be *went* because of the overall meaning of the sentence. In other words, a high level process (semantics) is feeding back to alter our perception of the letters. This is an example of top-down processing and goes some way to explaining why there are neural signals transmitted from higher brain regions back to the senses. On the basis of an interpretation of the sentence our brain projects the most likely letters onto the page and modifies our perception of what is really there.

Predictive coding

On this account, perception depends upon inferences. Helmholtz called them *unconscious inferences* because we are not aware of all this brain work. The signals from our senses are used to make inferences about the objects in the world that are causing these signals. Then, on the basis of these inferences, we make more precise predictions about our sensations. This process is, of course, a microcosm of the scientific method. This is the cycle of observation, hypothesis and experimentation. The essence of experimentation is prediction. If my hypothesis about the world is correct, then if I perform this experiment, I predict I will get that result. I said that our eye passively responded to the light falling on the retina. But, of course, our eye is not passive. It is constantly in motion. We use our eyes to explore the visual world and test our predictions. *If this is an elephant's trunk, then if I move my eyes to the other end I should find an*

elephant's tail. If my prediction is wrong, then I must modify my hypothesis. It is through the errors in my predictions that I learn new things about the world and make better and better hypotheses about what is out there. This is true both for the macrocosm of science and the microcosm of the brain.

In fact, the pressure to predict the things we sense may have a quite fundamental role in shaping perception, action and even the way we have evolved: we try to explain sensory input by adjusting our hypotheses about how that input was caused and we interact with the world to sample those things we predict. This is perfectly sensible in an evolutionary setting, because only organisms that can predict their environment will respond adaptively and survive. If this is the case, evolution itself may have furnished us with the biological equipment to sample those parts of the environment that can be predicted. Above, we noted that perception depends on eye movements – it also depends on the lens in our eyes that has evolved to sample and focus incoming light rays so that they can be explained as being reflected from objects. Minimisation of prediction errors may be a characteristic of life that transcends many levels; from the microcosm of action-perception, through to the social and scientific macrocosm. In short, there may be a close link between the aesthetics of a picture whose content discloses itself, the joy of a scientist whose data fit his predictions and the pleasure we feel when the dénouement of a film confirms what we secretly knew was going to happen.

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Magic and mathematics

I have described this cyclical process of perception, known as *predictive coding*, in words. But for this to be a scientific account the words must be replaced by mathematics. Consideration of mathematics takes us back to a very different strand in the development of the scientific method. Hidden in the shadow of Francis Bacon is the Elizabethan scholar, Dr John Dee (1527-1608). His idea of an *invisible college* of scientists influenced Francis Bacon and the founders of the Royal Society. But Dr Dee has acquired a very different reputation as a deluded alchemist who tried to converse with angels. In fact, Dr Dee was the leading mathematician of his day. He wrote a preface to the first English translation of Euclid's *Elements* and was an expert on navigation, training many of the Elizabethan explorers. But his interest in mathematics was closely allied with an interest in occult philosophy and the magic of numbers. Roger Bacon also had an interest in the occult and mathematics, leading to his reputation as a seeker after forbidden knowledge, a forerunner of Dr Faustus. Dee wrote a defence of Roger Bacon, now lost, in which "he shows that all that is said about his [Roger Bacon's] marvellous works should be ascribed to his knowledge of nature and mathematics, rather than to a commerce with demons". It was to avoid associations with the occult that Francis Bacon downplayed the role of mathematics in his scientific method. However, Newton's triumph depended on his skill as a mathematician and his development of an early form of differential calculus, which he called the "method of fluxions". And, following in the steps of Dee, Newton devoted much of his later life to alchemy and the interpretation of prophesies in the Bible.

Bayesian statistics

Even for the generation after Newton, mathematics was still tainted with magic. On a visit to Tunbridge Wells in 1736 Philip, 2nd Earl of Stanhope, was described as "always making mathematical scratches in his pocket-book, so that half of the people took him for a conjuror". Stanhope was a promoter of mathematics and mathematicians. The most important of these was the Reverend Thomas Bayes, who was elected to the Royal Society in 1742

sponsored by Stanhope. This election is somewhat mysterious since Bayes was an obscure non-conformist minister with no published mathematical papers to his credit. The election was based in part on a book, *The Doctrine of Fluxions*, which Bayes had written in defence of Newton. Bayes remained obscure for the next 200 years, but, because of a paper published in *Philosophical Transaction of the Royal Society* two years after his death in 1761, he is now an 'icon to our age'. Put 'Bayes' theorem' into Google and you will get over 400,000 hits telling you about the importance of Bayes' theorem for all subjects from epidemiology to philosophy.

In his 1763 paper Bayes presented a simple formula for calculating probabilities:

$$p(A|X) \propto p(X|A)p(A)$$

p(A) is the probability that there is something out there in the world called A. In other words p(A) is the strength of our belief in A. X is some new evidence about A. X could be a sensory signal caused by A [p(X|A)]. p(A|X) tells us how much our belief about A has changed as a result of the new evidence, X. p(A) is sometimes called the *prior probability* because it is a measure of our belief about the world *before* the new evidence arrives. p(A|X) is called the *posterior probability* because it is a measure of our belief about the world *after* the new evidence has arrived. This simple mathematical proportionality is important for two reasons. First, because it captures the idea that perception, the interpretation of our senses, depends upon our prior beliefs. Second, because it can capture the cyclical process of going from evidence to beliefs and back again from beliefs to evidence. We alter our belief on the basis of the evidence and then we select the next evidence on the basis of our new belief. Through constantly upgrading our beliefs on the basis of the prediction errors we come to a better and better understanding of the world both at the level of the macrocosm of science and the microcosm of the brain.

The figure below shows Karl Friston's diagram of brain function as a hierarchy of Bayesian devices in which the upper levels predict the outputs of the lower levels, while the lower levels send evidence to the upper levels. In fact, this sort of scheme is called *Bayesian Belief Propagation* and is used by mathematicians to analyse scientific data, when its complexity is beyond intuition or comprehension.

Note the elegance of this scheme. The mechanisms at each level of the hierarchy are identical. The only differences lie in the inputs and outputs: 'As above, so below.'
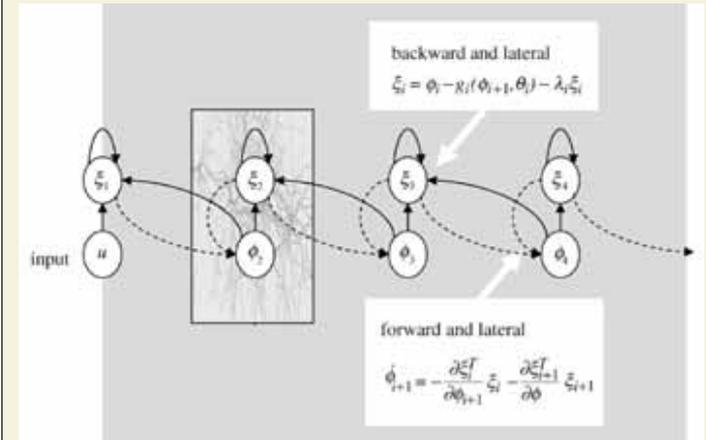
The microcosm meets the macrocosm

In this diagram (page 147) it is easy to see what happens at the lowest level on the left. This is where physical energy such as light activates our sense organs. But what happens on the right-hand side of the diagram? Is there a region in the brain that is at the top of the hierarchy? Is this where the ultimate prior beliefs come from? The ultimate priors are outside the brain of any individual. These priors take the form of the knowledge and beliefs that have cumulated and been passed on in our culture. This is where the macrocosm of culture and the microcosm of the brain converge.

<p style="text-align:center">∽◌◠</p>

T. Bayes. (1763). *An essay towards solving a problem in the doctrine of chances*. (Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, 53), p. 370-418.

D. R. Bellhouse. (2004). *The Reverend Thomas Bayes, FRS: A Biography to Celebrate the Tercentenary of His Birth*. (Statistical Science 19 (1)), p. 3-43.

K. Friston. (2005). *A theory of cortical responses*. (Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B, Biological Sciences 360(1456)), p. 815-836.

F. A. Yates. (1972). *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London).

LINDSAY SEERS

Nothing I became involved in was light-hearted, so in my obsessive way when I took an interest in film it occupied most of my time. Alongside innumerable TV channels checked daily for film, I acquired thousands of films in the form of cheap DVDs from China.

The only memory my family had collectively of Mauritius was of a boat, a shipwreck. Remarkably, we all remember it in almost exactly the same way. It was a piece of fiction, a false memory on which we could all concur without dispute, guilt or resentment – the filming of a ship supposedly wrecked on Le Chaland rocks. Gallons of water from fire engines were pumped over the prop-ship, like tidal waves; huge wind machines billowing the phoney tea-stained sails. The drama of the pure spectacle stayed with us. It was the French film based on the tragic love story of *Paul and Virginie* by Pierre Gaspard-Huit. All our other memories were too coloured by our own perspectives – or was it the metaphor of imminent disaster that made it resonant?

I had forgotten for a while that French film set. I had never seen it committed to film. One afternoon it came unexpectedly onto my television. I recognised Le Chaland beach immediately; our beach, where we had stood by and watched the filming. I don't know why it hadn't occurred to me before to return to Mauritius? I had, after all, tried to trace an origin in Amsterdam, a step back in history beyond my own lifespan; it seems more obvious to return to my birthplace than the more expansive 'birth of human history' on Mauritius. Maybe unconsciously I had not wanted to corrupt what was held uncontaminated in my mind – the eidetic traces, those pin-sharp moments that shine out of darkness, hard and bright as sapphires. Was anything ever as beautiful again as that simple child-like immersion in pre-linguistic pure experience? I doubted Mauritius could be as beautiful as I remembered it.

The blunt and dull edge of my new perceptions (or lack of them), the dogged force of a near dead present, would surely rewrite that magical, ideal past. My return would mean giving up the past to the less than satisfactory present. Eventually it was what I could not remember that drove me to go back – the things that I could not recall at all, such as the house we lived in.
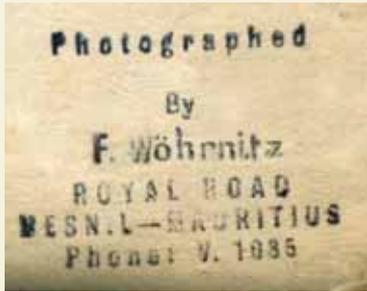
I remember the flat, which we had stayed in for a short time between accommodations, but not the house in which we had lived for a number of years. The memory of that house was blocked – a black hole in my brain, a missing part. I had no idea why that particular image had been buried. I had had years of putting my hand on the same door handle in that house; hours of lying on a bed and emerging from sleep into a room that would reground my existence after having been lost in a vivid dream. Why should I not remember that house? I resolved to go back and find it. Could it unlock some closed passage in my mind leading to some event that might give an explanation for my silence as a child … or my life as a camera?

So I went back to Mauritius with two ambitions: to find the house we lived in and also the photographer. The back of that photograph which had jolted me out of my childhood silence was rubber stamped with the photographer's name, Wöhrnitz. It was only on my return to Mauritius that I realised the significance of that name. I had searched for it on the web in England and got one hit, but the page had expired and I could get no information on him beyond what I already knew: a Mauritian photographer.

I was in the small photography museum in Port Louis when I found an image of a man called Ferdinand Wöhrnitz, a Mauritian of Dutch descent. Ferdinand was the son of a merchant from Amsterdam who had traded in the East; in later years the extended family bought a house on the island, in Vacoas, meanwhile retaining strong trading links with Europe. It was as early as 1840 that photography took a grip on Mauritius and it seemed that it did so directly through Wöhrnitz. An entrepreneur, Ferdinand was fascinated by novelty; often in Paris, he had followed the developments of Daguerre closely. As soon as the first commercial camera came on the market he bought the entire darkroom, materials, chemicals and equipment and shipped it to Mauritius, setting up the

first photographic studio in the Indian Ocean. In fact Mauritius was the first colony to fall under the spell of the photograph, which took hold with an equal ferocity to that of the sugar cane fires lit to aid harvesting.

Wöhrnitz's dusty camera was on display in the cluttered museum in Port Louis along with the image of the man himself. The portentous photograph of me was taken by his great great-grandson. The image which inexplicably shocked me out of my silence and ruptured my immersion in pure being came from a hand that had a trace of the birth of photography in it. We could find no trace of Fred still living in Mauritius. Mum thought that the family must have emigrated. The house in Vacoas was renovated for tourists and the history of the specific Wöhrnitz family had made way for a more general history of the evils of colonialism and the slave trade that had passed through the islands predominantly during the French rule.
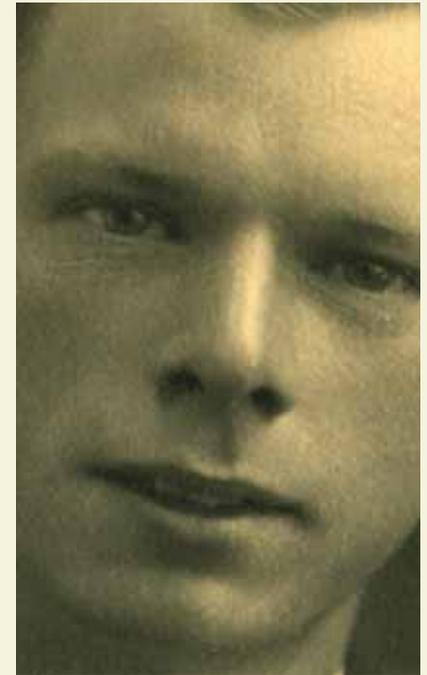
Mother

I think I look like her; not many people agree. When I imagine her it is with long dark hair, younger, as she was in Mauritius. I packed a wig for my trip which looked like her hair used to be. I thought I could wear it and think I was her. When we are on the beach we both put on the wigs. I feel that neither of us are who we were, equalising us, the sameness being that we are both different and changed by the same condition – the false hair. I imagine that we are in a film and I am playing the role of the younger she and she the older her. In either case, in the film we are the same person separated by time but played by two people. It is as if by being her I can pass beyond the problem of her. She said that when I put on the wig, she saw herself. If I am her, perhaps she can pass beyond the problem of me too? It was as if with the wigs we no longer saw ourselves through the well-rehearsed roles of mother and daughter.

Doing these actions, even taking the big Mamiya camera onto the beach (the camera a miniature theatre in itself), changed our relationship. I imagined that she felt loved by me when I photographed her. In the photographs she looks to me like a beautiful aging actress.

My mother specifically flew out to Mauritius to help me find the house; I met her at the airport. We travelled to the north and rested for a few days. I hired a driver and then we began the search. She was sure she would find it. She told me a number of times that it was just by the "Chinese store" and the "clock & bicycle repair shop" down the track by the "Caltex Garage" on the left, sugar cane fields beyond. I took her to the military flats; it was raining (it nearly always is in Vacoas, the damp centre of the island). As we pulled onto the estate, she insisted that this was not where we had lived. It was extremely run down and depressing to look at. She wanted to leave; I think she had very bad memories from this time. I argued with her and then cajoled her out of the car. We walked around in the rain and she finally conceded that this was the estate where we had lived, but then settled on a building in the middle of the site and claimed this was the one. It was not.

I asked her to stand outside the building she thought we had lived in and I photographed her. I knew it wasn't right but I felt like I needed to play

along with the way things had been going. I could tell she was really shaken being there. I knew it wasn't the place but I couldn't speak about it – not then. She said there was no point in photographing her against the yellow wall – it could be anywhere, we should go. She really wanted to leave more than anything but I forced her to stay longer hoping she would recall something more clearly given time. When I look at those photographs I can see the grief in her face.

I remember the intense nausea that had come over me when I had first found the site alone. The place in general had also seemed alien to me in the very first instance, as it did to her. It was when I walked around in it that recognition started to emerge and the obscured familiarity bubbled up into a knowing without doubt. I had hung around there then for days, verifying the weird sensation, repeating it again and again. I had even been inside the flat. The owner had grown curious about me watching the building, sheltering under the Eucalyptus trees from the sporadic and sudden heavy rain. Eventually, she had come out and invited me in. It was almost intolerable to be inside those rooms in company because I needed to be alone in there. Instead, I sat politely drinking vanilla tea in our former lounge, looking through her wedding photographs, all the time longing to walk down the hall to my bedroom and sit in there feeling the strange confluence of time. The new occupier told me how much she hated the flat and how she desperately wanted to move with her husband and son to Rose Hill.

I had photographed the site during those vigilant days; its incredible charge persisted. It was as if time was folded as past and present (it was vertical rather than horizontal). I am unclear as to whether these sensations were in my mind or in the air itself? My mother seemed to be on the outside of this place when I took her there. Later, when I discussed it with my father, he told me she had identified another flat that they had actually lived in, in happier times, where my brother was born. She had left my father from the second flat, taking me to Paris; a lot of pain had followed for us all. Now I think she didn't want to remember the flat I knew.

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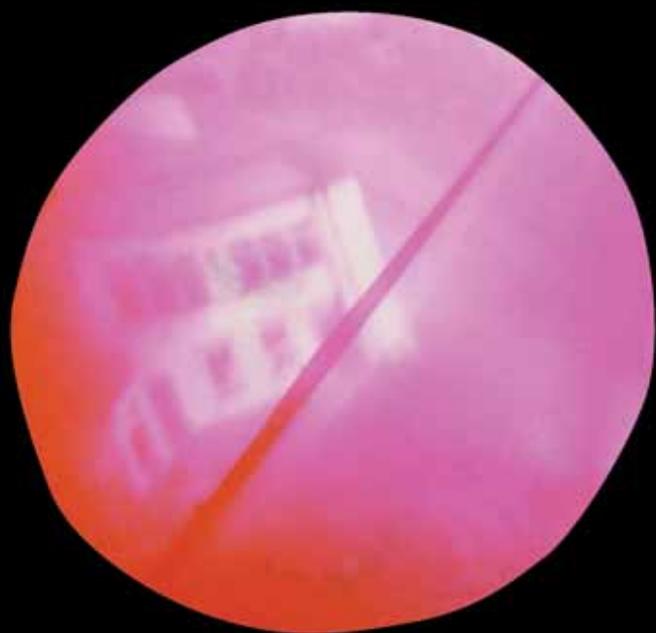
The past had become too much for us both after this day; I couldn't ask anything else of her; she had suffered for me enough. I decided we should do whatever it was that she wanted, whatever would make her happy. She considered herself psychic and was a Romany herself so she wanted to consult a fortune teller (a move from the past to the future). So we went to see the most famous fortune teller in Mauritius, Mme Kwok. She is based in the old Chinatown in Port Louis, in the back of an aquarium shop. She spoke in French; she said she could see an image of light in the crystal.

Mum wouldn't tell me what Kwok had told her but I know she had consulted her about her own death. My mother left Mauritius but I stayed on alone. I carried on searching for memories/places for a while but eventually gave up. Then I finally had time to think. I moved from the hotel to the house owned by Krishna, a local artist who I had met on Flic & Flac beach. The house was still under construction and empty, apart from a drunken guard with a long moustache and a pretty blonde dog that lived in an outhouse at the end of the back garden.

I spent evenings peaceful but loud with the sound of frogs, packs of roving dogs and crickets. I needed to make some decisions – what to do with my life, how to proceed. I was no longer a camera or a ventriloquist. I spent time reading Rosicrucian texts I'd come across in an old Anglo bookshop in Rose Hill.

Cine

From an early age I have loved cinemas, particularly those converted theatres that linger on in most towns with huge tiered auditoriums in red velvet. I had always been mesmerised by the long cone of anamorphic light from film projection made almost solid through the miasma of exhaled smoke. There is an alchemical magic to the way in which the abstracted light beams, intersected by the screen, suddenly find forms; halted on their journey to infinity to make a luminescent and seemingly visionary picture. Cinema is an inversion of my own camera life, but that turning inside out released me. I found an animated soul to photography.

This conviction that I could become a projector - and forget my life as a camera - was a long time forming. It would mean no more falling back in time but reaching forwards, endlessly falling forward in the present with light.

Now light emanates from me in a new 'becoming'- images come from my eyes in an act of extramission; an ancient, long-standing and often-pictured phenomenon in which vision exudes from the eyes in beams to meet the world.

We cannot always immediately observe the world when we are caught up in the chaos of living; there are blind spots and inattentions, an unwillingness and inability to see certain things that fall across our field of view. In photographs everything is kept back, light is congealed and preserved, its stasis is like a pause; the carousel we were riding has stopped, the feeling of the wind on our skin, the rising and falling of the painted wood, the passing and laughing faces, are suddenly all locked and we sit on the silent and still hobby-horse all comprehension gone, perhaps happy to rest with this blank stare, thrown to the outside of the moment to look at the scene as if a stranger to it, isolated in it. In projection the carousel and all the senses spin on, everything is interdependent and connected, light takes on a multitude of qualities; the sparkle of the coloured flashing lights and the moon moving behind a dark cloud, everything is unfolding and endlessly moving, both inside, with the body living what it sees, and outside, thinking through the image, the mind oscillating between what is given and what is understood, the light constantly recasting the phosphorescent objects it has captured; light reaching out to meet light - in which nothing stands alone.

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