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**The British Experience with American Independent Photography, 1944-
1980**

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**The British Experience with American Independent Photography, 1944-
1980**

by

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Dedication

To Mum, Dad, and Kirstan

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The British Experience with American Independent Photography, 1944-1980

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: Steven Hoelscher

This dissertation explores the ways in which US-based photographic practices shaped British independent photography from the late stages of the Second World War to the beginning of the 1980s. America had become the center of the Western artistic and literary universes by the late 1940s, and the US had led the way in photography from at least the 1930s and arguably from the 1910s. American photographic technology, education, and aesthetics looked enviously advanced to Britons for most of the twentieth century, and those on the photographic vanguard in Britain cultivated relationships with their transatlantic counterparts in the hope of effecting change in British institutions. During the period studied, photographic traffic mostly emanated from the US, accompanying a broader stream of ideas, capital and cultural products that were eagerly consumed by many and resisted in other quarters as the pernicious products of American cultural imperialism. As ideas, images, and technology flowed into Britain from the US, photographic collections and personnel from Britain flowed out. American photographic practice in Britain was promulgated as much by its British recipients as their US counterparts. Influential professionals like magazine editor Bill Jay, Arts Council officer Barry Lane and freelance photographer Tony Ray-Jones sought to stimulate British independent photography by importing American institutional and aesthetic models. This

catalytic process had the effect of invigorating photography in Britain which both developed along and ultimately diverged from American models. This work contributes to a larger body of scholarship examining the transnational lineages of artistic and cultural production through analyzing how actors in this flow of information sought to rework and domesticate artistic forms and ideas to suit their own purposes.

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List of Abbreviations

ACGB	Arts Council of Great Britain
BJP	British Journal of Photography
BTA	British Travel Association
CAPS	Creative Artists Public Service Program
CEMA	Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts
CS	Combined Societies
EFDSS	English Folk Dance and Song Society
FSA	Farm Security Administration
GEH	George Eastman House
ICA	Institute of Contemporary Arts
LSP	London School of Printing
MoMA	Museum of Modern Art, New York
MOMA	Museum of Modern Art, Oxford
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts
NPRA	National Photographic Record Association
NYSCA	New York State Council on the Arts
RCA	Royal College of Art
R.P.S.	The Royal Photographic Society
SPE	Society for Photographic Education
UPS	Underground Press Syndicate
USIS	United States Information Service
WPA	Works Progress Administration
VSW	Visual Studies Workshop

Introduction

It's a well-known fact that the wide Atlantic Ocean, which, according to your viewpoint either links or separates the continents of Europe and America, has generated a roaring trade in not just in gold and silver, slaves and sugar, cotton and crack, Scotch and Bourbon, the Rolling Stones and Madonna, but a stranger and more elusive commodity: images.

*-Malcolm Bradbury*¹

In this dissertation, I aim to document and explore the ways in which US-based photographic practices shaped British independent photography from the late stages of the Second World War to the beginning of the 1980s. Since the medium's beginnings in the early Victorian period, British and American practitioners have engaged in a transatlantic dialogue that mirrored their broader cultural and political relationship. As I will outline in chapter one, British-based photography dominated the transatlantic dialogue until the early 1910s when a group of disaffected photographers seceded from the Camera Club of New York and unmoored modern American work from European models in the proceeding years.² Declaring independence from Europe, American photographers, although few in number and largely invisible in the art scene, continued to experiment aesthetically and by the 1940s had a miniscule but important beachhead in art colleges. Joining native talents in the 1930s and 1940s were first-generation immigrants and exiles like Alexey Brodovitch, Alfred Eisenstaedt and later Robert Capa and Robert Frank who, to borrow a phrase from Joseph Horowitz by "staying foreign and becoming American," invigorated US practice by bringing the innovations of German, Czech,

¹ Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Transatlantic Mythologies & the Novel* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1995), 1.

² In doing so, they contributed to a cultural revolution spurred by intellectuals like Randolph Bourne, William Carlos Williams and Vernon Parrington. For a discussion, see Rob Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 168..

Hungarian and Russian photography with them.³ British photography, which never thoroughly absorbed modernist influences, was similarly enriched by photographic talent from the Continent in the 1930s, such as Bill Brandt and Kurt Hutton, but Britain's independent photography community was comparatively smaller and less well-developed by the time they arrived. In the 1950s and 1960s, the reverberations of the nascent "American photo boom" started to reach British shores,⁴ and it began to dawn on the mandarins of the somnambulant British photography world that the radiated glory of Britain's photographic past could not hide the deficiencies of the present. As Britain was ceding status as a world power to the US, so Britannia no longer ruled the waves photographically.

Writing in the *Annual of American Photography* in 1944, Ansel Adams found the occasion germane to briefly sketch the prospects for postwar American photography. "I know that professional photography will survive and tremendously expand," he stated, "as for 'the independents'— their situation is unpredictable, but I am confident that any man having something to say will find a way to do it."⁵ Adams would never have predicted that an underappreciated and unpredictable corner of the photographic spectrum would, by the late 1960s, blossom into a field of its own. Twenty-two years after Adams' credo appeared, a young curator at George Eastman House in Rochester named Nathan Lyons would decide to anthologize his essay in a canon-building book of primary sources on photography, in the hope of further inspiring more young "independents" to take up

³ Joseph Horowitz, *Artists in Exile: How Refugees from Twentieth-Century War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Arts* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 12.

⁴ I take this phrase from Martin Parr and Gerry Badger. *The Photobook: A History* (London: Phaidon, 2004), 54.

⁵ Ansel Adams, "A Personal Credo," in *Photographers on Photography: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Nathan Lyons (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966), 25.

photography.⁶ In the intervening years between the end of the Second World War and the end of the 1960s, American independent photography was slowly and quietly becoming established in colleges, libraries, galleries, and museums, abetted by figures like Adams on the West Coast, Harry Callahan and Henry Holmes-Smith in the Midwest, and Beaumont and Nancy Newhall and Van Deren Coke in the East. As A.D. Coleman notes, the 1960s were the time when “all the seeds for what we see now in North American photography—diversity of practice; critical, theoretical and historical inquiry; academicization; serious archiving and museumization, and more—were planted.”⁷ By 1966, American independent photography was on the precipice of a revolution that caught even its most ardent devotees off guard.

I focus on showing how the US-based revolution in the practice of photography affected its British counterparts, and how influential British practitioners reshaped their own photography by turning towards American models of funding, aesthetics, practice and display. I examine, to borrow a phrase from Paul Gilroy, the “routes and routes” of American cultural influence in British photography, paying particular attention to dialogues that construct and attempt to define national photographs.⁸ At first blush, the American photographic scene from the 1940s to the 1960s might seem an odd place from which to derive inspiration. As Jessica McDonald recounts, before the mid-to-late-1960s in the US, there were only a small number of serious, non-technical photographic books being published, a handful of courses in photography at colleges that were not purely

⁶ Nathan Lyons, ed., *Photographers on Photography; a Critical Anthology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

⁷ A. D. Coleman, “American Culture, Photography and Society in the 60’s—The Transformation of a Medium,” *Images Ink* 6, no. 1/2 (1991): 32.

⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 19.

vocational, and museums did not often collect photographs.⁹ Workshops were one of the few places students could find a course in creative photography and as photographers were scattered in small centers across the US “one really couldn't speak of a coherent ‘field’ of photography.”¹⁰ Coleman recalls the diminutive New York scene in 1968 in similar terms:

The New York scene consisted of the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Photographs, Norbert Kleber's Underground Gallery on Manhattan's East 10th Street, the walls and vitrines of some public libraries, a handful of bank lobbies and the anterooms of a few custom labs and processing houses.¹¹

In these circumstances, it is tempting to underplay the role of American practitioners in inspiring the British: on the face of it, both countries' scenes were in their infancy. To do so, however, would be to overlook two crucial factors.

The primary difference between the US and Britain was that independent/creative photography was *even more* obscure in Britain. Aside from a brief bright period in the 1950s, Britain's photography scene was moribund compared to the US in 1968. Britain had no equivalent of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) or George Eastman House to act as an intellectual or historical base, no permanent space for showing photography, and had no college programs dedicated to artistic or fine art photography until 1974, the year that John Szarkowski declared that “it seems that half the people in colleges are studying photography” in the US.¹² There were no photographic galleries, and even compared with the small US output, photographic book and magazine publishing was at a trickle. Photographic collections moldered in forgotten attics or were being shipped to the US,

⁹ Jessica S. McDonald, ed., *Nathan Lyons: Selected Essays, Lectures, and Interviews* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012), 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ A. D. Coleman, “Welcome to the International Image Community,” *Photocritic International*, October 10, 1998, <http://www.nearbycafe.com/artandphoto/cspeed/essays/licpkeynote.html>.

¹² Douglas Davis, “Photography,” *Newsweek*, October 24, 1974, 64.

and save for Helmut Gernsheim's pioneering efforts, very little of Britain's photographic history was widely known.

Suffering through the hardships and dour sterility of the 1950s, Britain emerged optimistic and eager to modernize in the 1960s, but had very little photographic infrastructure to build on, and the independent photography that had survived paled in quality and quantity to its American counterparts. As Peter Turner put it, Great Britain was "a nation exposed to competent, often visually sophisticated, but nearly always trite imagery."¹³ Susan Kismaric's assessment of postwar British photography (in tandem with John Szarkowski) demonstrates the imbalance:

To a postwar American audience, photography in Britain appeared to consist of the work of Bill Brandt (1901-1983) and, to slightly more knowledgeable viewers, Roger Mayne (b.1929) and Tony Ray-Jones (1911-1972). In 1973 John Szarkowski, director of the Department of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art, described the situation from an American perspective when he wrote in *Looking at Photographs*: "For purposes of approximate truth, it might be said that the photographic tradition died in England sometime around 1905. . . . When Bill Brandt returned to London in the thirties, England had forgotten its rich photographic past, and showed no signs of seeking a photographic present."¹⁴

Szarkowski's is too sweeping a statement to take wholly on face value, but it perfectly captures the mood of mediocrity in which British photography was mired, and which a few pioneers in Britain were working against.

The second reason that the nascent US scene inspired the British was that, wherever the truth lay, the label "American" had long been imbued with a sense of the future. From the technological sublime of the Empire State Building,¹⁵ the promise of

¹³ William Messer, "The British Obsession: About to Pay Off?," in *US Camera Annual 1977* (New York: Popular Publications, 1977), 49-93.

¹⁴ Susan Kismaric, *British Photography from the Thatcher Years* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 6.

¹⁵ See David E Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 77-108.

“better things through better living... through Chemistry,”¹⁶ and the irrepressible torrents of music and movies, the mythic projected image of America as the land of progress and plenty was a powerful force in British culture, and this bled into photography. As Rob Kroes eloquently puts it, “it is an old habit of Europeans to recognize the features of their own future in America. At times the country assumes the tonic quality of a beckoning horizon.”¹⁷ From the 1940s to the 1970s, among British independent photographers it was an almost axiomatic belief that the US was more advanced in nearly every way. Certainly, the idea of “Americanness” carried more general cultural cachet in the postwar years through the 1960s as a generation raised on American popular culture came of age. To those growing up in the postwar years, American culture was new, fresh, vibrant and not a little subversive. Through what Kroes calls a perceived “talent for cultural dissolution mixed with an ingenious nonconventionality,”¹⁸ Britons, especially the “young contemporaries” who enlivened British photography in the 1960s and 1970s, were culturally predisposed to perceive American photography as daring, independent and modern; photographs of life in America were doubly so.

American museums and educational institutions were the dominant forces in the transatlantic exchange. Notable here are the exhibition program at MoMA, the expansion of photographic history through George Eastman House and the University of New Mexico, and the curatorial functions of institutions such as the Harry Ransom Center, whose acquisition of the Gernsheim Collection turned the institution into one of the most important photographic venues in the world overnight. The influence of these powerful gatekeeping organizations was felt in all corners of the medium and were, some would

¹⁶ Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

assert, agents of US cultural imperialism. As Blake Stimson argues, exhibitions such as 1955's *The Family of Man* promised "a sense of belonging in the transcultural marketplace"¹⁹ that shrouded a particular brand of American ideology in the discourse of universal human values.²⁰ Likewise, Richard Pells notes the view that the transmission of culture via channels like MoMA and the United States Information Service (USIS) was couched in a puritanical sense of exceptionalism that assumed that the rest of the world looked up to the "city on a hill" and wanted to enjoy the fruits of democracy and its attendant culture.²¹ Pells and others, including Penny Von Eschen, have demonstrated however, how divergent global reactions to officially-sanctioned American culture really were, and how experiencing "official" American culture does not preclude agreement with the message of the institutional sponsor.²³ Most critiques of *The Family of Man*, and by extension MoMA's exhibition policy, tend to amplify their cultural imperialism and perceived impact on the public as passive receptors rather than, in the case of photographers, active participants in making their own meaning out of culture.²⁴ As I will demonstrate briefly in chapter two, photographers in Britain loved *The Family of Man* not for the message but because, prosaic as it might sound, it offered a smorgasbord of interesting images in a gallery setting: a very welcome development in a country with few venues for photography. The seemingly top-down dissemination of photography from the citadels of American high art obscures the fact that those working in

¹⁹ Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 20.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Richard H. Pells, *Not like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), xiii.

²³ Von Eschen's take on how audiences and performers subverted official frameworks is an excellent example. See Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

²⁴ Jaap Kooijman, *Fabricating the Absolute Fake: America in Contemporary Pop Culture* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 11.

photography in places like MoMA, the Art Institute of Chicago, and other large institutions were often embattled both financially and institutionally within these institutions. As an upstart art, until the mid-seventies, independent photography had still to convince many people that it belonged in the museums and contemporary galleries. When looking across the Atlantic, British photographers identified with the struggles of museum curators, gallerists and educators to maintain and expand photography's standing within the art world in America because it was a struggle they were also going through.

One of the central points throughout this dissertation is that this flow of independent photographic practice from the US was not an irresistible hegemonic cultural force that threatened to overwhelm British practice. From the 1940s until at least the 1990s photographic traffic was mostly one-way, emanating from the US to a largely receptive audience in Britain. As ideas, images, and technology flowed in from the US, photographic collections and personnel from Britain flowed out. Rather than seduce the British photographers, I argue that American photography was promulgated in Britain as much by its British recipients as their US counterparts. Influential professionals like magazine editor Bill Jay, Arts Council officer Barry Lane and freelance photographer Tony Ray-Jones sought to invigorate the British photographic scene by importing American institutional and aesthetic models. By seeing what was possible in the US, they pointed British photography in the direction of America to bring its British counterpart out of, as Paul Hill and Thomas Joshua Cooper memorably put it, "the dark ages."²⁶ This catalytic process had the effect of invigorating photography in Britain which both developed along and ultimately diverged from American models.

²⁶ Paul Hill and Thomas Joshua Cooper, "Can British Photography Emerge from the Dark Ages?," *Creative Camera*, no. 123 (September 1974): 294–95.

My study follows the “transnational turn” in American Studies scholarship, a broad body of intellectual work that examines, as Shelley Fisher Fishkin suggests, “how the nation is seen from vantage points beyond its borders” and also how other nations and cultures have contributed to American politics and culture.²⁷ The transnational turn shifted the boundaries of the field away from an exceptionalist framework to examine how American culture has been mutually constituted with other cultures and also to examine how populations of other nations have been affected by US culture and policy. Analyses of the way that American culture has travelled across the globe in the twentieth century have often sprung from examinations of diplomacy or foreign relations because of the US’ vast resources of culture and capital. A seminal text that bridged foreign relations and cultural relations is Emily Rosenberg’s *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic & Cultural Expansion 1890-1945* (1982), which demonstrated the links between the spreading of American economic and cultural liberalism.²⁸ This was joined by a subsequent body of work that examined the cultural component of this transmission and reception, paying particular attention to non-state actors and non-official channels that culture was received through. Representative works in this vein like Richard Pells’ *Not Like Us: How Europeans have Loved, Hated and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (1997) and Victoria de Grazia’s *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (2005) refined this analysis by looking at popular culture and consumer culture respectively. Pells’ work rests on the responses of Western Europeans to American culture, demonstrating how

²⁷ The term was used notably by Shelley Fisher Fishkin in her 2004 presidential address to the American Studies Association: Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005): 20, doi:10.1353/aq.2005.0004.

²⁸ Emily S Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

American cultural products were both resisted and adapted by Europeans to fit their own native cultural frameworks.²⁹ On the other hand, de Grazia shows how American consumer culture ousted local European models by “the pressure of its markets, the persuasiveness of its models and... [by] exploiting the peaceableness of its global project.”³⁰ Following Paul Gilroy and Paul Giles, many recent assessments of American cultural exchange have been construed in transatlantic or transnational frameworks that question the nation-state as a structure for analysis by looking toward cultural contact zones and boundaries as areas where culture is constructed.³¹ As Giles asserts, transatlantic dialogues have the effect of “consolidating or interrogating forms of national identity,” and transatlantic approaches open up the possibilities for multiple effects of cultural contact in contrast to seeing the effect of British or American culture abroad as monolithic.³²

A term widely used by European academics and non-academics alike that warrants a brief exploration is Americanization, defined by Francis Williams as the spread of “American ideas, customs, social patterns, language, industry and capital around the world.”³³ The wholesale substitution of European cultural values for American versions was (and remains) a pervasive fear among European political and cultural elites, but the fear of an unstoppable, homogenizing, vulgar Americanization tends to obscure the fact that the European encounter with American culture is not

²⁹ Pells, *Not like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II*, xv.

³⁰ Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006), 3.

³¹ See Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. and Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

³² Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*, 5.

³³ Quoted in George Ritzer and Michael Ryan, “Americanisation, McDonaldisation and Globalisation,” in *Issues in Americanisation and Culture*, ed. Neil Campbell, Jude Davies, and George McKay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 47.

something new under the sun. While discussions of Americanization reached fever pitch from the 1950s to the 1970s in Britain, the term has its origins in the 1830s where, as Pells points out, fears of “America’s mechanical inventions and technological ingenuity” abounded.³⁴ Pells and Rob Kroes³⁵ have done much to examine the myth of Americanization as an irresistible global process that substitutes a hollow mass culture for vital but imperiled autochthonous examples.³⁶ Any form of culture must be understood as operating within a nexus of contexts and relationships, and any recognition of American cultural power must be tempered by examining what happens to American culture when it leaves its side of the Atlantic.³⁷ It is, then, less productive to look at where American culture has supposedly transplanted British culture(s) and examine how its effects have been domesticated, as Kroes has done for the Netherlands, how American culture is “Dutchified” and absorbed into a new, globally-construed Dutch cultural identity.³⁸

Because of photography’s unique status in the arts, my own analysis negotiates between the “Americanization” of British photography, assessments that suggest that photography from the US was just one of a panoply of cultural strands and influences that were woven into the skein of photographic practice in Britain, and analyses that view the photographic modernism that emanated strongly from the US as an international movement that arose simultaneously in different places during the 1960s and 1970s.

³⁴ Pells, *Not like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II*, 7.

³⁵ Rob Kroes, “Americanization: What Are We Talking About?,” in *If You’ve Seen One, You’ve Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 162–178.

³⁶ This process was famously dubbed “grobalization” by George Ritzer. See Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society 6* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2010), 185–187.

³⁷ For a discussion of this, see Kooijman, *Fabricating the Absolute Fake: America in Contemporary Pop Culture*, 12.

³⁸ Kroes, “Americanization: What Are We Talking About?,” 178. See also Kooijman, *Fabricating the Absolute Fake: America in Contemporary Pop Culture*, 13.

When examining a supposedly top-down Americanization of photography in Britain, it is important to note that state-sponsored promotion of photography was comparatively miniscule in comparison to other cultural projects by the USIS or other official agencies. Moreover, fine art photographs only began fetching significant prices at auction in the mid-1970s; non-commercial photography was a labor of love because there simply was not a market for either contemporary or historical works. For most of the period under discussion, photography flew under the economic and cultural radar in both the US and Great Britain and aside from major institutions like MoMA and George Eastman House, photographic exchange was very much a conversation among a small group of committed individuals. While this was not a meeting of equals, it is difficult to suggest that American photography was propagated across the ocean with any degree of unified purpose.

In recognizing the dominance of US practice, it is important to assert the agency of photographers in Britain who wanted to see American images, use American cameras and buy American magazines, and it is equally important to see the conduits through which American photography passed as being controlled by individuals who were not only sympathetic to the work of US-based photographers, but went to great lengths to import their ideas, methods and aesthetics. In this sense, the more well-developed American photographic practice was in a natural position to influence British photography in an Anglophone exchange of ideas that weighed in favor of ideas disseminated from an America which dazzled and enticed British photographers both culturally and photographically. In highlighting the uneven flow of intellectual and photographic capital, I do not wish to suggest that the experience of American culture is uniform or subsume the process of cultural transfer to simple binary of dissemination and reception. It is important to acknowledge and interrogate, however, why the dominant

partner in the flow of photographic and cultural ideas across the Atlantic from the 1910s was the US.

“Photography” is a broad term to which many delineations of mode (art, fine art, documentary, social documentary, etc.) and style (pictorial, straight, modernist, etc.) can be appended. The photographs and photographers discussed in this work often transcend, redefine, or eschew categorization, but the term “independent photography” probably comes closest to describe the development of a British photographic consciousness from the 1940s to the 1970s. This has been used extensively by photographic historians Val Williams and Mark Haworth-Booth to describe the impulse in Britain to extend the range and scope of artistic photography and champion its cause as an art form.⁴⁰ Haworth-Booth’s usage demonstrates the long history of attempts to classify photography:

My source [for the word] was the commissioners of the 1862 International Exhibition in London. Facing a crisis with angry photographers over whether to classify photography as a fine or a mechanical art—an art or an industry—the commissioners suavely decreed that photography is an "independent art."⁴¹

The term independent is appropriate during the timeframe under discussion because most professional photographers made their living commercially and made their personal, artistic work independent of this in their spare time. The word also reflects the drive to detach photography from its still-lingering subordination to painting and appropriately does not define an independent photographer as an aesthete in the way that “fine art photography” might. As the lines between documentary and art blurred when

⁴⁰ See Val Williams and Susan Bright, “The Urge to Document- 1970-1990,” in *How We Are: Photographing Britain : From the 1840s to the Present* (London: Tate, 2007), 139. The trope of “independence” was also used by George Hughes in a 1979 issue of *Amateur Photographer*. Hughes’ article in praise of American photography continued the longstanding British tradition of conflating photographic quality and national characteristics, the vitality of US work mirroring the “ironic, incongruous, ingenious, idiotic, inspired place” of origin. Hughes, George, “The Independent Way,” *Amateur Photographer* 160, no. 1 (July 4, 1979): 76.

⁴¹ Mark Haworth-Booth, “Helmut Gernsheim: ‘An Unreasonable Man,’” in *The Gernsheim Collection*, ed. Roy Flukinger (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 328.

photojournalism and conceptual art entered art galleries and museums in the 1970s, defining the parameters of the term photography became increasingly difficult. I use the terms “art photography” or “fine art photography” when its practitioners described it as such; likewise “creative photography” was a term widely deployed by photographers in the 1960s to differentiate their work from the legacy of Pictorialism and commercialism, and I have used it accordingly. In acknowledging the inadequacies of definition, it is equally true that the richness and heterogeneity of the photography that emerged in Britain, the US, and beyond between the 1940s and 1970s happily resists simple classification.

American culture touched all areas of the arts in Britain in the twentieth century, and it is briefly worth enumerating the similarities and special circumstances of photography with two of these art forms. As John Walker demonstrates, British art was following American trends closely by the late 1940s, the most visible of these was the Independent Group, formed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). Interested in American culture as an alternative to official British culture, artists, critics and designers like Eduardo Paolozzi, Peter Blake, and Reyner Banham, turned to American popular culture for inspiration and in doing so blurred the already tenuous line between high and low art.⁴² Contact with abstract expressionism invigorated certain spheres of British painting while leaving other artists cold, and British pop and abstraction in the 1960s both absorbed and critiqued American influence.⁴³ Important to Walker’s narrative are the numerous visits that British artists paid to America in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, a

⁴² John A. Walker, *Cultural Offensive: America’s Impact on British Art Since 1945* (Pluto Press, 1998), 17–43.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 102.

parallel that can be seen in the British photographic world with several trips I will document in later chapters.⁴⁴ Walker succinctly sums up the experience of these trips:

More and more Britons were thus able to compare the reality of America with the impressions they had gathered from the mass media. It also enabled them to see more American architecture, art, design and mass culture at first hand and to meet American artists and critics on their home turf.⁴⁵

Some of these trips were permanent, comparable to the ‘brain drain’ of British scientists to better-funded institutions in the US, as Walker argues.⁴⁶ Britain, and London in particular, experienced reciprocal traffic, however, as Americans R.B. Kitaj, Robert Fraser, and Jim Dine ensconced themselves in the British art scene in the 1960s.

American and British literary cultures have long been intertwined and as such have tended to be presented as a transatlantic literary culture that both transcends and complicates ideas of national literature(s). Paul Gilroy, Malcolm Bradbury, and Paul Giles have been key theorists in examining the effects of this flow from canonical figures like Henry James, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence and W.H. Auden whose work was rooted in the relationship between the two countries⁴⁷ to figures such as Frederick Douglass who drew on and reconfigured discourses surrounding British abolitionism.⁴⁸ As Bradbury demonstrates, transatlantic literary figures explored notions that Britain’s (and more broadly, Europe’s) venerable literary culture was superior to its American counterpart, resulting in the “literary absenteeism” of many American writers who migrated to Britain in the 1900s through the 1930s.⁴⁹ By the 1950s, writers such as Bradbury himself were

⁴⁴ For a detailed account see Daniel T Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998).

⁴⁵ Walker, *Cultural Offensive*, 104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴⁷ Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages*, 158–202; 247–294.

⁴⁸ Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*, 22–46.

⁴⁹ Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages*, 9.

“shuttling” across the Atlantic in a physical cross-cultural exchange, and, as with photography, it became clear that the US was becoming the dominant literary influence. This is best exemplified by the International Poetry Incarnation, held at London’s Albert Hall on June 11, 1965. The minority of Britons active in the literary underground had always followed developments in American poetry (the Beats in particular) closely since the late 1950s, and the Incarnation was the moment when the American-influenced British undercurrent became mainstream.⁵⁰ Hastily organized around Allen Ginsberg’s visit to London in May 1965 the wildly successful incarnation featured Austrian, British, Finnish and Dutch poets, but it was the American contingent who provided the main attraction. The main hope, embodied in Michael Horovitz’s exhortation, “England! Awake! Awake! Awake!,” was that the reading would breathe life anew into the English literary scene; a belief that was predicated on the transcendental spiritualism and Beat sensibility that participants Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti embodied. Writing after the event, Ginsberg described the lead up to the event in his quintessentially breathless sentences:

The audience had been summoned by Blakean clarions for some great spiritual event, there was a hint of Jerusalem joy in the air, there were great poets near London, there was a spontaneity of youths working together for a public incarnation of a new consciousness everyone’s aware of this last half decade in Albion (thanks to the many minstrels from Mersey’s shores and Manhattan’s)...⁵¹

⁵⁰ Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (New York: Dell, 1970), 253.

⁵¹ Allen Ginsberg, in an unpublished piece for *The Times Literary Supplement*, 19 June 1965, in Barry Miles, *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London since 1945* (London: Atlantic, 2010), 151. Barry Miles’ “The Albert Hall Reading” chapter is a particularly compelling history of the genesis of and proceedings of the evening. Despite the long-term impact of the readings of Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti and Corso, et al., on the British scene, Ginsberg felt the event disappointing: “there were too many bad poets at Albert Hall, too many goofs who didn’t trust their own poetry.” Ginsberg confided to Miles that he “didn’t think any of the British poets he’d ever read were good enough but he recognized that the host country could not be snubbed like that.” Ibid.

It was fitting that the figure called upon to hasten the building of Jerusalem was a Jewish American with roots in New York and San Francisco that he was soon to transcend. Michael Horovitz would later produce an anthology of British poetry titled *Children of Albion* (1969), a conscious counterpart to Donald Allen's groundbreaking *New American Poetry 1945-1960*.⁵² As I will argue in chapter three, Tony Ray-Jones' photography aimed to rediscover the loamy roots of English culture by gleaning inspiration from the free and invigorating approaches of US photographers.

British photography, literature and art are all arenas where, by the 1950s and 1960s, practitioners increasingly looked across the Atlantic for their cues. Naturally, this was not true across the whole spectrum of artists and writers, but the cultural flow to Britain that increased exponentially after 1945 brought inexorable changes to the artistic landscape, changes that were, by and large, welcomed and encouraged. Figures like Ginsberg were courted to give inspiration to the British scene, whereas expatriate artists like R.B. Kitaj enlivened both the British art world and art education. British photography shares many similarities with the artistic and literary scenes but differs in important ways. In brief, and although it is difficult to quantify, British photography was even more in thrall to US photography than its equivalents in literature and art. If America (and New York in particular) had become the center of the artistic and literary universes by the late 1940s, the US had led the way in photography from at least the 1930s and arguably from the 1910s.⁵³ The photographic scene in the US, from technology to education to the promotion and display of photographs, looked enviously advanced to Britons for most of

⁵² For a more detailed discussion, see James Keery, "Children of Albion: Blake and Contemporary British Poetry," in *Blake, Modernity and Popular Culture*, ed. S. H. Clark and Jason Whittaker (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 100–113.

⁵³ Some of the most innovative and original ideas, as I will explore briefly in chapter one, were coming out of Weimar Germany and the USSR in the inter-war period, but British photographers were wont to turn to the Anglophone transatlantic before they looked to Germany or Hungary, a process enmeshed in a general cultural suspicion of avant-gardism and a less well developed support and training structure for artists.

the twentieth century, even if some took pains to patriotically downplay this. Whereas American influences enlivened or challenged already existing cultures of poetry or painting, there was no equivalent British independent photographic culture of which to speak as a counterpart to the small-scale but growing photographic culture across the Atlantic. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein, there was no there there in British photography, and thus American practices gained traction because they were enthusiastically embraced as marks of progress and modernity.

To date, no comprehensive examination of the British encounter with American photography exists. Many works acknowledge the debt that the British photographic scene owes to American examples, but no sustained treatment has been written. Because of the still-growing nature of the field, historians of British photography have understandably sought to highlight Britain's contributions to photography rather than explore the time in its history when independent British photography was in the doldrums. Accompanying exhibitions of the same title, pioneering recent surveys like David Mellor's *No Such Thing as Society* (2007)⁵⁴ and Val Williams and Susan Bright's *How We Are: Photographing Britain from 1840 to the Present* (2007)⁵⁵ are no exception to this rule, and both showcase the vitality of British photography from the 1970s to the 2000s in particular. It was a vitality, however, that had been shaped by the excitement and example offered by American work.

The American photographic influence in other Western countries has been parsed by scholars. The interaction between French and American photography in particular has been examined, most notably by Jean Kempf in his 1994 essay *American Photography in*

⁵⁴ David Mellor, *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87: From the British Council and the Arts Council Collection* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2007).

⁵⁵ Val Williams and Susan Bright, *How We Are: Photographing Britain : From the 1840s to the Present* (London: Tate, 2007).

*France since World War II: Was France liberated by the United States?*⁵⁶ Kempf plays particular attention to the Rencontres d'Arles festival that began in the 1970s and acted as a marketplace for international photographic exchange. It was a gathering that was heavily attended by American photographers and was successful in promoting their work. European photographers and photography professionals eagerly attended Rencontres to share news about photographic practice and to attend workshops on publishing, printing and marketing photographs held mainly by American photographers.⁵⁷ In 2008, the Bibliothèque nationale de France exhibition *Le Choc de la Photographie Américaine* (the shock of American photography)⁵⁸ examined the impact of American photography in France in the 1970s, and a similar show, *Reality Revisited: Photography from the Moderna Museet Collection* (2010) did the same for American photography in 1970s Sweden.⁵⁹ Other works that examine American influence speak to particular generic influences. *Der Rote Bulli: Stephen Shore und die Neue Düsseldorfer Fotografie* (2010) examines at length the influence of American color photography on what came to be known as the Düsseldorf School of photography, and charts the subsequent global influence of teachers Bernd and Hilla Becher and their students Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff and Candida Höfer.⁶⁰ Finally, Ryūichi Kaneko and Ivan Vartanian's survey *Japanese Photobooks of the 1960s and '70s* (2009) notes the importance of the catalogue of Nathan Lyon's 1967 show *Toward a Social Landscape* at George Eastman House in

⁵⁶ Jean Kempf, "American Photography in France since World War II: Was France Liberated by the United States?," in *American Photographs in Europe*, ed. David E. Nye and M. Gidley, European Contributions to American Studies 29 (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 205–22.

⁵⁷ Marco Masani and Derek Bennett, "Arles Photo Meeting in Critical Phase," *Print Letter*, October 1976.

⁵⁸ Anne Biroleau, ed., *70', Le Choc de la Photographie Américaine* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2008).

⁵⁹ Anna Tellgren, *Reality Revisited: Photography from the Moderna Museet Collection* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010).

⁶⁰ Stephen Shore et al., *Der rote Bulli: Stephen Shore und die Neue Düsseldorfer Fotografie* (Düsseldorf: NRW-Forum, 2010).

shaping the outlook of “nearly every serious photographer in Japan.”⁶¹ This study hopes to build on these works by contributing to the documentation of the wide-ranging effects of American photography, and showing the unique circumstances under which British photographers brought it into their orbit and used examples from the US to shape the field in their own country.

My first chapter gives a brief history of transatlantic photographic exchange between the US and Great Britain from the turn of the century up to the 1960s. I use the correspondence between Helmut Gernsheim and Beaumont Newhall to examine the contours of each country’s independent photography scene and demonstrate how Gernsheim and others looked to the US for cues to revitalize British photography. In particular, Newhall, MoMA and the photographic museum at George Eastman House in Rochester, NY, served as examples for reformers such as Gernsheim, whose important collection of photographs would end up not in a museum in Britain but in an archive in the US. Chapter two picks up this thread and examines the figure of Bill Jay and the two magazines he edited: *Creative Camera* and *Album*. These publications were formative in the British independent photography movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jay drew inspiration from a 1968 trip to the US and advocated passionately for importing American models of display, academization and practice. *Creative Camera* and *Album* displayed a large number of American photographs in their pages, and the US was cast as a mythic place where cutting-edge photography was abundant and whose photographers the magazines’ young audience was encouraged to emulate. Like Gernsheim, Jay’s ambitions were frustrated and he emigrated to Arizona in 1972, leaving behind a country that he felt had spurned him.

⁶¹ Ryuichi Kaneko and Ivan Vartanian, eds., *Japanese Photobooks of the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Aperture, 2009), 18.

My third chapter looks at an individual who was pivotal not only to the development of *Creative Camera* magazine but to the rebirth of British independent photography. The Yale-trained photographer Tony Ray-Jones became Britain's first young independent superstar off the back of a series of photographs he took of the English during their leisure time. Ray-Jones' experience as a student in the US was instrumental in introducing him to new aesthetic practices, and it was through photographing street parades that he developed a sense of how to represent national characteristics through his lens. Armed with his Americanized style, his images produce a complex picture of English culture under threat from the forces of American mass culture. I place Ray-Jones in contemporary contexts about folk revivals, the tourist image of England and a body of literature that was wary of the effects of American culture on ordinary British folk.

My final chapter examines the role of the Arts Council of Great Britain and its role in supporting British photography through grants, publications, exhibitions and more. The key figure in this is Barry Lane, the Arts Council's photography officer, who was inspired to reshape state support for photography along US lines after a seminal fact-finding trip he undertook by establishing a Photography Committee that operated from 1973 to 1980. I contextualize the Photography Committee's turn towards US models in the longstanding exchange of ideas about arts funding between the US and Britain since the 1930s to highlight the continuity of this exchange but also to demonstrate the unique situation Lane encountered in the US in 1972. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the Arts Council's support of photography and the ways in which American influences were mediated. Finally, in a brief conclusion I show how the landscape of a newly-confident British photography shifted away from an American-inspired modernism to a more introspective postmodernism that critiqued the validity of

metanarratives of nationalism, fine art and self-reflexive documentary, and addressed concerns of race, class, gender and disability.

Chapter 1: “Excellent Examples of How to Do Things:” Anglo-American Photographic Exchange, 1944-1963¹

In February 1955, the eminent photographic historian and collector Helmut Gernsheim was moved to write a letter to the cultural affairs officer at the US Embassy in London about the possibility of sponsoring exhibitions of American photographers to be shown in Great Britain. An additional copy of the letter was sent to his friend Beaumont Newhall, then-curator of photography at George Eastman House in Rochester, NY for his approval. The text serves as an adroit and timely assessment of the relative state of photographic art in the US and Great Britain:

I have for a long time admired the work of the great American photographers such as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Eugene Smith, Paul Strand, Walker Evans, Clarence John Laughlin, Alfred Eisenstaedt, and many others. Among other supporters of modern photography, I deplore the fact that their work is little known in this country, for photography is one of the fields in which your country is leading, and could be an inspiration to photographers in Europe, especially in Britain where the general level is unfortunately not very high...

Unfortunately, there is no public museum in which the work of any of these photographers, either singly or collectively could be shown, so I wonder whether it would not be possible to have small exhibitions at the US Information Center (similar to exhibitions at the Amerika-Häuser in Germany)?...

It is a thousand pities that we in this country should have to miss, through lack of exhibition opportunities, such exhibitions as that of Alfred Eisenstaedt, recently arranged at the George Eastman House, and Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man*, for the showing of which I believe no gallery has yet been found in Britain, though it will go to Paris, Cologne, and other places in the continent.²

¹ This quote is taken from an editorial in *The British Journal of Photography* discussing American influences on British photography. “Ex Cathedra,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4447 (July 27, 1945): 241.

² Gernsheim continued: “I would in particular like to support, if I can, the proposed lecture exhibition tour to this country of Clarence John Laughlin, who in consequence of my encouragement has, I understand, made his application to the State Department (Specialists Division) for a grant to come to Britain. I enclose some printed material on Mr. Laughlin, and the exhibition pamphlet of Mr. Eisenstaedt's work.”

Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, February 6, 1955, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Impassioned as such a letter was, no evidence suggests that it had any effect. For at least the next few years, the “general level” of photography in Britain, despite Gernsheim’s efforts, would remain “not very high,” although a place was found for *The Family of Man* in London in 1956 and a USIS touring exhibition of Edward Steichen’s photographs was shown at the American Embassy in 1965.³ The letter expresses the contrast in attitudes towards photography between the US and Britain: one country embracing and supporting the future of photography and the other lagging behind its ally. Gernsheim was in many ways a man before his time; he would leave the UK for Switzerland in 1965, feeling unappreciated and frustrated by the British establishment’s lack of support for his work, after selling his collection of around 35,000 photographs, 3,600 photographic books and ephemera he had acquired in Britain to the University of Texas at Austin in 1963.⁴

Gernsheim’s fervent plea to the US Embassy was written eleven years after his and his wife Alison’s first meeting with Captain Beaumont Newhall, USAF, in 1944, a meeting that has long been recognized as one of the most important moments in the writing of photography’s history. It began a relationship that would prove “unflinchingly cordial, amicable and supportive,”⁵ between the two power couples of photography in their respective countries, and is one that was formative in the transatlantic photographic exchange between Great Britain and the United States in the middle of the twentieth century.⁶ Although Beaumont and Nancy Newhall were the dominant partners in the relationship, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim’s legacy as writers and collectors has

³ Mark Haworth-Booth, *Photography, an Independent Art: Photographs from the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1839-1996* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 139.

⁴ Roy Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 5.

⁵ A. D. Coleman, “Bringing up Baby: Helmut Gernsheim, Beaumont Newhall and the Childhood of Photography,” in *Helmut Gernsheim: Pionier der Fotogesichte = Pioneer of Photo History*, ed. Helmut Gernsheim and Alfried Wiczorek (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003), 67.

⁶ Flukinger provides a good summary of the meeting. Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 11.

endured equally. Beaumont Newhall's *Photography: 1839-1937* (1937), later revised into *History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present* (1949), based on his MoMA exhibition of the same name, and the Gernsheims' *The History of Photography from the Earliest Use of the Camera Obscura in the Eleventh Century up to 1914* (1955) would come to redefine the historical treatment of photography by recasting the practice in terms of aesthetics rather than technology, a distinction that would contribute greatly to the legitimization of photography as a modern art form. As A.D. Coleman writes:

For all intents and purposes, for a period of forty years control of the history of photography rested in the hands of two men: Beaumont Newhall in the United States and Helmut Gernsheim in Europe... they virtually owned it.⁷

Though the initial encounter between the Gernsheims and Newhall has been recounted many times (especially by Helmut Gernsheim)⁸ and the differences between the approaches, inclusions and exclusions in their histories have been parsed, I wish to use the example of Helmut Gernsheim and Newhall's friendship and correspondence, and the Gernsheims' later struggle to found a national photographic collection as a means of illuminating the evolution of independent photography in the US and Great Britain. At their point of meeting, Gernsheim and Newhall's careers serve as representations of the state of photographic practice in their respective countries of residence and the trajectories that creative photography would take. Newhall's career progression from MoMA to George Eastman House to the University of New Mexico parallels the

⁷ This domination was not of their own design, as Coleman continues: "I do not mean to imply by this any territorial imperatives on the part of Gernsheim and Newhall. In my own experience, and from all reports, they were unflaggingly supportive of any and all serious efforts by others who came to the discipline with a sense of commitment." Coleman, "Bringing up Baby: Helmut Gernsheim, Beaumont Newhall and the Childhood of Photography," 63.

⁸ One widely available account is in Paul Hill and Thomas Joshua Cooper, eds., "Helmut Gernsheim," in *Dialogue with Photography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 160–210. See also the comprehensive essay in Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 11–14.

exponential growth of art photography in the US (a process Newhall played a central role in facilitating) through museums, galleries and educational establishments. Ironically, the Gernsheims were able to take advantage of an apathetic British art world to amass a stellar collection of early British photography with next to no institutional support; Newhall, on the other hand, was always ensconced in supportive institutions. The Gernsheims' efforts to reform and promote the history of photography in Britain through their books, essays and acquisitions was an attempt to sow seeds of photographic revival that would fall on stony ground in their home country until the late 1960s.

In this chapter, I sketch the history of Anglo-American photographic exchange, beginning the period from the 1880s to the 1940s. I highlight the convergent and divergent trajectories between the countries, concentrating on how photographic imagery, practice and technology was construed and consumed in terms of nationality. Following this, I will explore photographic exchange in the years post-World War II and will use the example of Helmut Gernsheim's friendship and correspondence with Beaumont Newhall as a means of illuminating attitudes towards fine-art photography in the US and Great Britain from the post-War years up to 1964 when the last parts of the Gernsheim collection reached the University of Texas, a watershed moment that was hardly reported on in Britain.

PHOTOGRAPHY'S FORMATIVE YEARS: AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR

Connections between British and American photographers have ebbed and flowed throughout the history of the medium, facilitated by a lively international exchange of information on technical and aesthetic developments. Photographers based in Britain and France dominated early international discourses of fine art photography, but by the turn

of the twentieth century the mantle had been passed to photographers in the US and Germany. From the 1840s, photographic innovations spread rapidly across borders, making photography simultaneously an international medium and a practice freighted with nationalist overtones from its inception. Arguments over the relative merits of William Henry Fox-Talbot's calotype and Louis Daguerre's daguerreotype were discussions that dissected the practical application of these processes but were also about which nation's genius could legitimately claim to have given birth to photography.⁹ Deciding who had "given photography to the world" was not simply a matter of invention.¹⁰ The French Académie des Sciences declared in 1837 that "France should then nobly give to the whole world this discovery [the daguerreotype] which could contribute so much to the progress of art and science;"¹¹ the unwritten corollary was that the calotype process had been patented, and use of Fox-Talbot's rival process commanded a hefty fee. Benevolent as Daguerre, and indeed the French nation, had been (Fox-Talbot later relaxed the patent), accepting this gift meant accepting the strings of French genius that were attached.

In addition to technological nationalism, photographs were employed from their very early years to promote and secure national interests at the state level. As many historians have demonstrated, photographs were used almost immediately by Western governments to facilitate and justify their imperialist ambitions; notably the French and

⁹ For a recent treatment of this rivalry, see Roger Watson and Helen Rappaport, *Capturing the Light: The Birth of Photography, a True Story of Genius and Rivalry* (London: Macmillan, 2013).

¹⁰ For many years, Nicéphore Niépce's 1820s experiments, now commonly accepted as the world's first photographs, were thought of as "photo engraving" rather than true photography. See, for example: J. Dudley Johnston, "Pictorial Photography," *The Photographic Journal* LXXIX (April 1939): 179.

¹¹ Kevin E. Nelson, "A Thumbnail History of the Daguerreotype," *The Daguerreian Society*, 1996, <http://daguerre.org/resource/history/history.html>.

the British in Africa and beyond,¹² and America in the Philippines.¹³ In the US, this occurred internally as well as externally, as photographers surveyed the American west and engaged in the “imperialist nostalgia” of photographing “disappearing” Native American tribes.¹⁴ Taking a photograph of territorial possessions and indigenous peoples for the purposes of a survey or to serve the interests of the state was both an adjunct to and mirrored the taking of land for the nation. Deciding which nation’s photographers produced the most beautiful pictures was a secondary concern until the late 1800s, but even then, fine art photographs were still couched in terms of national talent: displays of photography at worlds’ fairs and commercial expositions were primarily used to demonstrate the technical excellence of a country’s manufacturing.¹⁵ The veracity and technical wizardry of the cameras were deployed in the service of the state not only as devices to abet statecraft but to promote national interests to a world audience. Fin de siècle expositions did often include exhibitions of photographic art but these tended to reside not in the fine arts pavilions, but were part of exhibits that heralded the science of optics and technological advances of their respective countries before their aesthetic developments.

As early photography was an enterprise that required time, patience, a considerable amount of money and mechanical and chemical tinkering, early practitioners tended to be those who could put it to commercial use in studios producing

¹² See, among others: Keri A. Berg, “The Imperialist Lens: Du Camp, Salzmann and Early French Photography,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 6, no. 1 (2008): 1–17, doi:10.1080/17460650801947838. and James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹³ See Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁴ The term is from anthropologist Renato Rosaldo, quoted in Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 235.

¹⁵ For an extended treatment of photography at nineteenth-century expos, see Julie K Brown, *Making Culture Visible: The Public Display of Photography at Fairs, Expositions, and Exhibitions in the United States, 1847-1900* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

miniatures and portraits for Victorian hearths. The invention of the collodion process (again the subject of an international dispute between Frederick Scott Archer and Gustave le Gray over its origins) took photography into the private sphere where it quickly became the preserve of the leisured middle and upper-classes by the early 1850s. Predominantly male societies and camera clubs soon sprang up in which members would express their curiosity at the camera's potential, share best practices, and engage in good-natured competition. The most important of these coteries in Britain, the Royal Photographic Society (R.P.S.), was formed in London as the Photographic Society in 1853 after the success of photographic displays at the Great Exhibition, and photographers mounted a concerted campaign that convinced Fox-Talbot to loosen the restrictions on his patent.¹⁶ Harry Cooper, writing on the occasion of the R.P.S.' 100th anniversary, appropriately described the more genteel contexts of its founding:

In the year 1853 all that was most characteristic of the nineteenth century was in flower. In that year, Ruskin completed *Stones of Venice*, Dickens his *Bleak House*, Kingsley his *Hypatia*... the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood had become respectable... in the field of politics the Chartists had ceased from troubling and Gladstone was bringing in his first budget.¹⁷

Cooper's description speaks to the aspirations of members both in 1853 and 1953: the former vying for recognition among the arts of the nineteenth century, their successors basking in this reflected glory. Photography's "golden age"¹⁸ in Britain was certainly auspicious. Early luminaries such as Roger Fenton and Sir Charles Eastlake guided the Photographic Society (R.P.S.) in its early years and the interest of Prince Albert aided

¹⁶ Michael Pritchard, "The Interchange of Thought and Experience," *R.P.S. Journal* 156, no. 1 (February 2013): 39.

¹⁷ Harry Cooper, "One Hundred Years of the Royal Photographic Society," in *The Centenary of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, 1853-1953: A Brief History of Its Formation, Activities and Achievements* (London: The Royal Photographic Society, 1953), 5.

¹⁸ I borrow this phrase from Mark Haworth-Booth's book: Mark Haworth-Booth, *The Golden Age of British Photography 1839-1900* (New York: Aperture, 1984).

photography's prestige. By 1854, the society had gained royal patronage and had set in stone a structure that would remain largely unchanged for the next hundred years.¹⁹ The R.P.S. was concerned jointly with the aesthetics of photography (the "Pictorial Group") and the technical side, publishing a journal and holding exhibitions of work. Though the society's structure was initially borrowed from France's Société Héliographique (Fenton had visited on a fact-finding trip in 1852)²⁰ the Royal's enterprising spirit took it in new directions, so that by 1854 other national societies like the Société Française de Photographie et de Cinématographie were following their lead.²¹ Described as "a prolific parent," the R.P.S. inspired and fostered similar organizations internationally and started a practice that would continue throughout many societies: accepting international members.²²

The photographic societies of France, Britain and the US during the Victorian age mirrored each nation's jostling for position on the international stage. The First International Congress on Photography was held in Paris in 1889 off the back of the Exposition Universelle "with the object of giving those interested in photography, whatever their nationality, the opportunity of meeting together to discuss questions of general importance."²³ The most important aim of the conference was standardizing measurements, definitions of terms and photographic apparatus, a goal which spoke to scientific rather than artistic aims. Magazines, salons and expositions filled the artistic gap. Typical of the best journals was *The Photographic Times*, "an illustrated monthly

¹⁹ Pritchard, "The Interchange of Thought and Experience," 41.

²⁰ Helmut Gernsheim, "The Royal- One Hundred Years Old," *Photography* 8, no. 1 (January 1953): 40.

²¹ Cooper, "One Hundred Years of the Royal Photographic Society," 9.

²² *Ibid.*, 15.

²³ Frank Roy Fraprie, ed., "Society News," in *American Photography, Volume 4* (American Photographic Publishing Company, 1910), 226.

magazine devoted to the interests of artistic and scientific photography,”²⁴ published in New York from 1871 to 1915.²⁵ The editorial from the January 1880 edition announces its intent to keep readers abreast of the latest trends abroad:

Our German and French translations are especially selected with care and judgment by our own staff, and such as are given by no other magazines.

The Times will hereafter supply all the home and foreign photographic news of any real service to American photographers, and you should carefully read it.²⁶

During the course of its publication, *The Photographic Times*, like many other photographic magazines, carried columns written by both British and American luminaries (H.P. Robinson, P.H. Emerson and Alfred Stieglitz, for example), thus solidifying the Anglophone exchange of photographic ideas. The international dimension of *The Photographic Times* increased when John Traill Taylor, former editor of *The British Journal of Photography*, became the magazine’s editor in 1891, “with the assistance of many well-known American photographic writers” as an 1893 article glowed.²⁷ Taylor’s employment was seen as a coup for the magazine, and when *The Photographic Times* announced his editorship, the editorial managed to get in a jibe amid the puffery:

The Photographic Times and American Photographer will be issued on the 15th of each month, under the able editorship of J. Traill Taylor, so well and favorably

²⁴ Internationalism only went so far, and a trenchant patriotism often percolated into photographic discourse, such as in this example from the January 1881 edition: “It has often been alleged by photographers throughout the United States that it is a disgrace to our boasted state of advancement that there is not in New York an independent photographic journal of a practical and scientific character, and removed from the trammels of trade.” “Publisher’s Announcement,” *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* XL, no. 121 (January 1881): 1.

²⁵ David Spencer, “The Photographic Times: 1871-1915: A Definitive American Photographic Journal,” 2012, <http://photoseed.com/collection/group/pictorial-photographs-a-record-of-the-photographic-salon-of-1895>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

known everywhere as having been for fifteen years editor-in-chief of *The British Journal of Photography*, then the leading photographic journal in the world.²⁸

Poaching an editor was one way of showing American ingenuity; another was praising American entries in salons and competitions. The report from a 1904 issue on one of the annual Kodak competitions in Britain highlighted the success of American entries that could not “but prove gratifying to those who take an interest in the advancement of American photography”:

Our American amateurs, in proportion to their entries, carried off over twice as much as their British cousins, three and a half times as much as the French competitors and did six times as well as the Germans—at least such was the opinion of the British judges who were no less personages than Sir William Abney, Mr. Craig Annan and Mr. Frank Sutcliffe.²⁹

However innocuous or received in a good-natured gentlemanly spirit of competition, these small examples show how a quintessentially stateless international art was continually construed in terms that claimed innovation or aesthetics as representative of a native ingenuity.

HANDS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC: THE RISE OF US PHOTOGRAPHY

Despite an innovative start, the R.P.S. settled into a rather staid and proper pattern for nearly fifty years until the secession of a group of members who formed the Linked Ring in 1892, an international brotherhood dedicated to advancing photography beyond

²⁸ Ibid. My emphasis.

²⁹ The statistics given in the article were as follows: “There were something over 20,000 entries received, of which about 12,000 were from the British Isles, 2,500 from France, 2,000 from the United States, 1,700 from Germany and 2,000 scattering. The British Isles received 229 prizes, the United States 85 prizes, France 28 and Germany 12. It will thus be seen that the British exhibitors received one prize to every 52 entries, the French one to every 89, the German one to every 141 and the American one to every 23 entries.” David Spencer, “Sharp as Needles & Woolly as Mary’s Lamb,” *Photo Seed*, April 2013, <http://photoseed.com/blog/2013/04/07/photos-sharp-as-a-needle-or-woolly-like-marys-lamb/>.

the stifling brand of pictorialism that had set in by the 1850s. Its members balked at what Margaret Harker described as:

The orthodox and narrow interpretation of the nature of photography by the Society's Establishment, the domination of the medium by its technology, and the subservience of the art to the technical processes involved.³⁰

The Links (as members liked to be called) insisted that photography was both a craft and an art, and the group was born amidst a smoldering controversy over “picture-taking” (realist, straight photography) and “picture making” (pictorialist manipulation of subject and aesthetics). Pioneers of the latter group such as H.P. Robinson sought to ally the aesthetic principles of pre-Raphaelite painting and theorists such as John Ruskin with photographic work.³¹ Robinson and his followers believed that the mutuality of influence between painting and photography was beneficial; they encouraged common standards of beauty to which visual art should adhere. The pictorial photographer and the painter alike looked to nature as inspiration for picturesque images that showed the artistic intervention in the scene.

Such ideas appealed transatlantically: Robinson's analog in the US was F. Holland Day, a wealthy Bostonian publisher whose leisure-time experiments with posed, symbolic portraiture and tableaux mirrored Robinson's own approach.³² The most important advocate of “picture-taking” was P.H. Emerson, who set himself up as the antagonist to those who would make photography a “handmaiden of art.”³³ Emerson

³⁰ Margaret F Harker, *The Linked Ring: The Secession Movement in Photography in Britain, 1892-1910* (London: Heinemann, 1979), xi.

³¹ As Peter Turner describes it: “Robinson considered that interpretation necessitated no less than constructing images from fragments; infusing the straight truth with artificiality under the guise of the imagination in an attempt to make the end product coincide as nearly as possible with some preconceived idea.” Peter Turner, *P. H. Emerson: Photographer of Norfolk* (Boston: D. R. Godine, 1975), 20.

³² See Harker, *The Linked Ring*, 20–22.

³³ For a succinct discussion of this collision, see Vicki Goldberg, “A Handmaiden, Time Saver and Occasional Rival,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1996, C30.

believed vehemently that photography, an art apart from other visual arts, should be approached with an eye to veracity, truth, spontaneity and revealing the individual vision of the photographer.³⁴ While not “straight” photographers in the traditional sense (Emerson advocated the blurring of the edges of photographs to highlight the subject in what he called Naturalistic Photography), Emerson and his acolytes such as George Davison (later to become the director of Eastman Kodak’s British arm) became increasingly perturbed by the twin perils of industrial society’s impact on this art form: the decline of standards following a profusion of uneducated camera operators and a need to combat accusations that photographs were mere mechanical reproductions. Acknowledged as the aesthetic leader in photography in the 1890s, the British secession movement inspired other like-minded groups in France, Austria and America to declare their own independence.³⁵ This international moment reflected the rapid transmission of photographic ideas across borders but must in turn be seen as a part of the fin-de-siècle imperialist and nationalist epoch. Individuals competed internationally in exhibitions but collectively entries from international photographers were invariably discussed as “the Belgian section” or were introduced as part of the Photo-Club de Paris, for example, to be remarked on as representative of photographic developments from their respective nations.³⁶ Thus, photographic ideas traversed borders but were freighted with nationalist overtones.

³⁴ Harker, *The Linked Ring*, 29.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65–66.

³⁶ This also mirrored the presentation of work at expositions. See, for example, Sir Isidore Spielmann, *St Louis International Exhibition 1904: The British Section* (London: The Royal Commission, 1906).

The Photographic Salon, the Linked Ring's break-away show of photography, ran from 1893 to 1909.³⁷ The 1895 pamphlet that accompanied the show offers a succinct manifesto:

The aim of the Salon is to exhibit only that description of pictorial photography in which there is distinct evidence of personal feeling and execution... As a mechanical craft photography still has its sphere of influence. On the pictorial side, chemistry, optics, and mechanism no longer predominate. They have become subservient and of secondary importance.³⁸

By 1899, the Photographic Salon was receiving a wide range of entries from different countries, and in particular, American photographers (some of whom would soon join the nascent Photo-Secession) received high praise.³⁹ The signature American show, *The New School of American Photography*, showcased 400 prints by sixteen different artists at the R.P.S. in 1900. Curated by F. Holland Day, it was not only a coming-out party but a statement of intent, as Day noted:

I believe that... we in America have, in the mass as well as the individual, taken a quicker, keener interest, and evinced a surer belief in the possibilities of a medium of artistic expression than has any other people.⁴⁰

The show was a pivotal moment that signaled the arrival of American fine art photography on a world stage, but the show was also notable for its absentees, in particular a thirty-six-year-old Link and member of The Camera Club of New York, Alfred Stieglitz.⁴¹

³⁷ Harker, *The Linked Ring*, 10.

³⁸ Walter L. Collis, "Pictorial Photographs: A Record of the Photographic Salon of 1895 in Twenty Plates Reproduced in Photogravure" (Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1895), <http://photoseed.com/collection/group/pictorial-photographs-a-record-of-the-photographic-salon-of-1895/>.

³⁹ Harker, *The Linked Ring*, 111.

⁴⁰ Johnston, "Pictorial Photography," 200.

⁴¹ Bochner mentions Stieglitz's disdain for Day's work and presents evidence that Stieglitz may have even attempted to derail the London show because its supposed sentimentality did not measure up to his

Like Holland Day, Stieglitz organized large exhibitions of photography in the hope of bringing greater exposure; both believed too in the superiority of American photography and sought to promote this above all else.⁴² In promoting and showcasing his “American School,” Stieglitz’s drive, perfectionism and unwavering instance on the highest standards stood him apart from others working towards the acceptance of photography as an art. Like his contemporary P.H. Emerson, he was often frustrated in his efforts to promote his own vision of photography, but crucially Stieglitz made the breakthrough in the 1910s, partially by the simple gesture of showing modernist photography and art alongside each other and partly because of his broader vision of the potential of photography. His Photo-Secession, named after the artistic avant-garde in Vienna’s “resistance to its own bourgeoisie culture,”⁴³ was formed in 1902 with the following statement:

The object of the Photo-Secession is: to advance photography as applied to pictorial expression; to draw together those Americans practicing or otherwise interested in the art, and to hold from time to time, at varying places, exhibitions not necessarily limited to the productions of the Photo-Secession or to American work.⁴⁴

Membership in the Photo-Secession was limited to Americans and contingent on strict standards laid down by Stieglitz and the group’s council. Stieglitz’s *Camera Work*, first published in 1903, set the standard for reproduction and artistic merit and brought to photography a set of high standards rarely matched in the US or beyond.

A great proselytizer, Stieglitz’s involvement in and ultimately his break from the Linked Ring and the Salon tradition is one of the defining moments in photography and

standards for American photography. Jay Bohner, *An American Lens: Scenes from Alfred Stieglitz’s New York Secession* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT, 2008), 34.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, x.

⁴⁴ “The Photo Secession,” *The American Amateur Photographer* XV, no. 11 (November 1903): 523.

can be seen in hindsight as the decisive break between the trajectories of photography in Britain and America.⁴⁵ The American Secession exhibited in shows successfully in Glasgow, Paris, London and Munich but after 1903 the secessionists largely withdrew from the international arena. By 1907, typified by Stieglitz's image *The Steerage*, American photography moved toward a realist straight photographic aesthetic, leaving the blurs of Emerson's naturalism and the painterly pictorialism of H.P. Robinson and his acolytes behind. The last secession show in London, held at the Newman Street Gallery in London in 1910, was well-received but was to prove the swan song for the secessionists in Britain, a "spasmodic dying effort," for the moderns, as J. Dudley Johnston put it.⁴⁶ Stieglitz's celebrated *International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography* in Buffalo, NY, in 1910, "the early coronation of photography as an art form in America," as Jay Bochner suggests, was only token internationalism, as three-quarters of the exhibitors hailed from the US. Coupled with the nation's burgeoning wealth, international standing and increasing population, the Buffalo show solidified the trend of American dominance in photography that was to continue well into the late twentieth century.⁴⁷

The beginnings of the split in direction that photography was to take in the US and Britain is typified by two articles from the November 1903 issue of *The American Amateur Photographer*. An announcement of the upcoming photography exhibition at the St. Louis World's Fair noted that Sir Benjamin Stone was taking his views of England

⁴⁵ For a thorough account of the schism, see Book IV of Robert M. Crunden, *American Salons: Encounters with European Modernism, 1885-1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 275–337.

⁴⁶ Johnston, "Pictorial Photography," 200.

⁴⁷ As shows with similarly skewed percentages such as George Eastman House's *Photography 63: an International Exhibition* held at the New York State Exposition demonstrated, for many years after "international" photography in American exhibits would not imply parity. Of the participants, 106 were from the USA, seven from England, seven from Japan, seven from Canada, six from Italy, three from Germany, and one each from Brazil, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Beaumont Newhall, ed., *Photography 63, an International Exhibition* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1963).

and “a collection of photographs from the various amateur photographic societies of England, Scotland and Ireland” to St. Louis “in the most elaborate and complete” exhibit of photography “ever made by a country at an Exposition.”⁴⁸ Stone “intended to outdo any and all nations represented at the World’s Fair” and their American cousins would “have to hustle if they do not want to be beaten on their own ground.”⁴⁹ Stone, who will be discussed more fully in a later chapter, was a Conservative MP whose artistic aspirations matched his party affiliation; his presence as the major British exhibitor consolidated the trend toward genteel amateurism that was soon to be entrenched in the upper echelons of British photographic practice. The American photographers most qualified to rise to Stone’s challenge were, surprisingly, not to exhibit at the fair. *The American Amateur Photographer* reported that “the council [of the Photo Secession] did not see its way to comply with the request of the Royal Society of London to contribute to its jubilee representative loan collection.”⁵⁰ The exhibition’s entry rules were too rigid and the secessionists too unbending to come to an agreement, thus few of the best American photographers were represented. Symbolically, however, the secessionists had also moved on whereas the elite British photographers sleepwalked toward obscurity and irrelevance.

As members of Stieglitz’s circle were to continue to push the potential of photographic modernism, Britain’s photographic artists largely retreated into painterly pictorialism. By 1909, as Bochner notes, “in the various quarters of photography, among pictorialists, British Links, secessionists and others, there was fatigue, stagnation, and a

⁴⁸ “The Photographic Exhibit at the St. Louis World’s Fair,” *The American Amateur Photographer* XV, no. 11 (November 1903): 494.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ “The Photo Secession.”

lack of new direction.”⁵¹ The ossification had begun, as is clear from the 1953 history of the R.P.S., which presents the break-off of the secession movements as a small anomaly in the otherwise unbroken history of the society and the salons:

Gradually most of those who had seceded came back, a number of them exhibiting at both shows. The exhibitions of the Society included some extraordinarily fine work (though, of course, they covered other fields than the pictorial) and the only difference between the two usually concurrent shows was that the Salon was perhaps the more daring and adventurous.⁵²

The prodigal British Links returned to the R.P.S.; the more daring American realist photographers had taken their ball and gone home, marking a decisive split in attitudes toward what constituted cutting-edge photography. While “serious” photographers in the US still remained a small minority, the case for photography as art had been made and codified by luminaries like Stieglitz and Paul Strand, and Britain had missed the boat. Always a minority artistic pursuit until the 1960s in the US, there was nonetheless an active independent, experimental current that operated in tandem with other vanguard art movements from the 1910s. While some British artists like Paul Nash would dabble in photography (and would later be resurrected as proof of British photography’s forgotten heritage), such attempts would nearly always be an experimental adjunct to painting or leisure-time affairs for the artist. Unlike the US where college courses in fine art photography slowly grew to prominence in the 1940s and 1950s, Britain would only belatedly catch up in the 1970s.⁵³

In an interesting coda to the demise of the Links and Secession in Britain, fragments of the transatlanticism of the Linked Ring could be found in the figure of Alvin

⁵¹ Bochner, *An American Lens*, 37.

⁵² Cooper, “One Hundred Years of the Royal Photographic Society,” 15.

⁵³ For a detailed discussion of the development of British art schools and design vis-à-vis American influence, see Alex Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things: The Development of a Postmodern Sensibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Langdon Coburn. A founder member of the Photo-Secession and an avowed Anglophile, Coburn had exhibited his photographs at the R.P.S. in London in 1900 at age eighteen and became an active member of the Royal Society. Once a leading member of the secession, Coburn was a well-known figure in Britain, especially as he resided there off-and-on between 1905 and 1908, settling permanently in 1912.⁵⁴ By the time he moved, he was still active in the photographic world, but wound down his involvement after 1915. He became a British subject in 1932 and thereafter pursued the study of freemasonry and druidic mysticism from his homes in the Welsh towns of Harlech and Rhos-on-Sea. His presence, if not his photographic output (dwindling in the 1920s and virtually nil by 1930, by which point he had destroyed many of his negatives and donated what remained to the R.P.S.), preserved links between British and American photography. By the time of his last solo exhibition in Colwyn Bay library in 1966 he was a remote figure in British photographic life.⁵⁵ Like his literary compatriots, Henry James and T.S. Eliot, Coburn would find enough of an affinity with British culture to want to stay there permanently; unlike the writers, his permanent emigration to Britain seems to have been motivated by a desire to get away from photography rather than move to the heart of the scene.⁵⁶

THE WILDERNESS YEARS—THE 1920S INTO THE 1940S

The connection with the American avant-garde was now severed through the clubs but kept alive through individual photographers. The example of Emil Otto Hoppé,

⁵⁴ “Alvin Langdon Coburn: An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center,” *Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center*, 2000, <http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/findingaid.cfm?eadid=00260>.

⁵⁵ “National Library of Wales: Alvin Langdon Coburn Papers,” *National Library of Wales*, 2013, http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/anw/get_collection.php?inst_id=1&coll_id=20084&expand=.

⁵⁶ In 1961, *Photography* republished some of Coburn’s photographs with the tagline “Alvin Langdon Coburn: A Name Remembered.” Alvin Langdon Coburn, “Alvin Langdon Coburn,” *Photography* XVI, no. 10 (October 1961): 32–43.

a German-born Briton who had ties to the Linked Ring and was a member of the R.P.S., demonstrates how forward-thinking photographers in Britain continued to be influenced by American photography. Hoppé, an immensely successful portrait photographer, shuttled back and forth across the Atlantic from 1907 through the 1940s for his trade. Portrait photographs could be commissioned and sold for higher prices and in higher quantities in America (effectively doubling his clientele) and it was here he could keep abreast of the “more developed attitudes” to photography within the US, a situation that Cecil Beaton also found himself in.⁵⁷ Hoppé was instrumental in continuing the London Salon in 1910, the successor to the Linked Ring Salon, although it progressed along more generally staid lines. Hoppé’s work was perhaps better received across the Atlantic than at home: he established a studio in New York in 1919, and exhibited at Knoedler’s Gallery on Fifth Avenue in New York in 1920⁵⁸ and the Wannamaker Gallery in 1921.⁵⁹ In 1922, Hoppé exhibited his American and English work in a comparative context at London’s Groupil Gallery:

The "American types" were juxtaposed against a gallery of "human documents" made in England: a London charwoman, labourers, street vendors, a cowhand, and so on. Novelist John Galsworthy, who wrote the Foreword to the show's catalogue, contrasted the American and British types as exemplars of the "national psychology" of their respective countries.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ David Mellor, *Modern British Photography, 1919-1939* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980), 8.

⁵⁸ “E.O. Hoppe to Exhibit: English Artist Will Show His Portraits and Quaint Dolls,” *New York Times*, November 30, 1920, 10, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/98082650/citation/14235E321974F031D6/1?accountid=7118>.

⁵⁹ Terence Pepper, “Chronology,” *E.O. Hoppé’s Estate Collection*, 2013, <http://www.eohoppe.com/romanticamerica.html>.

⁶⁰ Mick Gidley, “Silence, Grandeur: Emil Otto Hoppé’s Popular American Landscapes,” 1995, http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/20040/school_of_english?file=hoppe.

Off the back of his familiarity with America, Hoppé was commissioned by German book publisher Ernst Wasmuth to produce an illustrated book of American views, entitled *Romantic America* published in 1926 in the US and in 1927 in Germany.⁶¹ Few British photographers had the means to work beyond the commercial obligations of making a living through portraiture and Hoppé, like Beaton, would develop both artistically and financially a sometime expatriate in 1920s and 1930s New York.

For the minority of fine art photographers in Britain, then, the US had become, by the 1920s, *the* place where a budding photographer could ply his or her trade and pick up on the latest artistic trends; one did not necessarily have to, as Hoppé and Beaton had done, live in the US to experience the transatlantic flow of ideas. As David Mellor recognizes, American cultural influence at the time was “pervasive at all levels,” and he notes that “an important colony of American photographers, including Francis Bruguière, Curtis Moffatt, Paul Outerbridge and Francis Feist were intermittently in London at this time,”⁶² a smaller-scale and more footloose “Lost Generation” of American photographers. The few prominent modernist British photographers like Hoppé after the First World War kept in tune with commercial and aesthetic developments but the few voices in the wilderness, no matter how cogent, were lost when they tried to influence the broader photographic community. Ward Muir, journalist and sometime contributor to Stieglitz’s *Camera Work*, attempted to redress the balance with his 1919 show *The Fact of Beauty*. Aimed at wresting the conversation away from the dominant soft-focus to more realist approaches, Muir’s work displayed the influence of Paul Strand and Moholy-Nagy, and he argued vociferously for a reform of photography along straight

⁶¹ “Romantic America,” *E.O. Hoppé’s Estate Collection*, 2013, <http://www.eohoppe.com/romanticamerica.html>. He would later produce *Picturesque Great Britain* in the same series in 1927.

⁶² Mellor, *Modern British Photography, 1919-1939*, 6.

photographic lines.⁶³ As Mellor mentions, however, Muir's attempt got nowhere⁶⁴ because Britain "lacked the context of a vanguardist climate" that was to be found among his art-world compatriots in New York."⁶⁵ While Americans like Man Ray, Edward Weston and the f/64 group and their equivalents in Germany and Eastern Europe were taking photography in new, experimental directions, the general reaction to abstract modernism and straight realism in British photography can be summed up by remarks J. Dudley Johnston,⁶⁶ president of the R.P.S., made in 1939 assessing postwar developments in artistic photography and experimentation:

Looking back on this time it is now quite evident that all the fuss arose from an insignificant but noisy minority. The great bulk of pictorial photographers pursued their way unperturbed by the assurances they were anachronistic survivals from a dark age... it is they who continue to survive and the revolutionaries who are dead... the vogue of "new angle" photography which, being a new stunt, naturally received the encouragement of the lay press. These things were quite amusing and harmless, and most of us merely smiled when they were claimed to be the latest and best manifestations of pictorial photography... these things, like so many "isms," have quickly faded into the background.⁶⁷

Such pronouncements from the catbird seat of British photography characterized the philistinism and backwardness that was to stifle experimentation in British photography and maintain a climate hostile to anything beyond pictorialism well into the 1960s.

⁶³ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁴ While Muir died in the 1930s, Hoppé remained active in the British photographic world until his retirement in 1954 and assisted with Helmut Gernsheim's Combined Societies exhibitions.

⁶⁵ Mellor, *Modern British Photography, 1919-1939*, 6.

⁶⁶ Johnston was to build up an impressive collection of photographs as curator at the R.P.S. from 1924 onwards, and was principally responsible for the society acquiring a wide range of images from likes of Alfred Langdon Coburn, H.P. Robinson and Julia Margaret Cameron. A. D. Coleman, "Who Was J. Dudley Johnston? (2)," *Photocritic International: A.D. Coleman on Photography and New Technology*, October 3, 2010, <http://www.nearbycafe.com/artandphoto/photocritic/2010/10/03/who-was-j-dudley-johnston-2/>.

⁶⁷ In the same article, Johnston called Albert Renger-Patzsch's work "soulless." Johnston, "Pictorial Photography," 201.

“BRITISH” PHOTOGRAPHY AND INTERNATIONAL PICTORIALISM

The flow of ideas from the US was matched in the 1930s by the flow of Europeans coming into Britain who sought their fortunes as photographers. The most successful and accomplished photographers in Britain from the 1930s to the early 1950s included Kurt Hübschmann (Kurt Hutton), Hermann Wilhelm Brandt (Bill Brandt), who, along with Gernsheim would escape Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Hutton and Brandt followed in the footsteps of Hoppé who arrived in the 1900s, Ida Karamian (Ida Kar), Nachum Gidalewitsch (Tim Gidal), Lucia Moholy, Felix Man and Stefan Lorant. Most plied a trade in photojournalism (by the 1930s the preeminent form of photography in Britain) or publishing, such as Andor Kraszna-Krauss. Although many immigrants became naturalized British citizens and anglicized their names, they brought with them from Germany, Hungary, Russia and Czechoslovakia advanced techniques and avant-garde ideas about photography that informed their practice. While photography had become a key component in continental European avante-garde art and design movements in the 1920s and 1930s, especially with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Bauhaus in Germany and Constructivism in the USSR, British photographic art largely lagged behind continental Europe. In particular, photography was not taught as practice in British art schools; experimentation came in the filigree of Angus McBean’s playful theatrical portraits and Cecil Beaton’s fashion photography rather than at the level of technique.

Some refugees like Stefan Lorant only intended to stay for a brief period but soon found support and economic opportunity among Britain’s community of Hungarian and German exiles.⁶⁸ Lorant’s founding of *Lilliput* in 1937 and later role as founding editor of

⁶⁸ Luce visited Lorant in 1936 when scouting new ideas for an illustrated magazine. Hallett notes that *Picture Post*, a magazine which Lorant had a direct hand in, took only ten issues to reach a million sales

Picture Post in 1938 (based on his design work for the illustrated photographic weekly *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*, the model for *Life* and *Look*)⁶⁹ reshaped photojournalism in Britain and provided work for the émigrés who turned their the small, speedy imported miniature cameras on British society. Lorant would in turn nurture native photographic and editorial talents like Bert Hardy and Tom Hopkinson, and although he left for the US in 1940 (publishing a 160-page *Picture Post* special entitled *The United States* before departing),⁷⁰ Lorant left an indelible impression on British press photography and photographic magazines more generally. A feature in *Picture Post* became the gold standard to which British photographers aspired, and the magazine cemented photojournalism's place as the preeminent photographic form in Britain.

By the 1940s, *Picture Post* stood at one pole of photographic life in Britain and the R.P.S. at another. The main core of what was thought of as artistic photography in Great Britain well into the 1950s was an international brand of pictorialism that had absorbed technological advances but was aesthetically backward.⁷¹ International salons of photography and annual photography competitions held across Europe, the USA and the British Commonwealth fostered the notion—to pictorialism's adherents—that they were engaged in preserving and promoting the most technologically and artistically perfect photography on an international stage.⁷² In issues of *Amateur Photographer* and their international equivalents, one could find the same nudes in repose, sunsets, bucolic rural

compared to *Life*'s sixteen issues. Michael Hallett, *Stefan Lorant: Godfather of Photojournalism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 52.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁷¹ In some cases proudly so, as the *Amateur Photographer* revealed: "In the first issue of the *Amateur Photographer*, nearly fifty-two years ago, the Editor made it plain that it would devote itself to the advancement of pictorial photography, a policy which it has assiduously followed ever since." J. Dudley Johnston, "Sixty Years of Pictorial Photography," *The Amateur Photographer* XCVI, no. 3000 (May 8, 1946): 308–9.

⁷² "The 31st Pittsburgh Salon of Photography," *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4368 (January 21, 1944): 26.

scenes, allegorical nods to “Spring,” “Whimsy,” and sub-Julia Margaret Cameron-like figures in costume. Tawdry and boring as these images were, the links between Camera Clubs maintained a transatlantic and trans-European image world, even if it was one that reinforced the stuffy, safe amateurism of camera clubs. The R.P.S. claimed to encompass a broad range of photographic ideas; in reality, its “boy’s club” mentality, concentration on photography for serious amateurs, general suspicion of the avant-garde, fellowship structure that encouraged uniformity and praised mastery of technique over experimentation, and its leadership, populated by characters of the Colonel Blimp variety, stymied diversity and encouraged bland mediocrity. Photographers could, of course, not bother joining the R.P.S., but its position as gate-keeper and taste-maker throughout the beginning and middle of the twentieth century in British photography (much more so than its more decentralized equivalents in the US) made it an important and almost unavoidable institution. Whereas in Germany and the USA photography was beginning to find its place in the art world and the academy (via the Bauhaus and the New Bauhaus in the US, for example), fine art photographers in Britain operating outside of the accepted pictorialist traditions had few opportunities to learn about new techniques in photography. Even if a Rayograph or abstract photograph of nature by Hans Hammarskjöld or Aaron Siskind made it into print in a British magazine, it was generally because the editors admired their technical prowess rather than the lyrical qualities of an image.

An important way that photographic exchange between the US and Britain was maintained was through membership in a variety of national photographic societies which acted as the umbrella organizations for the local clubs. These organizations organized exhibitions and print exchanges, published newsletters, conferred awards that attested to an individual’s photographic prowess, and generally kept communication

between geographically disparate groups alive. A look at the R.P.S. membership as of 31 December 1952 confirms this internationalism and signals the continued interchange between the US and Great Britain: 29% of the Society's membership came from overseas, with members from the USA (540) comprising by far the largest category of these, forming 9.1% of the total membership.⁷³ By dint of scale and the abundance of resources, coupled with an increasing emanation of American cultural products to Europe, America became dominant in shaping the pictorialist conversation, moribund as it may have been. In turn, submitting to salons and societies in the US was particularly attractive to British photographers for a number of reasons: members were Anglophone, the prize money for winning photographs was high and like most of their compatriots they were intrigued by the culture of their ally that was assuming the mantle of world leadership.

OVERPAID, OVER-OUTFITTED AND OVER HERE: AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY IN WARTIME BRITAIN

Photographers both amateur and professional in Great Britain felt the effects of total war across the panoply of photographic practice. When hostilities commenced, photographic supplies were needed more urgently for the war effort and were thus rationed for the civilian population, as was the paper that photographic journals and magazines were printed on. International communications were disrupted: correspondence and printed material had to pass through the censor and the importation of international photographic magazines "almost ceased during the war."⁷⁴ Travel became more daunting for civilians, and contact, especially with continental practitioners

⁷³ Cooper, "One Hundred Years of the Royal Photographic Society," 30. The next largest overseas memberships were India (196); Canada (150); Australia (145) and South Africa (145).

⁷⁴ "Worth Noting," *The Amateur Photographer*, April 17, 1946.

and equipment manufacturers, slowed or ceased completely.⁷⁵ Domestically, the Control of Photography Orders placed restrictions on where photographers could take pictures as military installations were set up and expanded across the country.⁷⁶ If doors were closing on the domestic front, however, the war opened up other possibilities for photographers.⁷⁷

While a dangerous pursuit, the conflict provided boon times for independent photojournalists shooting for *Life* and *Picture Post*: many photographers like George Rodger, Robert Capa and David Douglas Duncan made their careers on the battlefields of Europe and Asia.⁷⁸ As Patricia Vettel-Becker has noted, faster, more portable cameras captured action rapidly and dramatically, and these coupled with the picture magazines combined to make minor celebrities of the dashing, daring war correspondents shooting the boys shooting at the enemies.⁷⁹ From reconnaissance, to propaganda, to photographs of troops for morale-boosting publications, many soldiers and civilians found themselves picking up a camera in service of their country. Helmut Gernsheim's employment with the Warburg Institute and the National Buildings Record, a wartime agency set up in 1941 to document British buildings in response to Nazi strategic bombing, is just one

⁷⁵ Exports of British photographic materials to the commonwealth also suffered: "What with permits from controls, licences to export, delays at ports, it has taken months to get away absolutely vital materials." "Ex Cathedra," July 27, 1945.

⁷⁶ These were revoked in June 1945. "Stop Press," *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4442 (June 22, 1945): 208.

⁷⁷ The R.P.S. continued to hold shows throughout the Second World War, although perhaps out of duty rather than a flurry of activity. British sculptors, artists and filmmakers would return home to grapple with the trauma of war and the deprivations of austerity within their works, but photographers by and large viewed the purpose of their work as a balm. "War is corrosive and a destructive influence that can in no wise be ignored," remarked the *British Journal of Photography* in its review of the 1945 *American Annual of Photography*, but "this reflection should make us welcome all the more heartily the escape which the pictures and text in this volume offer us from war and thoughts of war." New Books: The American Annual of Photography, 1945," *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4421 (January 25, 1945): 40.

⁷⁸ As Susan D. Moeller notes, thirty-seven war correspondents lost their lives covering the war: "the casualty rate for civilian correspondents, covering the war was four times greater than that for soldiers fighting the war." in Patricia Vettel-Becker, *Shooting from the Hip: Photography, Masculinity, and Postwar America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 33.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 33–34.

example of the myriad ways photographs were used to support the war effort. Some of those pressed into service such as Australian Norman Hall would later become photographic professionals, a legacy continued well into the post-war era of National Service in the 1950s where a young David Hurn was inspired to take up photography.⁸⁰ Importantly, war service opened up possibilities after the war for extant photographers who were called on to use a camera in the Army, Navy or Royal Air Force, but the war would also change the way British photographers interacted with their American compatriots.

The most visible manifestation of American power in wartime Britain was the large numbers of troops stationed in Britain in preparation for the Normandy landings in 1944. While their presence evoked the usual gamut of emotions from gratitude and curiosity to suspicion and outright hostility (Britain was now an “Occupied Territory,” George Orwell grumbled),⁸¹ American photographers were largely warmly received in British photographic circles as kindred spirits. For their part, the British photographic press reported eagerly on the overseas visitors’ use of photography, noting GIs taking pictures of the statue of Abraham Lincoln in Westminster,⁸² trying to obtain a miniature camera,⁸³ getting a portrait done to send home,⁸⁴ or in striking up conversations with local photographers, who were excited and intrigued by the charming and exotic “Lootenants” patronizing their studios.⁸⁵ The generous foreigners famously brought gum,

⁸⁰ Hurn, David and Harrison, Graham, “David Hurn,” *Photo Histories*, 2010, <http://www.photohistories.com/interviews/56/david-hurn?pg=all>.

⁸¹ George Orwell, “As I Please,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Ian Angus (Boston: David R. Godine, 2000), 54.

⁸² “Through American Eyes,” *The Amateur Photographer* XCV, no. 4444 (July 4, 1945): 443.

⁸³ Hilda Newby, “Let Us Therefore Wallow,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4371 (February 11, 1944): 49.

⁸⁴ “Unclaimed Portraits,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4385 (May 19, 1944): 178.

⁸⁵ The Yarnier, “Americans,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4380 (April 14, 1944): 133.

These young soldiers would later return to Britain with their GI brides and a selection of portraits from US

chocolate and nylons to woo the local populations, but their novel camera technology whose importation had been interrupted also caused a stir among a British photographic public feeling the material effects of total war.

“Though comparisons may be odious,” intoned a 1945 *British Journal of Photography* editorial, “it is inevitable that in very many fields comparisons will be made between ourselves and the United States.”⁸⁶ As a publication whose audience included a large number of technicians and professional photographers as well as interested amateurs, the *BJP* was an enthusiastic cheerleader for British industry. During the war the photographic press had suffered under paper and ink rationing but optimism abounded that the coming abundance would eliminate the need to explain poor prints as “a bit war-time.”⁸⁷ Shortages at home were necessary sacrifices, however, in a global conflict of this magnitude. The nationalist discourse of war trickled into the otherwise genteel photographic magazines. A technological brand of patriotism reflected the general sense that the war was being won by 1945, and British photographic manufacturers were keen to commercialize the advances made during the war and bring improved consumer goods to a public who had seen rationing affect almost every aspect of life. Ilford Ltd. reminded their customers that their products were “on war service”⁸⁸ and that “1,000,000 pictures” had assisted General Montgomery in his bid to rid Europe of the Nazis.⁸⁹ Such advertisements coupled up-to-date photography from the Western front with a suggestion that the materiel that won the war would soon be winning over the

studios which had an “unmistakable slickness” to them compared to the portraits taken in Britain; a useful and revealing description from professional portraitists. John Blaxland, “Confessions and Suggestions,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIII, no. 4503 (August 23, 1946): 302.

⁸⁶ “Ex Cathedra,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4429 (March 23, 1945): 133.

⁸⁷ The Yarner, “This and That,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4375 (March 10, 1944): 85.

⁸⁸ “Ilford Film on War Service,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4375 (March 10, 1944): ii.

⁸⁹ Ilford Ltd, “1,000,000 Pictures Taken for Monty’s New Drive,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4429 (March 23, 1945): ii.

consumer. Advertisements by Ross lenses depicted Allied liberators in French streets “at present, focused on victory”⁹⁰ and promised to share with the masses the “Supremacy of British Scientific Achievements” that were to be “Reflected in Post-War lenses.”⁹¹ Optimistic and vaguely jingoistic though these pronouncements were, for British manufacturers they attempted to counteract a deep sense of unease about the superiority of American (the Speed Graphic was coveted in particular), German, and later, Japanese manufacturing and technology. German cameras and film (particularly the Rolleiflex, Leica and Contax) had made inroads into the British market by the time war broke out and American technology, most apparent through Kodak’s presence,⁹² was widely perceived to be superior to domestic equivalents,⁹³ a fact highlighted by the introduction of Polaroid’s Land Camera in 1947 that caused a stir in the British press.⁹⁴ A letter to the *BJP*, mused that when Britons encountered the “new American model body release flash-synchronized optical viewfinder Brownie” it would be less a case of “can Britain make it?” and more “can Britain take it?”⁹⁵ What made matters worse was that an embargo on British goods needed for relief (and to be sold to pay off war debts) meant that even after the war simple commodities like flash bulbs were scarce. “As a refreshing trip into dreamland, and to sustain an unsupported bout of wishful thinking,” counseled a *BJP*

⁹⁰ “Ross Lenses: At Present, Focused on Victory!,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4403 (September 22, 1944): iii.

⁹¹ “The Supremacy of British Scientific Achievements Will Be Reflected in Post-War Lenses by Ross,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4442 (June 22, 1945): iv.

⁹² During the war, Kodak’s British output was aided by supplies from the US. “Imported Films,” *The Amateur Photographer* XCVI, no. 3010 (July 17, 1946): 477.

⁹³ Kodak used pictures from the international salons to illustrate their advertisements, noting that “It is because ‘Kodak’ printing papers satisfy such requirements that the photographer, a well-known exhibitor whose work is familiar in salons in this country and America, always uses ‘Kodak’ bromide paper...” Kodak Limited, “‘Kodak’ Papers,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4432 (April 13, 1945): iii. It is noteworthy that a salon exhibitor was chosen as the apogee of photographic talent.

⁹⁴ “The New One-Minute Camera,” *The Amateur Photographer* XCVII, no. 3044 (March 12, 1947): 149. See also Williams and Bright, *How We Are: Photographing Britain : From the 1840s to the Present*, 205.

⁹⁵ B.A. Colgan, “Britain Can Make It,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIII, no. 4495 (June 28, 1946): 234.

contributor, “there is nothing so invigorating these days as the perusal of a batch of American photographic magazines.”⁹⁶ By 1947, the *BJP* was ready to acknowledge that “there is no country in the world where progress in every branch of photography has been more rapid, or where its practitioners have shown more drive and originality... there is, therefore every reason why we, in this country, should know as much as we can, and follow as closely as possible, the work of our opposite numbers in the United States.”⁹⁷

THE IMAGE OF AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY IN POSTWAR BRITAIN

The influx of American military personnel to Britain and ultimately the European continent in the 1940s was part of a broader flow of money, cultural and social ideas, mass media products, consumer goods, technology, and political and economic models to Britain. What had been a trickle since the late 1800s waxed to a steady stream in the 1920s and finally became a deluge in the 1940s with the onset of war, codified with the Lend-Lease⁹⁸ program and in the provisions of the European Recovery Act, more popularly known as the Marshall Plan. Almost every aspect of European life was touched by American culture from the early decades of the twentieth century onward.⁹⁹ This was manifest most plainly in the visual arts in the cinema, where, as a 1927 *Daily Express* editorial noted, the pervasive influence of American movies was such that “the bulk of picturegoers are Americanised to an extent that makes them regard the British film as a

⁹⁶ Fotos, “In My Notebook,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIII, no. 4514 (November 8, 1946): 402.

⁹⁷ “Ex Cathedra- American Photography,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIV, no. 4544 (June 20, 1947): 179.

⁹⁸ The adoption of the British model of postal portfolios by several American camera clubs was described, however jokingly, as “a nice little bit of reverse Lend-Lease.” “America Copies Britain,” *The Amateur Photographer* XCV, no. 2967 (September 19, 1945): 630.

⁹⁹ For a comprehensive look at early consumerism, see Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*.

foreign film.”¹⁰⁰ The 1948 implementation of the Marshall Plan, while opening the floodgates to American cultural influence institutionally, served as a confirmation of an already widely-felt American presence. In return the US government expected “expressions of thanks and an eagerness to be Americanized” as a result of aid,¹⁰¹ according to Richard Pells. The assumption underlying such aid was “that Western Europeans were incipient Americans who, given the proper tools and instructions, would turn out to be (in line with the Marshall Plan’s implied promise) “just like us.”¹⁰² Certainly, the US government, under the auspices of the State Department and the Economic Cooperation Administration, promoted American cultural norms just as much as economic norms,¹⁰³ the most visible of which were the America Houses in West Germany whose equivalent in Britain was the American Embassy, which held cultural events and occasional (often didactic) displays of photographs.¹⁰⁴ It is worth reiterating, however, that as much as American culture was a one-way flow from the US in the 1940s and 1950s, in the realm of fine art photography, American influence was almost always welcomed and actively courted as the hope was that the American example would stimulate British interest in photography at the institutional level.

“The United States has provided us with plenty of excellent examples of how to do things during the war and since VE day,” a *BJP* editorial commented, “the great majority of us are only too keen to emulate the useful lessons we have learned, only too

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Walker, *Cultural Offensive*, 8.

¹⁰¹ Pells, *Not like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II*, 52.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰³ For a description of cultural efforts allied to the Marshall Plan designed to thwart Communism in France, see Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 25.

¹⁰⁴ Pells, *Not like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II*, 50.

keen to put our country where we feel the genius of its people needs to be.”¹⁰⁵ The immediate lessons that the British wanted to learn was how to stimulate interest and technological growth in photography to match US standards. The image of American abundance projected to Britain was as seductive in the classifieds of camera magazines as in Hollywood movies. The reality often chafed, as a disappointed Edward Richardson found out on a trip to the US. “You can get more in America than you can here,” he reported, “but you can’t get everything. That dream of a paradise across the Atlantic is partly wish-fulfillment, supported by clever advertising pictures and the fantasy world of the cinema.”¹⁰⁶ Even if a visit to the US would disabuse the notion of a “land of plenty,” the image of abundance persisted unabated. Visits to the US were also reinstated on a more formal basis. Immediately after the war had ended, trade and information links rebounded. R.N. Haile, president of the Institute of British photographers, the nation’s most prominent professional photographers’ association, seized the opportunity to visit the US and Canada. The purpose of Haile’s visit was, according to the *BJP*:

[to] secure information regarding the most recent uses of photography in America, particularly in connection with the stimulation of export trade; to gather information regarding the current practice and processes to enable the I.B.P. to give the best guidance to professional photographers in this country; to establish close links with photographic organizations and leading photographers in the U.S.A. and Canada, and, possibly most important of all, to enable the photographic profession to play its full part in ensuring the closest friendship and cooperation with the USA, as one of the vital factors in world reconstruction on a truly democratic basis.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ “Ex Cathedra,” July 27, 1945.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Richardson, “America—Land of Plenty?,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIV, no. 4540 (May 23, 1947): 189.

¹⁰⁷ “I.B.P. President Visiting USA,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCII, no. 4454 (September 14, 1945): 304. The aim of the visit was couched in the high moral sentiment of the immediate post-war period: “To do all in our power to use and to ensure the use of photography to improve relations between man and man, nation and nation, race and race.”

Such visits had been conducted informally, but the reconfiguration of global influence in the postwar period made them increasingly important to photography professionals; they were announced with much fanfare and their results pored over and parsed in talks up and down Great Britain.

To an avid amateur or up-to-date professional photographer in Britain, American photography consisted of advanced examples of an international pictorial photography, “slick” glamour pictures¹⁰⁸ that over-used photo-flash,¹⁰⁹ and the magazine photography found in *Life*, *Look* and other popular periodicals.¹¹⁰ International salons of pictorial photography still continued with restraints during the war (prints were shipped internationally for exhibitions and photographers did not have to travel to exhibit) and happily, as G. Turner would have it, the war “failed to quench” the enthusiasm for such shows.¹¹¹ Despite restrictions, American photographic publications did still trickle into Britain via distributors such as the Focal Press, and enterprising small-time importers who would post classified advertisements in the back of photographic magazines. American photographic manuals and annuals were particularly coveted both during and after the war. *The U.S. Camera Annual, 1949*, which included photographs by Ansel

¹⁰⁸ The faintly derogatory term “slick” was used often to describe American photography. “Lessons in Glamourizing,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4596 (July 9, 1948): 282. Paradoxically for a profession where the quality of visual reproduction was paramount, professional British photographers who encountered commercial American work generally surmised that “presentation” and “display” trumped quality. One visitor to the US in 1948 found that where photography was displayed “the work was average but the premises magnificent and simply oozing prosperity.” “Society Proceedings: Photography in America,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4613 (October 15, 1948): 426–27.

¹⁰⁹ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, January 1, 1946, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹¹⁰ *Life*’s international clout meant that it could exert a good degree of influence on British magazines. In 1944, *Life* requested that its British bureau publish the names of photographers on images, something common in US press culture but not in Britain where the attribution went to the magazine. Such a practice, insisted *Life*’s editors made the British photographers seem like “menials,” a position with which Tom Hopkinson of *Picture Post* vehemently disagreed. “Photographers’ Credit Lines,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4376 (March 24, 1944): 102.

¹¹¹ G. Turner, “Suggestions for Modernising International Exhibitions,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCI, no. 4409 (November 3, 1944): 389.

Adams, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Gijon Mili and Edward Weston, was labeled “outstanding” and the reviewer lamented the fact that the book was only available from the distributors in limited quantities.¹¹² The healthy desire for American photography books is evident in the distribution of an American photographic book list by the Fountain Press, specialist photographic publishers who also imported American books and magazines for interested parties. The Fountain Press would often reprint American books for the domestic market, and by acting as agents they also capitalized on the broader interest from the latest in American photography.¹¹³

The Focal Press’ gallery was also a key venue for American photography in the postwar years. Outside the salons, photographic exhibitions were generally limited to those displayed in the showrooms of photographic manufacturers and retailers such as the Kodak Gallery on London’s Regent Street and the Ilford Gallery, High Holborn.¹¹⁴ London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts, founded in 1946, hosted photographic exhibitions sporadically but few galleries would dedicate much time or space to fine art photography. Exhibitions were often a mix of technical photography and documentary as well as fine art photography. *Pictures of the American Scene*, an exhibition of photographers from Standard Oil under the direction of Roy Stryker, was displayed in

¹¹² “New Books: US Camera Annual 1949,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCVI, no. 4637 (April 15, 1949): 175–76. The readership for American yearbooks was significant in photographic terms but would not have run beyond the low thousands. The market was cornered domestically by *The British Journal of Photography Annual*; long the Christmas bestseller among photography books.

¹¹³ “Fountain Press American Photographic Book List,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCVII, no. 4684 (March 31, 1950): 157. Importing American Magazines was a lucrative business, as the presence of several advertisements in the back of photographic magazines by different importers suggests.

¹¹⁴ Occasionally other galleries would serve as venues. The British Council’s *Photography Aids Export* exhibition was staged at the Alpine Gallery, an adjunct of the Alpine Club, Britain’s oldest mountaineering society. “News and Notes,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIV, no. 4555 (September 5, 1947): 327. More progressive galleries would also occasionally show photographic exhibitions, such as the exhibition of Ida Kar’s portraits of artists at the Whitechapel Gallery. Ida Kar and Colin MacInnes, *Ida Kar: An Exhibition of Portraits of Artists and Writers in Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union* (London: The Gallery, 1960).

December 1947 in the Focal Press Gallery and there continued a monthly exhibition of American work that were looked at with “interest and pleasure.”¹¹⁵ A show of Ansel Adams’ work in March 1948 was particularly well received,¹¹⁶ most probably because of the success of his manuals.¹¹⁷ Small as these flowerings of American work may have been, they sustained links between photographers and showcased American work to British photographers. At a time of austerity and shortages, images of American landscape, industry and abundance in photographic form stood in stark contrast to the British situation.

HELMUT GERNSHEIM: A LIVELY INTEREST IN BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHY

Charles Gibbs-Smith in his introduction to *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography* in 1951 indicates the importance of Gernsheim to British photographic history and provides a succinct introduction to the man behind the collection which formed the basis of the show:

Mr. Gernsheim came to this country from the Continent and has made his permanent home here. He had always taken a lively interest in the history of British photography, but only when he made England the land of his adoption did he pay us the unusual compliment of studying the subject to such effect that, in some six short years, he has accumulated the most thoroughly representative collection in existence.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ “Pictures of the American Scene,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIV, no. 4567 (December 12, 1947): 461–62.

¹¹⁶ “Contemporary American Photographers,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4583 (March 19, 1948): 114.

¹¹⁷ The Adams quote used is now widely reproduced: “Photography is more than a medium for factual communication of ideas. It is a creative art.” “Ex Cathedra: A Creative Art?,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4595 (June 11, 1948): 231. Adams’ photographic manuals were highly valued in Britain; the combination of Adams’ creative qualities, his technical expertise and the grandeur of his landscapes was a winning combination. “New Books: Camera and Lens,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4596 (June 18, 1948): 246.

¹¹⁸ Helmut Gernsheim, *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography*. (London: Phaidon Press, 1951), 6.

Gibbs-Smith's remarks cast Gernsheim as an emissary, dispatched to Britain to make a friendly raid on British sensibilities, an assessment not too far from the truth. By his industry and involvement at many different levels of British photography, Gernsheim made a lasting contribution to reform in his adopted home. Born in Munich in 1913, Gernsheim studied photography at the renowned Bavarian State School for Photography in Munich from 1934 to June 1936.¹¹⁹ In October 1937, he was called to register for the German army, an event which rapidly set in motion his departure.¹²⁰ Gernsheim's Jewish heritage and hatred of the Nazi regime made his mind up for him, and a visit to London arranged under the auspices of photographing works of art at the National Gallery became his ticket out. The choice of London was purposeful: he had lived with his brother there from 1933-1934 and had fallen in love with the city.¹²¹ His years in London before the war signaled his prodigious activity: he began working as a freelance photographer, exhibited his work, met Alison Eames who would become his wife and partner in photographic research, and began to ensconce himself in the world of British photography.¹²² Gernsheim's liminal nationality (he was classified as a "friendly enemy alien" throughout the war)¹²³ and ethnic identity gave him a unique perspective from which to survey British photography. As Alison Nordstrom has observed, his connection to Britain was "a simple acquiescence to the circumstances of where a political refugee happened to find himself."¹²⁴ Attached to his adopted homeland as he was, he was displaced and stateless, ferried to Australia for over a year from 1940-1941 by the British

¹¹⁹ Hill and Cooper, "Helmut Gernsheim," 161.

¹²⁰ Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 17.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²² Hill and Cooper, "Helmut Gernsheim," 165.

¹²³ Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 17.

¹²⁴ Alison Nordstrom, "Ideas in the Things: The Gernsheim Collection and the Histories of Photography," in *The Gernsheim Collection*, ed. Roy Flukinger (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 1-2.

government as a wartime precaution.¹²⁵ Ironically, he was later entrusted with important work documenting threatened national treasures with the National Buildings Record. As Nordstrom notes, Gernsheim's yen for early British photographs provided "an appropriate emphasis on the geographical roots of what would become an international medium,"¹²⁶ and also represented the excitement of discovery, his love for his adopted homeland, and the exasperation at the neglect and apathy that Gernsheim encountered when trawling for photographs. An encounter with Beaumont Newhall's 1937 introduction to *The U.S.A. Camera* in 1944 would encourage his interest in early photography and would alter the course of British photography irreparably.

In December 1944, Captain Beaumont Newhall, on leave from his job at MoMA and from his military position found himself with some leisure time in London. Arriving in Britain from the Mediterranean theatre, he was assigned to US Photographic Reconnaissance Wing where he used his visual skills to identify the launch apparatus for the Nazi V-1 and V-2 terror weapons.¹²⁷ When in London he was engaged in reconnaissance of a different nature, which he would recount years later:

I was delighted to find a few classical photographic books: the folio volume *Pictures of East Anglian Life* (1886) with thirty-two photographs by Peter Henry Emerson, and his charming book *Marsh Leaves* (1895). For these I paid, respectively, five guineas (\$26.25) and seven shillings sixpence (\$1.88). Today these books fetch thousands of dollars each at auction.¹²⁸

Newhall arrived in Britain as one of the world's foremost figures in photography, albeit a big fish in a tiny pond. Appointed as MoMA's librarian in 1935, six years after its

¹²⁵ Gernsheim almost ended up going to New Mexico, as Roy Flukinger notes: "where friends had reportedly secured him a photography professorship at the Lab of Anthropology, Santa Fe...." Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 18. See also Hill and Cooper, "Helmut Gernsheim," 173.

¹²⁶ Nordstrom, "Ideas in the Things: The Gernsheim Collection and the Histories of Photography," 1–2.

¹²⁷ Beaumont Newhall, *Focus: Memoirs of a Life in Photography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), 92.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

opening, Newhall had been instrumental in shaping the museum's photography collections and programming. Alfred F. Barr, MoMA's first director, had collected photography from the museum's inception, but it was not until 1936 when Newhall was given carte blanche by Barr to assemble an exhibition surveying the history of photography that MoMA's leadership in the field became consolidated.¹²⁹ Influenced by Ansel Adams's *Making a Photograph: An Introduction to Photography* (1935) a book that championed straight photography, Newhall put together a show that concentrated on demonstrating the straight photographic tradition through the portraiture of D.O. Hill and Robert Adamson, Nadar and other pioneers through the sharp-focused perfectionism of the contemporary Group f/64.¹³⁰ *Photography 1839-1937* was billed as an "International Exhibition of Photography," Newhall was aided in his enterprise by an advisory committee whose members included Kenneth Mees of Eastman Kodak, a British scientist who had relocated to Rochester in 1912 and helped advance wartime technology,¹³¹ Laslo Moholy-Nagy, Alexey Brodovitch and D.A. Spencer of the Royal Photographic Society.¹³² Though nominally international in flavor, the composition of the committee demonstrated that the US arts establishment had already surpassed other European nations in terms of taking photography seriously as an art, not only by importing collections from France and beyond but by benefiting from the European talent fleeing the Nazi regime. The "international" label masked US dominance, especially with contemporary works. Victorian photographers were Britain's strongest representation, and Cecil Beaton was the only notable modern British photographer shown.¹³³ The show

¹²⁹ Ibid., 43.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 46.

¹³¹ "Dr. C.E. Kenneth Mees," *Image* 10, no. 1 (January 1961): 1-2.

¹³² Newhall, *Focus*, 47.

¹³³ Ibid., 51.

had the repercussion of establishing Newhall and MoMA as *the* curators of the international photography scene. The 1937 exhibition toured the US and its accompanying catalogue became the influential *Photography: A Short Critical History*, later revised into *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day* in 1949. Importantly, Newhall was influential in reestablishing links between Alfred Stieglitz and Adams and the West Coast photographers. MoMA's ongoing collections program set a precedent for the collecting of contemporary photographic work and in 1940 a department of photography was created. Still small-scale in comparison to the other arts, a foundation was being laid for US-based photography's dominance of the international photographic scene. While Britain dithered, France dozed and Nazi Germany purged deviant art, the baton had now been firmly passed to the US in both fine arts and photography.

Newhall's ever-growing expertise had placed him atop the pile of photographic historians concerned with the aesthetic and social development of photography, and he quickly recognized that Britain's historic photographs were imperiled. He had already established links with the Royal Photographic Society when he visited Britain in 1936, where he first met Moholy-Nagy and met with William Henry Fox-Talbot's granddaughter to borrow prints for an upcoming MoMA show. A concurrent trip to France to use the French Society of Photography archives and visit Paul Nadar confirmed an exciting, if dormant French photographic tradition that Newhall was keen to tap. Indeed, it seems that French photography was at the time of much more interest to Newhall, due in part to the strengths of George Eastman House's Gabriel Cromer collection, purchased from the eponymous Parisian's widow for \$13,000 in 1939.¹³⁴ As

¹³⁴ Joseph R. Struble, "Gabriel Cromer Collection at George Eastman House," *George Eastman House*, n.d., <http://www.geh.org/cromer.html>.

in Britain, French photography was undervalued domestically, but collections of French materials were making their way over to the US. Britain's photographic heritage was another matter entirely, and Newhall could scarcely believe the neglect. When he later returned to war-torn Britain in 1944, his purchase of P.H. Emerson's books for a song was at once thrilling and perplexing: how could a country with such a rich photographic heritage under-value photographic art as much as it did?

The meeting between the Gernsheims and Newhall in December 1944 was prompted by a suggestion by Gernsheim that Newhall look him up should he find himself in London. Both shared the belief that photography's history was neglected and its contemporary practitioners overshadowed by a focus on technique rather than individual vision. In one of his first letters, Newhall wrote to Gernsheim from the Italian front in 1944: "There has been so little genuine aesthetic criticism of photography as an independent art form that it is a real pleasure to meet the acquaintance of a fellow critic."¹³⁵ Intending to talk primarily about photographic aesthetics, their conversation quickly turned to the acquisition of photographs. Gernsheim had "sought to modernize" British photographic aesthetics along a continental model through his small book *New Photo Vision*, published in 1942, and found in Newhall a fellow-traveler. Gernsheim had absorbed the currents of avant-garde photography in Germany, felt through the likes of Erich Salomon, Felix Man and Alfred Eisenstaedt through John Heartfield and Helmar Lerski, although he would only come to know these photographers' work individually through research in the 1950s.¹³⁶ The book fell foul of jingoism in the national

¹³⁵ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, November 20, 1944, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹³⁶ Hill and Cooper, "Helmut Gernsheim," 163.

photographic press, who, according to Gernsheim, balked at a German judging British photography's distinct "national idiom."¹³⁷

It was Newhall who gave Gernsheim his impetus to collect by suggesting that his reforming efforts, though worthwhile, did not represent the most valuable contribution he could make to the cause of photography in Britain: what was needed was someone with a keen eye and the tenacity to save the country's neglected photographic heritage. Gernsheim was initially uninterested in collecting photographs as he already had large collections of woodcuts, African art and pottery clogging his apartment.¹³⁸ According to Gernsheim, Newhall was insistent, telling him to: "give up on other things" and admonishing him to urgently switch his attention: "you can get them later on—but *now* you should concentrate on photography—stuff is just lying around and people don't know what to make of it. It should be preserved!"¹³⁹ Also at Newhall's urging, Gernsheim kept a set of American stereographs he had purchased as a gift for Newhall to form the basis of his new personal photographic collection, an enterprise that was to take up twenty years of his life. Though Newhall's most important act was inspiring the Gernsheim's collection, it is important to see their dialogue through their correspondence as having broader effects on the British photographic scene. Gernsheim often drew inspiration from American photographers and curatorial practices that Newhall had alerted him to, and often tried to enact change in Britain using these as inspiration.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 178.

¹³⁸ Newhall, *Focus*, 93.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

REFORMING CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE: THE COMBINED SOCIETIES AND AMERICAN EXAMPLES

Helmut Gernsheim and Newhall's letters provide an intriguing window on both the Gernsheims' and Newhalls' collecting and aesthetic proclivities. Increasingly comfortable with each other over subsequent years of letter-writing, they became cheerleaders for their cause in their respective countries: Gernsheim provided a valuable conduit for photographic research and photographic material to Newhall, and in turn Newhall would review and ensure exposure for the Gernsheims' books in American publications and act as interlocutor between American collectors and museum professionals. Their letters from 1944 to 1965 illuminate several key aspects of the transatlantic traffic in photographic ideas in the twenty year span. Intellectual equals, Newhall and Gernsheim traded ideas about photographic history, but the letters also chart the efforts and growing frustrations of Gernsheim to change British attitudes toward photography in contrast to photography's comparatively upward trajectory in the US.

Although the Gernsheims' work in collecting British photographs and rewriting photographic history are their signature achievements, it is important to acknowledge Helmut Gernsheim's attempts to reform contemporary practice. His most concerted effort in this regard was his involvement in the Combined Societies (CS), an offshoot of the ingrained British camera club structure. Salons had been intermittently criticized for their selection processes and their autocratic leadership structure in the photographic press, but their hold on British photographic life was firm.¹⁴⁰ On his arrival in Britain, Gernsheim threw himself into the world of the R.P.S. and the salons with characteristic gusto; after all, they were almost the only game in town. He would later recall the state of the work he found in 1937:

¹⁴⁰ Paul L. Anderson, "Pictorialism Criticized," *The Amateur Photographer* XCV, no. 2946 (April 25, 1945): 277.

With the exception of a few independent spirits such as Hoppé, Beaton, Brandt, Nürnberg and other foreigners, I had not seen such sentimental, sugary work before... it was an artificial world one associates with chocolate and soap boxes, completely novel to me. So were the manipulated prints, executed in historic processes introduced around the turn of the century. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.¹⁴¹

In March 1947, Gernsheim's article "What is Wrong with Our Exhibitions?" was published in the *BJP*. Criticizing the Royal Photographic Society and the London Salon for their "anachronism" in showing "year after year the same stereotyped pictures" produced "within the limits laid down by the pictorialists in the early years of this century."¹⁴² Such photographs were "romantic picture making or Victorian story-telling" at best, "monstrosities of artificiality and sickly sweet sentimentality" at worst, "completely divorced from present-day standards in all other cultural activities."¹⁴³ In a point that he would frequently make, he noted that "in the early days of photography it was Britain which produced the greatest artists... D.O. Hill and Adamson, and Mrs. Cameron—and... a number of other British photographers whose work, though outstanding has so far remained comparatively unknown." As a solution, Gernsheim advocated ousting the "venerable gentlemen," and replacing them with young blood, "confident that much that is to-day [*sic*] regarded as iconoclastic in modern photography will one day be accepted without question."¹⁴⁴ British photography could be great again, Gernsheim hints, and progress will occur when the younger generation (which included, presumably a 34 year-old Gernsheim) slough off the fetters of pictorialism. Gernsheim's

¹⁴¹ Paul Hill and Thomas Joshua Cooper, *Dialogue with Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), 166.

¹⁴² Helmut Gernsheim, "What Is Wrong with Our Exhibitions?," *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4581 (March 5, 1948): 93.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

assessment was correct, but was too radical for the leadership. Even when he had advanced up the food chain at the R.P.S. he was unable to make a change in the deep-rooted prejudices against modern, straight photography. In a 1977 interview, Gernsheim recalled the time when he was on the fellowship committee and was handed “some superb pictures of sand dunes” that he recognized to be the work of Edward Weston. When Gernsheim approvingly stated that the R.P.S. “should be honored to have the great man in our company,” J. Dudley Johnson dismissed the photographs as having “no details whatsoever” and declined to put his work in an exhibition.¹⁴⁵

A solution to the anachronism at the top of British photography was posed by The Combined Societies (CS), a secessionist movement of the Herefordshire, Wolverhampton and Bristol camera clubs formed in March 1945. The CS concentrated on discussions and exhibitions of more contemporary photography, and while not comprising the wild experimentation or hyper-modernism evident in the US and in continental Europe, the CS nonetheless provided an alternative venue for modern work. The panel of judges in the early years of the CS was formidable, consisting of E.O. Hoppé, Kurt Hutton, Hugo van Wadenoyen, Gernsheim, and the art critic and political philosopher Herbert Read.¹⁴⁶ A credo of sorts was expressed by van Wadenoyen. The purpose of the CS was “to establish a popular type of photography, with a democratic outlook and of a realistic, documentary character, [members] realize fully that the medium has possibilities also for non-abstract, symbolic art.”¹⁴⁷ The Combined Societies manifesto added that the group’s purpose was “to make records—that is the role of photography. But records can be dull and

¹⁴⁵ Hill and Cooper, *Dialogue with Photography*, 169.

¹⁴⁶ J.B. Lanman, “Letters to the Editor: What Is Wrong with Our Exhibitions?,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4584 (March 26, 1948): 127–28.

¹⁴⁷ Hugo Van Wadenoyen, “The Photographer as Artist,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIII, no. 4476 (February 15, 1946): 57.

uninformative or imaginative and revealing. It all depends on the vision and sensibility of the man behind the lens.”¹⁴⁸ The last phrase would echo the title of Gernsheim’s 1948 book, *The Man Behind the Camera*, a profile and miniature portfolio of nine photographers whose introduction would contain a similar sentiment:

Even the most straightforward photograph can be an expression of deep feeling, but it will be less obtrusive than the calculated presentation of the purely sentimental...It is axiomatic that only pure photography, i.e. photography which does not borrow from other forms of art can fulfill the demands of an *independent art*.¹⁴⁹

Van Wadenoyen’s statement “The Photographer as Artist” played down the need to copy the techniques of art and instead used literary examples to make his case for the personal image:

We can all write: few of us are great poets. Many of us, however, can write expressively, and sensitively, and very personally, about our feelings and experiences.... We don’t attempt to express ourselves in the manner of Donne, or Byron, Ella Wheeler Wilcox or Gertrude Stein: we write about the present, about current things in normal everyday language. Wouldn’t it be wise if we tried to use the photographic language in the same way?¹⁵⁰

Although he did not mention this explicitly, van Wadenoyen’s manifesto inched towards promoting the subjective, self-reflexive photography inspired by US-based photographers that would gain considerable popularity in the late 1960s.

Predictably, the upper echelons of British photography missed the point of the CS. In “This Documentary Photography,” *BJP* contributor E.S. Tompkins attempted to come to terms with “the objects of the new movement” and was saddened that its proponents felt the need to decry the work of more established photographers as “artificiality, sentimental trash, hackneyed themes rehashed, pretentiousness and insincerity, stale

¹⁴⁸ Lanman, “Letters to the Editor: What Is Wrong with Our Exhibitions?,” 127–128.

¹⁴⁹ Helmut Gernsheim, *The Man Behind the Camera*. (London: Fountain Press, 1948), 13.

¹⁵⁰ Van Wadenoyen, “The Photographer as Artist,” 57.

romanticism and cheap sentimentality.”¹⁵¹ He found the new focus on “record photography” (i.e. straight photographs of everyday life) interesting, but was largely perplexed by their inclusion in exhibitions: “how many... could we take out of their journalistic setting and display as a single picture for exhibition purposes?”¹⁵² Such pictures, “were a joy in their settings of explanatory text” but were “mere tantalising annoyances” when displayed alone.¹⁵³

The already progressive CS was internationally-oriented from the outset, and this made it more open to a greater range of aesthetic trends. A large number of entries for the 1946 exhibition were from Brazil, Argentina and the USSR, for example.¹⁵⁴ Gernsheim and van Wadenoyen wrote letters to Ansel Adams and other photographers as early as 1944, urging them to “send a show” to Britain¹⁵⁵ and while they did not, it seems, manage to get any shows sent over for the CS exhibitions, Adams did later exhibit at the Focal Press Galleries. Gernsheim’s correspondence with Newhall brought to light the general paucity of information regarding American photography in Britain in the immediate postwar period, and he was eager to rectify the situation. An early exchange of books spoke volumes about the respective state of independent photography in each country. In 1945, Gernsheim sent Newhall an exhibition catalog from the Bristol Camera club, and in turn, Newhall sent Gernsheim the catalog of his Paul Strand exhibition, an “excellent” photographer in Gernsheim’s assessment with whom he was “entirely

¹⁵¹ E.S. Tompkins, “This Documentary Photography,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCIII, no. 4473 (January 25, 1946): 29.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Combined Societies, *International Exhibition of Photography 1946* (Bristol: Combined Societies, 1946).

¹⁵⁵ Newhall, *Focus*, 131.

unacquainted.”¹⁵⁶ While the US scene was still developing, it was clear that Britain would have a long way to go before it would produce a monograph by a native photographer of Strand’s caliber. Throughout his career, Gernsheim would send Newhall advance copies of all the books he produced and all of the latest publications that reevaluated or reprinted work from historical British photographers. Few letters indicate that Gernsheim reciprocated Newhall’s gesture of sending contemporary work from Britain, beyond sending Newhall his own books. In the early years of their correspondence, Newhall would be instrumental in familiarizing Gernsheim with what was to become the American canon. In 1945, Newhall sent “a rather unusual book of photographs of New York made by a lone wolf who calls himself Weegee” as well as Robert Taft’s *Photography and the American Scene* both of which were accompanied by some even more scarce items in bombed-out London: candy and Spam.¹⁵⁷ Newhall eagerly communicated the excitement surrounding an Edward Weston exhibition arranged by Nancy Newhall in 1946, to which Gernsheim responded eagerly, as he had been hoping to contribute to *Western Photography*, an upcoming American journal that he thought Weston may be involved with.¹⁵⁸ Gernsheim admired Weston’s work immensely as “he knew little of the man and his work” prior to Newhall introducing him to it.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Helmut Gernsheim to Nancy Newhall, July 2, 1945, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁵⁷ Beaumont Newhall and Helmut Gernsheim, October 1, 1945, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers. Helmut and Alison enjoyed Weegee’s book, noting that it “strip[ped] New York of any glamour it may have had. It is a first-class pictorial record of human drama...” Gernsheim to Newhall, January 1, 1946.

¹⁵⁸ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, February 26, 1946, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers. Weston was not involved with the journal. Despite sending out a flyer advertising its first issue, it seems that no issues ever materialized.

¹⁵⁹ Helmut Gernsheim to Nancy Newhall, June 2, 1946, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

In the months after their initial meeting, Gernsheim was very keen to use his contact with Newhall to bring the best of American photography to British audiences via MoMA, as he wrote to Nancy Newhall:

I was extremely interested to hear of the state and scope of modern photography in America, and have already discussed with your husband the possibilities of a loan exhibition of about 50 pictures by progressive American photographers such as Weston, which I hope to be able to include in an exhibition of modern photography to be held in London in 1946.¹⁶⁰

Gernsheim requested “about 50 to 80 exhibition prints, preferably 16” x 12”, by such modern workers as the two Westons, Ansell [*sic*] Adams, Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Walker Evans, Berenice Abbott, etc.”¹⁶¹ Should such a loan be practicable, Gernsheim promised a loan of English prints from the Bristol Camera Club exhibition. The idea of sending an exhibition over was well-received by American photographers, but Nancy Newhall wrote that an “over-worked and under-staffed” photography department at MoMA was unable to assemble it; this was probably a gentle let-down by Newhall.¹⁶²

Ambitious as Gernsheim was about bringing shows over for the CS, his involvement with the group did not last more than a couple of years. By June 1946, Gernsheim and van Wadenoyen’s relationship had soured, and while still active in the CS, Gernsheim refused to be involved with “activities which entail collaboration” with him, soon after discontinuing his involvement entirely due to time commitments with his collecting and writing.¹⁶³ The CS carried on into the 1950s but never truly reached its potential to unite like-minded photographers in Britain with their American or European

¹⁶⁰ Helmut Gernsheim to Nancy Newhall, February 6, 1945, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁶¹ Helmut Gernsheim to Nancy Newhall, March 13, 1945, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁶² Nancy Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, April 13, 1945, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁶³ Gernsheim to Newhall, June 2, 1946.

counterparts; neither did the CS shows supplant the R.P.S. shows. Perhaps the CSs legacy resides in the formative effect it had on at least one young photographer. Van Wadenoyen mentored a young Roger Mayne within the Combined Societies in 1951-55, where Mayne would assist with exhibitions.¹⁶⁴ Mayne would later turn to full-time photojournalism, producing his now-famous images of Southam Street in Kensington, and gave a show of his photographs at the ICA member's room in 1956;¹⁶⁵ for many years, he was one of the voices in the wilderness in British photography who is only recently being accorded the recognition due to him. His images played a starring role at the seminal 2007 retrospective of British photography *How We Are* at the Tate Modern and in July 2012 his images were exhibited at the Gitterman Gallery, New York, a transatlantic crossing over sixty years in the making.¹⁶⁶

Gernsheim would face an uphill struggle outside of the Combined Societies to popularize independent photography, especially contemporary work, in Britain. The attitude of most involved with photography mirrored a 1949 review of *History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present* in the *BJP*. Although the reviewer thought the book interesting overall, they seemed perplexed as to why Newhall did not write “a history in the ordinary sense” by concentrating on, in Newhall's words, the “history of a medium rather than a technique.”¹⁶⁷ The author of the review completely missed Newhall's point of downplaying the technical to concentrate on the cultural and aesthetic.

¹⁶⁴ Mayne, Roger, “Biography,” *Roger Mayne*, 2013, <http://www.rogermayne.com/about.html>.

¹⁶⁵ Institute for Contemporary Arts, “ICA Exhibitions List 1948-Present” (Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2012), <http://www.ica.org.uk/download.php?id=1051>.

¹⁶⁶ Jessie Wender, “Roger Mayne's Street Life,” *The New Yorker Blogs*, May 29, 2012, http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2012/05/roger-mayne.html#slide_ss_0=1.

¹⁶⁷ “New Books: History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCVI, no. 4667 (August 19, 1949): 392–93.

This attitude bled into a neglect of British photographic heritage which Gernsheim was keen to redress. Again, American models provided inspiration for his venture.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTING AND PUBLISHING

Much comprehensive material exists on the Gernsheims' acquisitions after their galvanizing meeting with Newhall.¹⁶⁸ For the purpose of this chapter, it is worth noting that the Gernsheims' collection's strengths lay in early photography and British photography into the Victorian (and sometimes Edwardian) ages, a natural enough focus given their location. Helmut Gernsheim's labors first bore fruit in early 1945, a fact that attests to the plethora of untapped sources he was to uncover and his shrewdness and as a collector. Initially, he would tour London book shops and ask the same unusual question: had they, by any chance, "some photographically illustrated books for sale?"¹⁶⁹ This was often a slightly unfortunate situation for the booksellers whose stock of photographs and photographic books (if they did indeed have any) were likely buried under current inventory or were being used to line boxes and shelves, so undervalued were photographs at the time. Such encounters would be an entrée into talking about photographs and gleaning information on dealers and other leads. Collectors like Gernsheim benefited from estate sales at fire sale prices in an economically exhausted Britain and from the fact that there was next to no market for historical photographs. Gernsheim was learning as he went along and making discoveries along the way, famously rediscovering Lewis Carroll's (Charles Lutwidge Dodson) photographs and Niépce's first photograph of 1826.

¹⁶⁸ Some of the best resources, apart from Flukinger's recent work, include the Gernsheim's histories themselves, based largely on their collections, and catalogues of their exhibitions. See also Alfried Wiczorek, ed., *Helmut Gernsheim: Pionier der Fotogeschichte = Pioneer of Photo History* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003).

¹⁶⁹ Newhall, *Focus*, 94.

A run-down of the names in his collection shows both his shrewd eye and the collection's comprehensive nature: Frederick Evans, Julia Margaret Cameron, John Thompson, P.H. Emerson, O.G. Rejlander, H.P. Robinson, Benjamin Stone and Clarence H. White among many others represent the panoply of photographers' work contained within. By 1947, he and Alison dedicated themselves full-time to working on their collection and the books that were to arise out of it.

In one of his earliest letters, Newhall hints at Gernsheim's eye for good photographs after he had recounted finds of Julia Margaret Cameron prints and albums by Frances Frith at London shops (later gifted to the Newhalls): "you are to be congratulated," Newhall wrote, "on finding some Cameron portraits—I quite envy you having them."¹⁷⁰ As well as sharing pleasantries about his latest acquisitions, Gernsheim was keen to exchange antiquarian and newly-published photographic books with Newhall as well as photographic prints. Gernsheim offered Newhall, for example, a number of prints by Robert Macpherson which he had found for the "ridiculously cheap" price of five shillings each.¹⁷¹ The exchange of photographic books and information continued through the 1960s and opened up a valuable conduit through which Gernsheim could send Newhall books, photographic duplicates and his latest finds to which Newhall would reciprocate and keep the Gernsheims abreast of developments in photography stateside. Gernsheim asked for copies of Stieglitz's *Camera Work* ("unobtainable here")¹⁷² an 1888 Kodak No.1 (I suppose... not very rare in America"),¹⁷³ and assisted

¹⁷⁰ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, March 31, 1945, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁷¹ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, April 10, 1945, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁷² Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, August 15, 1947, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁷³ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, January 9, 1951, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

Newhall in finding bibliographic information on British photographers. Newhall's initial suggestion that he collect Britain's neglected photographic heritage had stuck. By 1947, Gernsheim was confident, after acquiring many of Roger Fenton's Crimean photographs directly from the Fenton family, that he owned "the finest and most comprehensive" collection in Britain, "perhaps not in quantity, but certainly in quality."¹⁷⁴

Pragmatism is needed as much in collecting as purism, and Gernsheim found in the US a healthy market for his duplicates. By 1947, he and Alison were immersed in collecting and had become part of a minute community of experts (mainly in the US) interested in collecting historic photographs. The Gernsheims' collection was always a means to an end: they mainly used the materials he acquired to write their books and articles. Their collecting would later contribute to (and partially create) the international market in photographs, but his collection was not primarily a financial resource. When the market exploded for historical photographs in the US in the 1970s, the Gernsheims' acquisitions would have made him a small fortune if sold.¹⁷⁵ Always seeking the best copy of a print or book, he would sell duplicates to American collectors such as Alden Scott Boyer, an eccentric photo enthusiast who would give up collecting in 1950 and donate his acquisitions to George Eastman House.¹⁷⁶ When Newhall was processing the collection at George Eastman House in 1951, he wrote to Gernsheim: "it is pleasant in going through the Boyer collection to find so many of his finest pictures came from your collection and I congratulate you upon the high quality of your collection."¹⁷⁷ Gernsheim

¹⁷⁴ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, June 29, 1947, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁷⁵ The value of Gernsheim's photographs rose with the Festival of Britain exhibition and also with the publication of his *History of Photography* in 1955. Hill and Cooper, *Dialogue with Photography*, 184.

¹⁷⁶ "The Boyer Collection," *Image: Journal of Photography of the George Eastman House* II, no. 7 (October 1953): 1, 44–48.

¹⁷⁷ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, February 9, 1951, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

was not necessarily competing with institutions and other collectors; it was the case, rather, that American collectors and institutions were willing to acquire what Gernsheim did not want. To cite one example, Gernsheim offered his duplicates of Roger Fenton's photographs to MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Columbia University, the National Archives and private collector Albert E. Marshall¹⁷⁸ in October 1950 to raise funds for more acquisitions.¹⁷⁹ "As far as I know," Gernsheim wrote, "no such collection has come up for public sale in Great Britain during the last fifteen years," also explaining that this collection was bought privately from Fenton's descendants. When necessary, Gernsheim had a knack for salesmanship, something that would unfortunately desert him when he was trying to set up a museum with his collection as the basis.

Another important dimension to Gernsheim and Newhall's friendship was the advice they shared on publishing their various research endeavors. Rarely was there anything but friendly competition between the two: as A.D. Coleman suggests, there was more than enough underappreciated photographic material to go around, meaning that the Gernsheims and Newhall had few worries that their respective research would overlap.¹⁸⁰ Newhall redirected Gernsheim's publishing agenda toward better American photographic venues like *Popular Photography* and *Minicam* rather than a "miserable little sheet in Boston" where Gernsheim's work had previously been published.¹⁸¹ Gernsheim would

¹⁷⁸ Marshall's photographic book collection was sold at auction in 1952, the first auction of Photographic Literature in the US. 5,300 items were sold in 173 lots, making the average price \$14 a lot. Nathalie Moureau and Dominique Sagot-Duvaurox, "La construction du marché des tirages photographiques," *Études photographiques*, no. 22 (September 1, 2008), <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/1005>. Significant auctions of this magnitude (and certainly not at these prices) would not occur again until the 1970s when the art world's interest, particularly in the US, had been piqued.

¹⁷⁹ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall et al., October 18, 1950, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁸⁰ Coleman, "Bringing up Baby: Helmut Gernsheim, Beaumont Newhall and the Childhood of Photography," 67.

¹⁸¹ Beaumont Newhall and Nancy Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, May 1, 1946, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers. The "miserable little sheet" was entitled *Highlights of Photographic Art*.

reciprocate with advice for British publishing houses, and in turn Newhall provided Gernsheim with contacts for the potential publication of his books and nudged him to pursue a publishing agenda in American photographic journals. A list entitled “People in the US interested in the History of Photography, compiled for Helmut Gernsheim, England, 11/9/48” that Newhall sent, listed all the movers and shakers in US photographic history and provided the basis of Gernsheim’s contacts for publishing, collecting and later exhibiting his work. Among the names mentioned are Scott Boyer,¹⁸² writer and photographer Dorothy Norman, educator and critic Henry Holmes Smith, MoMA’s Edward Steichen, and Louis Siple, director of the American Museum of Photography in Philadelphia.¹⁸³ Aside from the elision of photographers and those on the artistic avant-garde, the list was a comprehensive selection, providing entrée into the upper echelons of photography in the USA. Steichen would borrow the Gernsheims’ Lewis Carroll prints for an exhibition in 1950,¹⁸⁴ signaling the rise of the Gernsheims’ star in the international photography world, and would visit them in 1955 when he travelled to London en route from the Berlin opening of *The Family of Man*.¹⁸⁵ Gernsheim’s reputation in the US was growing thanks to Newhall, but this did not mean plain sailing from here on in.

¹⁸² Scott Boyer would later donate his collection—four and a half tons worth of material—to George Eastman House. See Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, May 30, 1950, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers. Newhall wrote to Gernsheim that in going through Boyer’s archive it was “good to see your name so frequent: you have been of real help to Boyer.” Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, August 16, 1950, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁸³ Beaumont Newhall, “People in the US Interested in the History of Photography, Compiled for Helmut Gernsheim, England, 11/9/48,” October 9, 1948, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁸⁴ Jacob Deschin, “Carroll Exhibit: Pictures Taken by Author Of ‘Alice’ Are Shown,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1950, sec. Arts & Leisure, 123. See also Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, June 24, 1950, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers. Gernsheim bought the original photographs directly from the Dodgson family and became the owner of the largest collection of Carroll photographs overnight.

¹⁸⁵ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, October 24, 1955, Container 15.1, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

Gernsheim did find British venues for his work, but the fragmented and technically-based nature of British photographic publishing did not help matters. There was a bright spot on the horizon, but compared to the US, Britain was behind again. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s books on photography were limited mainly to how-to-guides and technical manuals for individual camera models, but the field was eventually invigorated by a continental import with a knack for carving out a profitable niche. Britain's most influential photographic publishing house, the Focal Press, was founded by Hungarian émigré Andor Kraszna-Krauss, who had fled Germany in 1937 and building on his work there editing film and photography magazines, set up the Focal Press in 1938.¹⁸⁶ Focal Press' books were lauded worldwide for their clear explanations and in-line illustrations, and were widely popular; perhaps so popular that books *on* photography crowded out opportunities for books *of* photographs.¹⁸⁷

By the 1950s, with Kraszna-Krauss' publication of fellow émigré Gernsheim's books, the situation showed signs of improvement, as illustrated by the National Book League's *Reader's Guide to Photography* (1950). Opening enthusiastically by mentioning that "[photography] provides an absorbing hobby for people of widely varying tastes,"¹⁸⁸ the author Percy Harris conceded that "perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on technical perfection, and not enough on the artistic use of the medium"¹⁸⁹ in book publishing. He duly noted the "increasing range of books devoted to the masters

¹⁸⁶ Colin Harding, "K Is for Andor Kraszna-Krausz... the Influential Founder of Focal Press," *National Media Museum*, June 22, 2013, <http://nationalmediamuseumblog.wordpress.com/2013/06/22/a-z-photography-k-is-for-kraszna-krasz-photographic-publisher/>. Kraszna-Krauss had attended the s

¹⁸⁷ "Andor Kraszna-Krauss Foundation," *Andor Kraszna-Krauss Foundation*, 2013, <http://www.kraszna-krausz.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Andor-Kraszna-Krausz.pdf>.

¹⁸⁸ Percy Harris, *A Reader's Guide to Photography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 6.

¹⁸⁹ The *BJP* agreed with this sentiment, mentioning that "it would do no serious harm if no further primers were published for another five years." "Ex: Cathedra: Books," *The British Journal of Photography* XCVII, no. 4707 (August 4, 1950): 399.

of photography” including the Gernsheims’ works in this as well as Focal Press’ “Masters of the Camera” series, two of which, *Speaking Likeness* by Kurt Hutton and *Camera in London* by Bill Brandt, became minor classics.¹⁹⁰ With one eye on their other titles the “Masters of the Camera” series was ultimately designed to show the amateur how the best do it: thus progress towards disentangling “serious” photography from hobbyism continued at a snail’s pace. Such titles were tucked away under the heading “Pictorial Photography” in the *Reader’s Guide*, a section which jostled for space with “Composition,” “Cameras,” “Table Top Photography” and “Trick Photography.” Although the Focal Press would publish several of Helmut Gernsheim’s books,¹⁹¹ he complained that Kraszna-Krauss was “inclined to put profit before production, and “mishandled” the photographs in books by crowding pages with too many pictures and cropping them too closely.¹⁹² Gernsheim’s favorite press, according to Roy Flukinger, was the art publisher Thames and Hudson, founded in 1949 by fellow German émigré Walter Neurath, an appropriately transatlantic name given the context of photographic traffic.¹⁹³ While it is not appropriate to underplay the important role of the Focal Press and Thames and Hudson, it would be years before Britain had institutions like MoMA, George Eastman House and ventures like Aperture to showcase independent photography.

¹⁹⁰ Harris, *A Reader’s Guide to Photography*, 8.

¹⁹¹ Andor Kraszna-Krauss proposed to coauthor a book on the history of amateur with Beaumont Newhall, but the plans went nowhere, perhaps as a result of a cautionary word from Gernsheim. Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, August 20, 1947, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁹² Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, September 7, 1947, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

¹⁹³ Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 25.

MOMA, GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE AND THE BRITISH SCENE

The letters between Gernsheim and Newhall illustrate the pleasures and pains of being engaged in photographic work in their respective countries. When Newhall resigned from MoMA in 1946, he wrote to tell Gernsheim the same day. In his letter, he outlined his frustrations with the organization and Edward Steichen in particular:

I was asked to come back as an assistant in the one department in the museum I founded and created! If the man who has been named as the head of the department was a person whose judgment I respected and with whom I felt I could work creatively, I would have stayed on. But unfortunately, Steichen, although an important photographer, has such an entirely different point of view from mine, that to stay on would be defeat. I am interested in photography as an art form... I am not interested in spectacular exhibitions where photography appears as illustration.¹⁹⁴

Leaving “more respected by the leaders in the photographic world than before,” Newhall outlined plans for Nancy and him to teach at Ansel Adams’ new summer school at the California Institute of Fine Arts, Moholy-Nagy’s Institute of Design in Chicago and at Black Mountain College in North Carolina; to add to this, he was latterly awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to work on a book about American daguerreotypes.¹⁹⁵ Such a diversity of opportunities was a salivating prospect for Gernsheim, struggling as he was for recognition with his own books. Gernsheim lamented that he “wish[ed] such a fellowship were obtainable here” because he would have “used up all my funds” by the time his history of photography would be published.¹⁹⁶

Even compared with the modest funding and institutional support Newhall received, Gernsheim often found himself at sea with his attempts to conduct research. Access to the British Library and British Museum aside, his biggest scourge became the

¹⁹⁴ Newhall and Newhall to Gernsheim, May 1, 1946.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Gernsheim to Newhall, June 29, 1947.

disorganized collection at the R.P.S., then the repository of Britain's best collections of photographic material. As he explained to Newhall, Gernsheim had numerous difficulties accessing items in the R.P.S. library. His exasperation, particularly when writing his and Alison's *History of Photography*, is evident:

I think there is far too much stuff at the Royal Photographic Society which no-one ever sees or hears of because Dudley Johnston himself doesn't know that it is in the society's collection. I have great difficulty with them in obtaining material for my history. You would hardly believe it but there exists no card index or other inventory list from which one could see what might be useful for publication. Last July I wrote to Dudley Johnston asking him to look out some items for me... to this day I have not heard anything more. That is the kind of collaboration I get from the leading British photographic society, in writing the first history of British photography!¹⁹⁷

The stranglehold the R.P.S. had on British photography and its collection's disarray choked off research. Alison's work at the British Library supplemented work at the R.P.S. and proved a valuable base for research, but the R.P.S. showed neither the ability nor the will to change.

In contrast to the sorry state of affairs at the R.P.S., by 1949, the US had taken the lead with not only contemporary photography but with the display, preservation and study of its past. In a 1947 letter, Newhall announced to Gernsheim that Kodak was planning to open a museum "based on the wonderfully rich Cromer collection" that "should be an important center for the history of photography."¹⁹⁸ To much fanfare on November 9 1949, the George Eastman House opened to the public as a museum, exhibition space, archive and conference center, to "show the world how manifold a part

¹⁹⁷ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, April 20, 1949, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers. Underfunded and underappreciated, the collection at the R.P.S. would only be thoroughly indexed and organized when it was acquired by the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television in 2003

¹⁹⁸ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, June 21, 1947, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

photography plays in human activities.”¹⁹⁹ With a nod to the history of photography (and the latent suggestion that its future lay in the US), past R.P.S. president Dr. D. Spencer gave a talk on Britain’s contribution to photography and he was joined by Marcel Aribat of Kodak-Pathé S.A.F. (the French subsidiary of Kodak), who spoke on the same topic for the French. The torch had duly been passed; neither the Bibliothèque nationale de France nor the R.P.S. would offer similar facilities and collections for the study of photography or continue to collect photography in the same manner. Beaumont Newhall was installed as the museum’s curator, a position heartily applauded by Gernsheim, who wrote approvingly to him:

As you won’t be restricted there with money (I suppose), it will give you an opportunity to build up the world’s finest collection. It is such a pity that we have not a museum of photography in this country. There just isn’t enough interest in this subject so far. The collection at the R.P.S. is in an awful mess because its curator does twenty other jobs which interest him more, and the Kodak Museum at Wealdstone is quite insignificant, consisting chiefly of a large range of Kodak cameras.²⁰⁰

Upon receiving a pamphlet about the museum’s activities, Gernsheim remarked on “the wonderful opportunities the Museum offers to the student and the historian; everything is so clearly and beautifully displayed.”²⁰¹

Administered by the University of Rochester, George Eastman House was unique at the time in its international outlook (it was later styled explicitly as an “International Museum of Photography”), ambitious programming, and permanent display of images from the history of photography. Pioneering in collecting historic photographs, the

¹⁹⁹ “George Eastman House- Rochester, New York,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCVI, no. 4669 (November 11, 1949): 451.

²⁰⁰ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, August 4, 1948, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²⁰¹ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, August 5, 1950, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

collection was based around historical equipment donated by Eastman Kodak, George Eastman's acquisition of pioneering Austrian chemist Josef Maria Eder's graphic arts collection just after the First World War, and Eastman Kodak's later purchase of Parisian photographer Gabriel Cromer's collection of 6,000 images, daguerreotypes, and extensive collection of photographic literature.²⁰² When it opened, Britain contributed several sets of RAF reconnaissance photographs, camera equipment, and a complete copy of Fox-Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*.²⁰³ In Britain, the galleries and collections at the R.P.S. were the only comparable spaces and archives but these were not as accessible nor as progressive in their outlook as Eastman House. Whereas the R.P.S. was happy to both dispense and sit on its laurels, Eastman House quickly evolved into a model for how to run a photographic museum. Its in-house journal *Image* presented one of the first venues for discussing the history of photography discretely and drew plaudits from Gernsheim who lamented GEH's progressive outlook compared to the inactivity in Britain:

We perused the first two issues of "Image" with the greatest interest. It is good that the historical items in the Eastman Collection are made generally available. We ourselves have suggested publishing such a paper in our Museum proposal, which has unfortunately not made any progress here. There just doesn't seem to be enough interest in this country, and those who are in an official position and should be able to do something for photography, do everything in their power to work against any progressive step.²⁰⁴

²⁰²Cromer's collection was almost exclusively of French material and he hoped that his collection would form the basis for a photographic museum in his native country, an ambition never realized. His widow sold the collection to Eastman House for \$13,000 in 1939. "Gabriel Cromer Collection at the George Eastman House," *George Eastman House*, 2013, <http://www.geh.org/cromer-collection-intro.html>.

²⁰³ "George Eastman House," *The Amateur Photographer* XCIX, no. 3184 (November 16, 1949): 824.

²⁰⁴ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, April 18, 1952, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers. Newhall responded by informing Gernsheim that he wished "that we could publish every word which you have written and all of the pictures, but as you have probably gathered, we are limited in our publication funds for the time being and so the stories in *Image* must necessarily be condensed." Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, July 25, 1952, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

Gernsheim would be among the first British recipients of *Aperture* (“a most exciting venture”) when copies were sent to him by Minor White in 1953.²⁰⁵ When Beaumont Newhall began to teach a course in the history of photography at the University of Rochester, Gernsheim reviewed the syllabus with great interest, and mentioned that he envied the opportunities that such a venture afforded.²⁰⁶ In August 1958, the same year that Newhall assumed the directorship of GEH, Gernsheim expressed an interest in visiting Rochester, NY to conduct research if he could obtain sufficient funding. Newhall suggested he contact the “very liberal” Commonwealth Fund and the Graham Foundation, and offered a pessimistic assessment of the possibility of funding coming from either Eastman Kodak or the University of Rochester. Yet again, Gernsheim faced the chronic lack of funding for his photographic work. Frustrated as Gernsheim continued to be, British photography had briefly moved out of the shadows and into the art museum seven years prior. Despite the initial excitement, the Gernsheims’ collection failed to spark a broader interest in photography.

THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN AND MASTERPIECES OF VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Contrary to prevailing trends of near-invisibility in the artistic realm, two anniversaries in the early 1950s provided an unusual bonanza of attention for British photography. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of William Henry Fox-Talbot’s birth (11 February 1800), a coalition of presidents from the Royal Society, Royal Institution and Royal Photographic Society came together to petition for a portrait of the master to be commissioned and painted. Addressing the continued debate of photographic

²⁰⁵ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, January 23, 1953, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²⁰⁶ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, September 28, 1954, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

primogeniture, the authors of their letter to the *BJP* laid out the importance of Fox-Talbot thus: “whatever the differences in opinion there may be about the origin of photography, there can be few who would dispute that William Henry Fox-Talbot laid the foundations of photography as we know it today.”²⁰⁷ Between 1950 and 1951, the year of the Festival of Britain, the hagiography of Fox-Talbot was in full swing. The National Trust had acquired Fox-Talbot’s Lacock Abbey in 1944, and the time seemed ripe for celebrating Britain’s achievements in science and photography and reevaluating a national hero in the face of shrinking world influence. *Photography* devoted their January 1950 issue to Fox-Talbot, and encouraged readers to join the camera club coach trips on February 11th for “the great occasion.”²⁰⁸ Beaumont Newhall had himself been thinking of writing a biography of Fox-Talbot,²⁰⁹ but when he found out about alternative biographies being written by R.P.S. president J. Dudley Johnston and Harold White, he put the project on hold. In a pattern that would later be repeated, MoMA were the first to beat the British to the punch, staging a small show of Talbot’s work, borrowed from Talbot’s relatives, in January 1950.²¹⁰

Photography’s bigger splash nationally turned out to be the Gernsheims’ involvement in 1951’s Festival of Britain, the twentieth century’s answer to the Great Exhibition of 1851. Naturally, the contexts of both festivals were different: the first a confirmation of an ascendant nation, and the second an attempt to get the country back on its feet during times of austerity by reminding people about the positives of British life

²⁰⁷ Robert Robinson, “Letters to the Editor: William Henry Fox Talbot F.R.S.,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCVI, no. 4670 (November 18, 1949): 560.

²⁰⁸ Harold Lewis, “Editorial,” *Photography* 5, no. 1 (January 1950): 5.

²⁰⁹ Newhall and Newhall to Gernsheim, May 1, 1946.

²¹⁰ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, March 1, 1950, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

and Britishness. As the Archbishop of Canterbury announced, the purpose of the festival was to:

Declare our belief and trust in the British way of life, not with any boastful self-confidence or any aggressive self-aggrandizement, but with sober and humble trust that by holding fast to that which is good and rejecting from our midst that which is evil we may continue to be a nation at unity with itself and of service to the world. It is a good at a time like the present so to strengthen, and in part to recover, our hold on the abiding principles of all that is best in our national life.²¹¹

These comforting words were hardly rousing. In acknowledging that the festival was “a challenge to the sloughs of the present and a shaft of confidence cast forth against the future,”²¹² the organizers balanced an agenda that would simultaneously draw from the best and most durable facets of the national past and the advanced technologies that could escape to the future. Thus, the Dome of Discovery and famously free-standing Skylon tower symbolized progress and prowess, and arts programs such as “Shakespeare and his Histories” and “Choral and Medieval Music” generally filled in to speak to Britain’s glorious heritage.²¹³ This was a heritage mobilized for national pride for the population, but the festival was also designed in some quarters to be a tool of cultural diplomacy. Becky Conekin has shown that beneath the Festival’s official assertion of national identity lay the fear of American cultural hegemony. Mobilizing the “deep England” of history was a tool by which the British elite could counteract both the vulgarities of an ever-present American popular culture and global power and symbolically restore Britain’s crumbling empire.²¹⁴ If the Great Exhibition had been photography’s coming-out-party in Britain,²¹⁵ the Festival would prove more retrospective, harking back to days

²¹¹ Festival of Britain, *The Official Book of The Festival of Britain, 1951* (Festival of Britain Office, 1951), 2.

²¹² Festival of Britain, *The Festival of Britain, 1951*.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 29–5.

²¹⁴ Becky Conekin, “*The Autobiography of a Nation*”: *The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 17.

²¹⁵ Gernsheim, *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography.*, 6.

of greater glory. According to *The British Journal of Photography*, initial plans included a photographic section that would show off Fox-Talbot's work—couched in terms of photographic processes—in addition to exhibits on “photography and criminological investigation” and photographic chemistry, to be covered by the British chemical industry.²¹⁶ Thematically, this was an apt reflection of the festival: the past glories of British photography and a future guided by science. Contemporary photography, predictably, did not have a place.

Debate exists over who proposed the exhibition of the Gernsheims' collection: Gernsheim claims that in 1949 he suggested it to the Arts Council,²¹⁷ while Mark Haworth-Booth suggests it was Philip James, Director of Art at the Arts Council.²¹⁸ Whatever its origins, the plan was met with immediate (and uncharacteristic) enthusiasm. Sir Kenneth Clark, then-director of the National Gallery and Surveyor of the King's pictures agreed to take a look at the Gernsheims' collection and recommended that the Arts Council support the show, only their second display of support for photography.²¹⁹ The Harvard-educated Charles Harvard Gibbs-Smith aided Gernsheim in bringing the collection to the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) where it was installed during the Festival in a “suitable Victorian setting” that included stuffed pheasants and peacocks.²²⁰ Gibbs-Smith was a quiet force in photography during his tenure at the V&A and had been adding to the V&A's collection of photographs (begun by Henry Cole in 1856) which culminated in a well-received 1939 exhibition at the museum celebrating the “centenary”

²¹⁶ “Ex: Cathedra: Festival of Britain,” *The British Journal of Photography* XCVII, no. 4684 (February 24, 1950): 89.

²¹⁷ Hill and Cooper, “Helmut Gernsheim.”

²¹⁸ Haworth-Booth, *Photography, an Independent Art*, 130.

²¹⁹ The first was an exhibition on the history of photography organized by Henry Guttman for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1945. Henry Guttman, *History of Photography* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1945).

²²⁰ Hill and Cooper, “Helmut Gernsheim,” 192.

of photography.²²¹ The V&A generally collected photographs as complements to an artists' work or for illustrative/informational purposes, but in doing so managed to acquire works by Roger Fenton and Julia Margaret Cameron, among others, and a five hundred photograph set of African Sculptures taken by Walker Evans in the mid-1930s.²²² Such efforts were important but by the twentieth century largely piecemeal: Gibbs-Smith's efforts were always minor as he was operating in a climate where the museum's directors did not "acknowledge photography as an art."²²³

The V&A's small-scale support for photography aside, the show was designed as a blockbuster and lived up to its billing, showcasing 520 important and mostly British works²²⁴ such as Julia Margaret Cameron's portrait of Sir John Herschel, Antoine Claudet's *The Geography Lesson*, Eadweard Muybridge's motion studies, P.H. Delamotte's stunning images of the Great Exhibition of 1851, a wide selection of Hill and Adamson prints, and Frances Frith's images of Egypt.²²⁵ It ran for five months, received 120,000 visitors, and the show and accompanying catalog received plaudits across the British press.²²⁶ The *BJP* declared that the show "should be seen by every photographer and everyone interested in photography."²²⁷ The *Times Literary Supplement's* review of the catalog glowed that the: "magnificent" photographs demonstrated that Gernsheim "opens up a new field for serious study by his endeavour to strike a proper critical balance between the historical development of Victorian

²²¹ Haworth-Booth, "Helmut Gernsheim: 'An Unreasonable Man,'" 329.

²²² *Ibid.*, 328.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 329. It was not until the 1970s that the V&A would take up the cause of photography in earnest after rebuffing ever-louder calls to do so, largely due to the energies of Carol Hogben of the museum's circulation department and curator Mark-Haworth-Booth.

²²⁴ "Masterpieces of Victorian Photography," *The British Journal of Photography* XCVIII, no. 4748 (May 18, 1951): 250–51.

²²⁵ Gernsheim, *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography*.

²²⁶ Haworth-Booth, "Helmut Gernsheim: 'An Unreasonable Man,'" 328.

²²⁷ "Masterpieces of Victorian Photography," 250.

photography and its artistic achievements.”²²⁸ The stage was set for a revival of interest in photography in Britain, and the Gernsheims were already thinking of making their collection the centerpiece of a national collection.

Britain’s photographic heritage was also showcased internationally via *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography*. The exhibition toured Europe in various guises from 1952 when it was exhibited at the World Exhibition of Photography in Lucerne in a modified form, becoming the more internationally-oriented *A Century of Photography from Niépce to Moholy-Nagy, 1826-1926* when it toured eight European venues from 1956-1961.²²⁹ Even before the success of *Masterpieces of British Photography*, Gernsheim earnestly wanted to bring his collection to the US, and its success further emboldened him. Gernsheim announced the idea in a 1950 letter to Beaumont Newhall:

A few months ago I arranged a small exhibition of Victorian photographs from my collection for the British Council, which will be touring a number of countries over-seas (but not U.S.A.). I also have recently been invited by the Arts Council of Great Britain to arrange a comprehensive exhibition of British photography in the nineteenth century (all items in my collection)... to be shown next year at the Victoria and Albert Museum in connection with the Festival of Britain... there may be a possibility of bringing the exhibition to America in 1952.²³⁰

Additional letters noted that plans were afoot to develop a museum of photography in Britain but in the meantime, the exhibition might be sent to the US under the guise of the Arts Council or Foreign office. Museums in the US would have to foot the bills due to an “acute dollar shortage” in Britain.²³¹ The difficulties of such an enterprise, for the East Coast at least, were enumerated by Newhall:

²²⁸ “A Handful of Photographers,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, November 2, 1951, 690.

²²⁹ Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 51.

²³⁰ Gernsheim to Newhall, June 24, 1950.

²³¹ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, September 9, 1951, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

As to an exhibition at the George Eastman House, I am, frankly, somewhat dubious... you see we have so much similar material that I am afraid my trustees would find it somewhat difficult to justify the expenditure on our not-overly-large budget on bringing duplicates into the country. Talbots, Hills, Camerons and Fentons we have in good measure... it might be feasible to think of showing what we have got in a joint show, which we could circulate.²³²

Gernsheim remained keen on the idea of a large exhibition of his collection travelling to the USA, particularly George Eastman House, and reprised the idea in 1956 when his photographs were touring successfully across Europe. He wrote to Newhall proposing that a selection of American photographs complement his, should the exhibition go ahead, and solicited his help in borrowing these from George Eastman House.²³³ Newhall again gently rebuffed the suggestion because of the “overlap” between the collections, but promised to assist with future exhibitions.²³⁴ Gernsheim replied, slightly disappointed, suggesting that the overlap consisted of inferior photographs that Gernsheim had sold to Alden Scott Boyer, but nothing came of the plans. Newhall congratulated Gernsheim on “the excellent exhibition” and said that he wished to put on a similar exhibition were it not for the fact that “our collection was not so staggering in its size.”²³⁵

Newhall did write a glowing review of the catalogue for *Modern Photography* (US), a well-meaning text that inadvertently ended up being a subtle critique of the state of photography in Britain. “Photography’s debt to Britain is great,” he starts, acknowledging Fox-Talbot, Sir John Herschel and Frederick Scott Archer as technological pioneers. The trail runs cold shortly after, skipping over the intervening

²³² Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, September 21, 1951, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²³³ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, August 5, 1956, Container 15.1, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²³⁴ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, August 22, 1956, Container 15.1, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²³⁵ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, June 5, 1951, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

years to discuss his friend Gernsheim's prowess as a collector and his desire to found "a National Museum of Photography" with his collection at the core. Newhall included a large quotation from Paul Strand, who saw the show in London, in which Strand championed D.O. Hill, said that Brady is better than Fenton, and marveled over Lewis Carroll's child portraits which were "quite swell... it is a collection you would want to see."²³⁶ Newhall lauds Gernsheim's stance on photographic art both in his collecting and his book, suggesting that "the true artist produces works of art no matter what his vehicle of expression."²³⁷ While Newhall and Gernsheim saw themselves on the precipice of winning support for photographic art, statements like Charles Gibbs-Smiths' in *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography* reflected the pervasive curatorial mood in Britain:

Much nonsense and a little wisdom has been written during the past century about the art of photography. I am not going to risk adding to either category. But no-one with moderate sensibilities would claim that pictorial photography as a whole can rival the achievements of painting with its infinite reach of creativeness.²³⁸

And this from one of Britain's most sympathetic ears! The paradox of arguing for photography's artistic merits was that in doing so one had to claim that photography was an art form in its own right by simultaneously justifying this in the terms of the very art it one was seeking to disentangle it from.

²³⁶ Beaumont Newhall, "Masterpieces of Victorian Photography," December 16, 1951, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Gernsheim, *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography*, 5.

A NATIONAL COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Because of the strength of *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography* and the positive public reaction to it, the Gernsheims' fruitless search for a permanent home for their collection in Great Britain was a lasting disappointment to them. From a national perspective, the sale of the Gernsheims' collection to the University of Texas was a huge loss for Britain's photographic community. The circumstances of its sale and the preceding disappointments of the fiasco surrounding the collection's initial move to Detroit have been examined at length by Flukinger,²³⁹ and I do not want to recount them here, but it is worth examining how Gernsheim and others construed the collection in national terms. Gernsheim was not a lone voice in calling for a national collection of photography. In 1946, an *Amateur Photographer* editorial asked "is not the time coming for a National Gallery of Photographic Art?" and turned to a familiar place to bolster its case:

They have something of this kind in America, at the Brooklyn Museum, where there is a collection of first-class pictorial work, expanded year by year as a result of additional purchases. Such a collection over here would be an inspiration to many people. It might be extended indeed from the pictorial to the record motif, and as such it would be a more intimate and faithful reflection of contemporary life and character than any collection of paintings could be.²⁴⁰

Photography's place in a museum had been studied with reference to Chicago's museums also, although generally as illustrations for exhibits.²⁴¹ Since 1927 the Kodak factory in Harrow had maintained an under-publicized display of equipment "illustrating the History of Photography and Some of its Applications in Science, Art and Industry." This moved into new premises in 1939 and was kept up-to-date by including examples of the

²³⁹ Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 54–59.

²⁴⁰ "The National Collections," *The Amateur Photographer* XCVI, no. 3017 (September 4, 1946): 596.

²⁴¹ "The Museum and Photography," *The British Journal of Photography* XCIII, no. 4517 (November 29, 1946): 430.

latest (Kodak) technology, but still fell short of anything remotely resembling a national museum.²⁴² Aside from the R.P.S. collection and the holdings at the V&A, few British institutions collected photographs for anything but didactic or functional purposes.

Buoyed by the success of the Festival show, Gernsheim decided to strike while the iron was hot and drafted a proposal for a National Museum of Photography in May 1951.²⁴³ Absorbing some of the festival spirit, it began:

Britain is the birthplace of photography as we know it today, and right through the Victorian era most of the epoch-making discoveries were introduced by British inventors, and British photographers were internationally acknowledged as leading the world.²⁴⁴

After establishing Britain's primacy in photography, Gernsheim addressed the current state of affairs: "One wonders how it was possible... the entire field of Victorian photography should have suffered neglect and become the Cinderella of the arts." He followed this by a description of the acquisition of his collection, and suggested that it might form the basis of a national museum of photography "just as the Angerstein Collection was the basis of the National Gallery."²⁴⁵ The proposed museum would have a library, exhibition and study spaces and would function as the national hub for preserving old and modern work. The matter of establishing said museum was a matter of urgency because "already some rare specimens of the art have gone to American collections, while a great many have been irretrievably lost by destruction, due to ignorance."²⁴⁶ True though it may have been that American collectors were acquiring British photographs,

²⁴² "A Photographic Museum," *The British Journal of Photography* XCV, no. 4617 (November 12, 1948): 462–63.

²⁴³ Helmut Gernsheim, "Draft Suggestion for the Foundation of a National Museum of Photography: Draft A," May 24, 1951, Container 13.1, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

given Gernsheim's fondness for (and transactions with) George Eastman House in particular it is probable that Gernsheim raised the bogey man of acquisitive nouveau riche Americans raiding British culture to stimulate action. The same passage in a second draft, revised by Gernsheim's friend Nikolaus Pevsner, expanded the scope and highlighted Americans' interest in photography:

It seems therefore high time that a public collection of photographic art should be started containing both the best work of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the best of today—the former before more valuable material has disappeared or been transferred to the United States where there is much more interest in the subject than in this country, the latter with a view to preventing the mistakes under which the preservation of early photography is suffering now.²⁴⁷

Another nod to internationalism in the cause of assisting British photography was added to Draft C which included the following statement:

[The museum] would give people in this country an opportunity not only to become acquainted with the great heritage of British photography, but also to see the best work of leading photographers in other lands, which would doubtless have a beneficial influence upon the present state of photography in this country.²⁴⁸

The draft proposal formed the basis of a letter to *The Times*, published on March 3rd 1952²⁴⁹ which was signed by an impressive array of luminaries from the art and literary worlds (Clive Bell, Tom Hopkinson, Nikolaus Pevsner and J.B. Priestley among them).²⁵⁰ Other supportive letters followed from Lucia Moholy-Nagy and I.D. Wratten, president

²⁴⁷ Helmut Gernsheim, "Draft Suggestion for the Foundation of a National Museum of Photography: Draft A," May 24, 1951, Container 13.1, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²⁴⁸ Helmut Gernsheim, "Draft Suggestion for the Foundation of a National Museum of Photography: Draft C," July 1951, Container 13.1, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²⁴⁹ Clive Bell et. al., "National Collection of Photography," *The Times*, March 3, 1952, sec. Letters, 3. See also the partial reproduction in Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 54.

²⁵⁰ Sir Kenneth Clark was initially on board but his name did not appear on the final letter. Gernsheim, "Draft Suggestion for the Foundation of a National Museum of Photography: Draft C."

of the R.P.S. who managed to use the occasion to spend the majority of his letter talking about their own collection of photographs.²⁵¹

In Britain at least, the letters in *The Times* were the high watermark for the possibility of a national center for photography along the Gernsheims' lines. Despite the general lack of financial support in Britain, there were a number of institutions interested in housing the Gernsheims' collection and proposed museum space, but they found themselves unable to accede to Gernsheims' wishes. One of the implacable conditions of accepting the collection was having Helmut and Alison installed as the curators and having the freedom to make decisions about acquisitions and exhibitions. Many institutions tried sincerely to fulfill his exacting demands: particular hang-ups seemed to be adequate monetary support, finding a suitable building to house the museum's activities and ensuring that he and Alison were well remunerated for their curatorial roles.²⁵² The Gernsheims did not want reproductions of their photographs sold commercially, neither were they interested in a proposal which denied access to the photographs for all but a select few.²⁵³

Understandably, many institutions balked at the prospect. Qualities that made Gernsheim a fabulous collector and writer, his bullishness, unstinting dedication and stubbornness, rankled with many when he was trying to negotiate the donation of his collection with strings attached. He was, as Mark Haworth-Booth memorably put it, an "unreasonable man" in both senses of the term.²⁵⁴ Flukinger presents an exhaustive list of institutions that Gernsheim approached to assist with or to house his collection from 1952-1963, and it includes the following on the British side: the Royal Society of Arts,

²⁵¹ D. Wratten, "Letters to the Editor," *The Times*, March 7, 1952, 4.

²⁵² Other potential sticking points are discussed in Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 56.

²⁵³ Hill and Cooper, *Dialogue with Photography*, 202-204.

²⁵⁴ Haworth-Booth, "Helmut Gernsheim: 'An Unreasonable Man.'"

the Royal Photographic Society, Kodak, Ilford, London County Council, the Victoria & Albert museum, and the Victorian Society. A nationwide appeal on BBC television elicited no responses beyond two letters from schoolboys, and despite backing from many of the great and the good in the political and artistic fields, including Lord Snowdon who was keen to assist in “keeping the collection in the country,” virtually no other support emerged.²⁵⁵ Following the model of Eastman House, Gernsheim solicited commercial support from Ilford, Kodak and the Belgian film manufacturer Gevaert. Neither Ilford nor Kodak showed “any interest in building up an institute and museum of photography” and Gevaert would only part-finance the enterprise “if the English industry played their part.”²⁵⁶

Their dreams fading for a British home for their collection, the Gernsheims widened the net into Europe where they had been touring their collection since 1952. Prospects were slightly brighter but still no agreements could be reached. Newhall noted with sadness the Gernsheims’ problems in finding a site for their collection, and suggested that he might speak on Gernsheim’s behalf to Morris Gordon who was advising A&P Supermarket fortune heir Huntington Hartford on the photography section of his proposed Gallery of Modern Art in New York.²⁵⁷ Again, this proposal seems to have gone no further than the initial suggestion, but it was in the US where the Gernsheims would finally find closure. Although initially slated to go to a large, newly-converted Chrysler office building in Detroit with the Gernsheims having free reign to direct photographic activities, the Gernsheims took the majority of their collection over in

²⁵⁵ Hill and Cooper, “Helmut Gernsheim,” 202.

²⁵⁶ Helmut Gernsheim to Beaumont Newhall, February 28, 1954, Container 14.7, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

²⁵⁷ Beaumont Newhall to Helmut Gernsheim, March 13, 1962, Container 15.1, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers.

1963. The venture would soon become, as Gernsheim put it the “Detroit Misadventure”²⁵⁸ when the money to renovate the buildings never materialized and the Gernsheims found their collection seized because of non-payment of bills from an exhibition staged in Detroit.²⁵⁹ An offer from the University of Texas was accepted in July 1963. The offer that they accepted did not provide for a museum setting for the photographs but did remunerate them reasonably well (though not as much as they had hoped), preserve the collection under the Gernsheim name in a suitable building and would be free for anyone to access.²⁶⁰ Thus, after thirteen years in the wilderness, the largest and finest collection of British photography ever held in private hands would pass over to an institution in a country both more able financially and more willing to look after photography’s heritage.

EPILOGUE

Though Gernsheim’s collection had left Britain with little fanfare, ten years later, taking stock of and preserving Britain’s neglected photographs became hot-button issues, especially as increasing numbers of these were being exported to the US. In 1974, attempts were made to form a National Photographic Council, comprising the heads of the major museums, galleries and educational centers, to address the poor state of historical collections of British photography at a time when contemporary independent photography was on the rise.²⁶¹ The proposed sale of the Hill-Adamson albums in 1972, the “19th and 20th century photographs [that] continue to be regularly sold at auction and

²⁵⁸ Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 46.

²⁵⁹ Hill and Cooper, *Dialogue with Photography*, 204–205.

²⁶⁰ Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, 58.

²⁶¹ Barry Lane, “National Photographic Council,” 1973, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain Records, Theatre and Performance Archives, Victoria and Albert Museum.

are lost to America and Europe,” and the fact that “many major international shows are turned away for lack of gallery space or money” were major concerns.²⁶² A National Photographic Centre was proposed that would help stanch the outward flow by “working towards the establishment of a National Photographic Archive and to prevent the further loss or destruction of material in private, public or commercial hands.”²⁶³ Despite the desire for change and enthusiasm for the idea among the members of the council, securing a premises and raising funds for this proved too much of a challenge.²⁶⁴

Among the National Photographic Council’s ambitious aims were to “advance photography as an art and promote public knowledge, appreciation and public understanding thereof;” “to acquire, collect and preserve for the public benefit examples of photography” and “by means of research, instruction, information, advice, lectures, publications, sources of reference or otherwise to increase and to make publically available information concerning photography and photographic art apparatus and history.”²⁶⁵ Collections were in real danger from neglect and destruction; one unpublicized example occurred in 1973 when Sue Davies of the Photographers’ Gallery moved to save some of the *Daily Express*’ picture library (including a complete set of *Paris-Match*) from being thrown out.²⁶⁶ As Helmut Gernsheim had discovered over

²⁶² Barry Lane, “National Photographic Centre: Draft Newsletter,” 1974, 1, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain Records.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶⁴ “Minutes of the National Photographic Centre Meeting,” January 21, 1974, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain Records. An adjunct of R.P.S., The National Photographic Record, published a directory of British photographic collections in 1975, the first attempt at a comprehensive cataloguing of Britain’s public and privately held photographic collections. John Wall, “National Photographic Record,” 1974, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain Records.

²⁶⁵ “National Photographic Centre: Draft Constitution,” 1974, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain Records.

²⁶⁶ Sue Davies to Barry Lane, September 20, 1973, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain Records. This practice is still occurring, and while lamentable is not unusual. The Courtauld School of Art faced public outcry when they proposed disposing of their photographic library in 2009 and in 2012 the Tate’s photographic archive of its collections was unceremoniously disposed of. The collection found a home at the Paul Mellon Center for British Art in London, a UK-based charity arm of Yale University. Dalya

twenty years earlier, photography collections not already in museums were mostly victims of benign neglect at best and wanton destruction at worst. Peril also came from American collectors who were more aware of the importance and value of nineteenth-century British photographs, and seeking to enter a burgeoning field of collecting with the money to do so. As Bryn Campbell wrote in *The Times*:

If American involvement [in British photography] has been partly missionary, it has also been determinedly predatory. Sotheby's auctions of photographic rarities have increased from their first 1971 sales total of £10,000 to over £100,000 on a couple of occasions since. The vast majority of items have been sold to American dealers.²⁶⁷

As in the post-war years, owners of valuable historical photographs in Britain increasingly had to part with them due to financial strain; others recognized their value and became keen to sell to the highest bidder wherever they were. The purchase of British photographs by American collectors occurred at a juncture when fears of a “brain drain” and of a “manuscript drain” to America were pervasive among the British cognoscenti.²⁶⁸ These fears predictably dredged up old prejudices against American money and vulgarity but they were also a wake-up call, a means to preservation and an indication that such objects should be cherished. In 1974, Sam Wagstaff bought the “Herschel Album” of Julia Margaret Cameron’s prints at a Sotheby’s auction, causing a stir because of the world-record price paid. The publicity led to a concerted campaign to stop the export of the album as a “national treasure” and £52,000 was eventually raised from various sources (including the Arts Council and the readers of *Amateur*

Alberge, “Tate’s National Photographic Archive ‘Rescued from Skip’ after Internal Tipoff,” *The Guardian*, February 23, 2012, sec. Art and Design, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/feb/23/tate-national-photographic-archive-rescued>.

²⁶⁷ Bryn Campbell, “How the Great British Photographic Revival Created Its Own Momentum,” *The Times*, November 5, 1976, 13.

²⁶⁸ For a contemporary account of the manuscript drain, see: “No Drum Heard For Boke Of Brome,” *The Times*, February 2, 1967, 16, Gale NewsVault.

Photographer) to purchase the album “for the nation.” It was about twenty years too late, but Britain had finally come around to Gernsheim’s way of thinking, and if they had recognized his collection as a national treasure and raised the funds to purchase it in 1950, the landscape of British photography would look very different than what it is today.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has centered on the friendship and correspondence between Beaumont Newhall and Helmut Gernsheim as a way of examining the transatlantic dialogue in photography between Helmut and Alison Gernsheim’s initial encounter with Newhall in London in 1944 to the sale of the Gernsheim collection to the University of Texas. In the first half of the chapter, I outlined some of the ways photographic practice travelled across the Atlantic from the late nineteenth century through to the middle of the 1960s. Though British photographers dominated the early discourse of photography, it was the aesthetically more advanced American independent photographers who would assume leadership from the 1910s onward. Clinging tenaciously to an outmoded pictorialism, at its highest levels of technical and artistic achievement British photography became safe, aesthetically backward, and retrograde. British photography was enlivened by practitioners from continental Europe in the 1930s, but European émigrés to Britain found themselves working commercially for magazines and newspapers in a country that was suspicious of avant-garde art, let alone experimental photography. In the comparatively freer confines of the American art establishment, and as a result of practitioners like Newhall at MoMA, the undercurrent of fine art photography continued and slowly grew whereas in Britain independent photographers

were at pains to find an institutional or educational support whatsoever. The Second World War both confirmed America's status as a global power and signaled to the British that at almost every level of photographic technology and practice, they were being outpaced. Far from being rejected as an expression of technological or cultural imperialism, British practitioners sought to learn from their transatlantic compatriots and were keen to emulate American success in the hope that this would reflect positively on Britain.

An accidental photographic missionary, Beaumont Newhall's assessment of the neglect and apathy surrounding photography in Britain prompted him to suggest that Gernsheim take up collecting British photography, a process that in turn would invigorate the field of photographic history but highlight just how deep the indifference towards Britain's photographic heritage was. In making the case for photography in Britain, Gernsheim would often invoke the example of institutions in the US as examples of how things could be done. He would advocate for both contemporary and historic photography passionately and encourage the importation of US exhibitions and photographic professionals to reform institutions like the R.P.S. and inspire a new generation of photographers. Both Newhall and Gernsheim were men who had reached the upper echelons of photographic practice by the mid-fifties, the differences between each country became stark. On the forefront of a small but burgeoning interest in historical photography, Newhall could look forward to institutional support and a small amount of money to support his endeavors. The Gernsheims, in contrast, could only spend his own funds and would fail to find a home for his collection in the country in which most of the images originated.

When they left Britain for Switzerland in 1965, the future was uncertain for British photography, but a generation of young photographers would pick up the cause.

The August 1969 edition of *Creative Camera* ran a small obituary for Alison Gernsheim who had died that April, noting her achievements, and mentioning that her death “will sadden all those who care for great photography.” “She, like her husband,” the piece continued, “must have been bitterly disappointed that nowhere in Britain could a home be found for the incomparable Gernsheim collection... it would have been the ideal basis for a national gallery of photography.”²⁶⁹ In the next chapter, I will focus on Bill Jay, the editor of *Creative Camera* magazine—in many ways the inheritor of Gernsheim’s reforming passion—and his efforts in the late 1960s to shape British photography to an American mold.

²⁶⁹ “Alison Gernsheim,” *Creative Camera*, no. 62 (August 1969): 272.

Chapter 2: Paddled Furiously Across the Atlantic: *Creative Camera*, *Album* and US Photography in Britain 1966-1972

Writing from New Zealand on the occasion of *Creative Camera*'s final issue in 2001, former editor Peter Turner provided a strident epitaph for the magazine he had edited for over fourteen years:

I am furious. Angry at indifference. Angry at crass stupidity and crying for photography being disregarded or dropped in the general mire of post-modern confusion... *Creative Camera* may not have been perfect, but for more than thirty years it was an outlet for photographers' thoughts and expressions. To sever it at the jugular is to make contempt and mockery of more personal endeavour than any arts council with a sordid routine of shuffling papers and snapping elastic could imagine... I am ashamed of being English and witnessing this genocide.¹

The target of Turner's ire, the Arts Council of England, had withdrawn financial support from the magazine in June 2001: dependent on this funding from 1981 onward, *Creative Camera* folded after thirty-six years of publication. To the magazine's acolytes, Turner's indignation must have seemed entirely justified: *Creative Camera* had become a "personal endeavor" for many photographers as well as for Turner who took the reins of the magazine when its iconoclastic editor, Bill Jay, left. Especially in its early years, the magazine's mission of zealously spreading the good news about photography and reforming outmoded British photographic institutions often meant making enemies as well as converts. Over its lifespan, *Creative Camera* was described on one pole as having aspirations to become "the *Granta* of photography,"² and on the other as a "modernist photo magazine... which is used mainly as a kind of poetic masturbatory aid for self-

¹Peter Turner, "Kiss the Past Goodbye: An Epitaph to Creative Camera," *New Zealand Journal of Photography*, no. 45 (Summer 2001), <http://zonezero.com/magazine/articles/turner/turnereng.html>.

²Eamonn McCabe, "Untitled," *The Guardian*, May 14, 1990. *Granta* is Britain's leading contemporary literary quarterly.

confessed aesthetes.”³ The magazine created and sustained a community of like-minded individuals, as William Messer noted in *US Camera Annual 1977*:

[*Creative Camera*] not only presented some of the most interesting photographs and considerations available anywhere, but served as a catalyst and fulcrum for the creative forces of younger British photographers who would no longer have to feel they were simply dreaming or working in isolation.⁴

Creative Camera's three-decade lifespan is testament to the passion its publisher Colin Osman and editors Bill Jay, and latterly Peter Turner, Susan Butler, Judy Goldhill and David Brittain brought to one of the defining publications of the British photographic community. Although never a mass-market publication, nor one that was read widely outside of a narrowly-defined photographic community (circulation estimates range from 5,000 to 30,000 over the years), it was central to what became known as the British photographic revival of the late sixties and seventies.⁵ As Val Williams puts it, “it was the restless and exclusive dialectic of *Camera Owner/Creative Camera* which set the aesthetic agenda of a decade,” an agenda enthusiastically embraced in some quarters and debated with equal vigor in the magazine's later years.⁶

³ Bob Long, “Camerawork 8 and the Political Photographer,” *Camerawork*, no. 16 (November 1979): 10. The reference here to ‘masturbatory aid’ is a sideways jab at the seedy ‘glamour’ advertisements that the magazine carried in its early years, something that was unfortunate but necessary for the magazine's finances: “That pin-ups are advertised in the classified columns is viewed partly with regret; their financial value cannot be denied but the idea of advert censorship, especially hypocritical censorship, is vaguely repugnant.” Colin Osman, “Colin Osman... Personally Speaking,” *Creative Camera*, no. 44 (February 1968): 45.

⁴ Messer, “The British Obsession: About to Pay Off?,” 51–52.

⁵ This was a term applied contemporaneously. See, for example Campbell, “How the Great British Photographic Revival Created Its Own Momentum,” 13.

⁶ Val Williams, “Crowned With Thorns: Creative Camera 1965-1978,” in *Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography From the 1850s to the Present*, ed. Liz Heron and Val Williams (Duke University Press, 1996), 223. The article first appeared in *Creative Camera* no. 312, April/May 1993.

Between 1968-1981,⁷ when it had divested itself of the need to support a “hobbyist” audience of mainly amateur photographers, *Creative Camera* was a magazine that approached fine art and documentary photography largely through the example of what would come to be defined as independent photography, although the editors had a definite but purposefully opaque definition of the term. From its inception, *Creative Camera* and later Bill Jay’s *Album* oriented themselves to developments outside the UK, and specifically to photographers and photographic practices emanating from the US. The volume of photographic material published in the US and the increasing number of young photographers keen to read about and publish their own material, coupled with the favorable disposition of young Britons to American culture, meant that from the beginning of the magazine until mid-1970s, the predominance of American material may have seemed a foregone conclusion, especially if its core audience wanted to see material from and inspired by US trends.

Readers, writers, and photographers involved with *Creative Camera* were building and sustaining an international community that advocated simultaneously for photography’s inclusion in the pantheon of fine art and its uniqueness as an art form. Most independent photographers did not see themselves purely in terms of their nationality (though they may have critiqued notions of national identity in their work) but more as fellow enthusiasts seeking to raise the profile of a neglected medium. Looking at *Creative Camera* as exemplary of this internationalism, it is telling to see how fraught the influence of US photographic practice was: one could argue that internationalism meant a

⁷ In 2005 a series of events were planned across Britain based around the history of British photography since the 1960s. Entitled “What Happened Here: Photography in Britain since 1968,” and sponsored nominally by the defunct *Creative Camera*, the choice of the year 1968 demonstrated the centrality of the magazine to British photographic culture. David Manley, “Some of ‘What Happened Here...,’” 2005, http://www.weepingash.co.uk/images/stories/cc/sundries/some_of_what.pdf.

hegemonic American influence internationally rather than an equal exchange of ideas.⁸ Magazines like *Creative Camera* were key platforms for resurrecting arguments about autochthonous national photographs, supported by the state by museums and arts funding, a process which meant mobilizing a separate sense of British photography and photographic history that resisted or reworked American stylistic and intellectual inflection.

In this chapter, I will discuss the role of photographic magazines in maintaining a dialogue between British and American photography from the 1950s until the mid-sixties when publisher Colin Osman bought *Camera Owner*.⁹ In particular, I will focus on *Creative Camera*'s first editor Bill Jay, providing an account of the early 'creative' years of *Camera Owner/Creative Camera* under Jay until 1969 and his later work with *Album* focusing on the magazines' relationship with existing magazine publishing and with US-based photographic practice. I end the chapter with a discussion of Jay's activities after *Album* and his move to the US in 1972. Although *Creative Camera* and *Album* largely drew inspiration from the US under Jay's editorship, I believe it is also important to see this as laying the groundwork for a transatlantic dialogue for independent photographers, especially as Jay himself embodied this ideal.

THE BEGINNINGS OF *CREATIVE CAMERA: CAMERA OWNER*

Creative Camera magazine arose out of the need for a specialist photographic magazine in Britain that concentrated on photography as a creative art, distinguishing

⁸ See, for example: Kempf, "American Photography in France since World War II: Was France Liberated by the United States?"

⁹ Brittain divides *Creative Camera*'s history into four phases: the creative years (1968-1981), the years of contest (1981-1986), the independent years (1986-1991) and the post-theory years (1991-2001). The term 'creative years' was provided by art historian Ian Jeffrey. David Brittain, *Creative Camera: Thirty Years of Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 2.

itself from technically-oriented magazines instructing photographers how to get the best out of their camera. The magazine's colorful origins necessitate a brief recounting.¹⁰ The magazine came about as an alliance of Colin Osman, a forty year-old magazine publisher and sometime photographer with Bill Jay, a young magazine editor fourteen years his junior. Jay contacted Osman about the prospect of including some images of Osman's in *Camera Owner*, a magazine Jay had become the editor of in 1965. Shortly after he was hired, Jay learned from the publisher Sylvester Stein that *Camera Owner* was due to fold because of low sales. Jay suggested to Stein that he purchase and edit the magazine and a chance meeting with Osman ended up with the latter becoming, in Jay's words, a "fairy godmother" by purchasing the title for a nominal fee of £1 in 1966 and agreeing to the use of his offices to produce the magazine under the auspices of the newly-formed Coo Press.¹¹

Jay had been a contributor to *Practical Photography*, and *Photography* magazine, and had spent a year working for film and paper manufacturer Ilford. A graduate of a vocational photography course at Berkshire College of Art, Jay's move into industry was typical of an accomplished graduate of a British photography program, the vast majority of whom would become photographers' assistants or find work in applied photography. Jay's interest in fine art photography had been piqued by a copy of Bill Brandt's *Perspective of Nudes* that he reviewed for the hobbyist publication *Practical Photography*. The book garnered derision from most of the staff but stirred strong feelings in Jay who pursued this by engaging with the nascent independent photography

¹⁰ This background information is drawn from the longer accounts which can be found in the Oral History of British Photography archival interviews with Jay and Osman as well as: Brittain, *Creative Camera: Thirty Years of Writing*; Williams, "Crowned With Thorns: Creative Camera 1965-1978."

¹¹ Bill Jay, interview by Val Williams, Cassette Tape, 1992, C459/23/01-04, The Oral History of British Photography, The British Library. Osman set up the ("Colin Osman Organization") after the J. Arthur Rank Organization; the name had the benefit of oxymoronicity representing his other interest.

scene at irregular shows and parties held at the Kodak and Ilford offices in London, some of the few venues where semi-regular gatherings of photographers occurred.¹² Personal contact with photographers would become incredibly important to Jay in future years to cultivate a community, as would the encounters with a trickle of important photographic books such as Robert Frank's *The Americans* that made a large impression on him and pointed him to a world of photography outside of the narrow confines of the advertising and fashion focus of the occasional British gallery shows. Jay saw the photographic magazine's potential as a vehicle for revolutionizing photographic thought and practice in Britain, and *Camera Owner* was a tool that could be shaped into a revolutionary device. Already aware of the exciting aesthetic and institutional changes happening on the continent and especially in the US, Jay's constant learning on-the-job and inclusiveness with regard to genre and style in the early years of the magazine gave it its variety and verve.

The more senior Osman was the publisher of *Racing Pigeon* magazine (inherited from his father) and a semi-professional photographer of nudes with burgeoning interest in left-wing politics and the history of photography.¹³ An occasional contributor to *Photography* magazine, Osman admired the approach editor Norman Hall had taken and lamented the magazine's reversion to amateurism in the mid-sixties. A fierce belief in free speech and a nonconformist approach to the staid photography establishment in Britain meshed with Jay's desire to shake photography at its roots and get photography

¹² Ibid.

¹³ It is possible to trace Osman's involvement with photographic magazines through articles on Pigeons scattered across various contemporary magazines. A 1964 edition of *Image* featured an article entitled "Pigeon- Pest or Pet?" with accompanying photographs and also in 1964 *Racing Pigeon* sponsored a photography contest held by *Photography*. "Reader Assignment: The Racing Pigeon," *Photography* XVIV, no. 6 (June 1964): 13. The term 'pigeon' was also used by photojournalists to describe the person carrying their films or images back to their photo editor while they stayed in the field. Tim Bishop, "The Royal Pigeon," *Hotshoe*, no. 168 (November 2010): 78.

on the cultural map.¹⁴ In the early years, Osman subsidized the cost of producing the magazine with his profits from *Racing Pigeon* magazine and made use of his contacts in the industry to assist with printing and distribution.¹⁵ *Creative Camera*'s offices at 19 Doughty Street in London's Bloomsbury were shared with *Racing Pigeon* and he kept a coop on the roof, an arrangement that lent a memorably chaotic feel to the offices.¹⁶ Osman's role was largely as facilitator of the magazine while the editors created and arranged the content, but his editorial contributions were some of the most important: especially in the later years, his articles on Eastern European photographic movements based on research trips funded by *Racing Pigeon* would be important pieces that introduced both amateurs and experts to figures like Frantisek Drtikol, Alexander Rodchenko and Josef Sudek. Osman and Jay made for a rather unlikely duo whose passion for photography and publishing acumen would lay a foundation for the rapid change the British photographic scene was to experience in the late sixties through the seventies.

Critical attention has been paid to the cultural role of literary magazines and popular mass media publications,¹⁷ but recent work on art magazines and countercultural publications in particular has done much to situate periodicals in a cultural/cross-cultural

¹⁴ David Brittain, "One for the Money, Two for the Show," *Afterimage* 30, no. 1 (2002): 5.

¹⁵ During its inter-war peak the periodical's circulation was 40,000. Although slowly declining subsequently, it by far outsold *Creative Camera* over its lifetime. Colin Osman, interview by Alan Dein, Cassette Tape, February 1995, C459/62, The Oral History of British Photography, The British Library.

¹⁶ The Osman family bought the lease to the house in 1908 but was forced to sell it in the early 1990s due to rising commercial rates from the local council. Ibid. *Creative Camera* had some illustrious neighbors. Doughty Street's most famous resident was Charles Dickens who lived there in the 1830s and whose former residence is now the Charles Dickens House Museum. Another agent of transatlantic exchange, the US-UK Fulbright Commission, is currently resident at 62 Doughty Street. Number 19 is currently the London base of international hair entrepreneurs Toni & Guy.

¹⁷ See for example Erika Lee Doss, *Looking at Life Magazine* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001). , Catherine Lutz and Jane Lou Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). and David Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical*, Hampton Press Communication Series (Cresskill, N.J: Hampton Press, 1996).

context as well as analyzing their content.¹⁸ As with any cultural production, magazines were designed to appeal to a particular audience whether broad (mass market) or narrow (niche) in a dialogic relationship; to be successful, a magazine's content has to appeal to its readership and also has to sustain their interest by being responsive to their tastes and desires while simultaneously providing information that stimulates desire. As Leara Rhodes succinctly puts it, magazines are "agents of socialization," "vehicles for ideas, understanding, and reader service."¹⁹ Especially in the 1960s, the decline in mass-market magazines and the subsequent rise in single-interest magazines like *Creative Camera* sprung up to fill gaps in the market, serving readers by creating and sustaining a quasi-public sphere for their respective communities.

In her survey of artists' magazines from the 1960s-1970s, Gwen Allen notes that the ephemerality and newness of the artist magazines of that period was an important function of their social and cultural roles: they had a "heightened relationship with the present moment."²⁰ Small-run, in-house publications are particularly sensitive to reporting on new forms of art and in turn generating excitement for conceptual events and happenings, often providing a framework in which they would be interpreted and discussed. The impetus of publication was not to make money or to even sustain the magazines beyond a few issues, "but by an earnest and impassioned belief in the magazine's capacity to radicalize the reception of art."²¹

¹⁸ See John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011)., among others. From a British standpoint: Nigel Fountain, *Underground: The London Alternative Press, 1966-74* (Routledge, 1988). Interestingly, one of the first histories of the American underground press was published in 1972 in Great Britain as a result of postgraduate Roger Lewis' hitch-hiking tour of the US: Roger Lewis, *Outlaws of America: The Underground Press and Its Context* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

¹⁹ Leara Rhodes "Research Review: An International Perspective on Magazines" in *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995). p.160-161

²⁰ Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines : An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Likewise, *Creative Camera* embraced the need to report on new photography, and provided a forum where interested parties could view cutting-edge work and read reviews of the latest hard-to-find books without having to visit a gallery.²² This democratizing role was heightened by the fact that in many ways magazines (Sunday color supplements included) were the only places interested parties could see cutting-edge creative photography. Aside from sporadic (if influential) shows, there was no gallery dedicated to displaying photographs in London until 1970 and outside the city until 1972.²³ *Creative Camera* enthusiastically reported on both gallery growth and touring shows: like Helmut Gernsheim's long campaign, the editors and their supporters had been lobbying for the establishment of a photographic gallery for years. This position was not simply reflexive, as the magazine could actively shape the photographic agenda through its pages as well as report on it.

The transatlantic exchange of photographic ideas through the most popular mass-market photographic trade and hobbyist publications continued much in the same vein from the postwar period into the 1960s. The increasing atomization of photographic practice in the 1960s between the professional and technical fields, an emerging art-oriented approach and the middle-class amateurism of groups such as the Royal Photographic Society (R.P.S.) was reflected in the pages of magazines like the *British Journal of Photography* who juggled all of these audiences in an attempt to provide a

²² Galleries showing photographic exhibitions were largely nucleated in London up until the mid-seventies, and *Creative Camera*'s ability to absorb these trends and disseminate images widely across Britain sustained and fostered the growth of regional galleries and photographic practice was of immense value. Importantly, as will be examined later, *Creative Camera*'s liminal existence between commercial and non-commercial, professional and amateur audiences, national and international focus gave it a unique position in the market and helped assure its centrality to independent photographic practice.

²³ These were Do Not Bend Gallery in London which opened in late 1970, closely followed by The Photographers' Gallery in early 1971 and the Half Moon Workshop in the same year. "Do Not Bend," *The British Journal of Photography* 117, no. 5755 (November 6, 1970): 1084. York's Impressions Gallery opened in 1972. Powell, Rob, "Impressions at Ten," *Amateur Photographer* 166, no. 33 (November 6, 1982): 110-13.

reasonably holistic picture of photography in Britain as well as garner more subscribers. As Jay repeatedly affirmed, by the time *Creative Camera* had come of age in February 1968 there was no one magazine where ‘serious’ non-commercial photography was the discrete focus. This is not to suggest that there were no venues for the type of photography Jay and Osman espoused, more that a person interested in this work would have find it in disparate venues across the publishing world.

An article published in the left-leaning review *New Society* in 1968 demonstrates the degree to which British magazine publishing was perceived to live in the shadow of its US equivalents. In a criticism mirroring assessments of the contemporary British photographic scene, Geoffrey Cannon opened his article “A Depressing Industry” with the question: “why are British magazines so bad?” noting that while excelling in television and newspaper reportage, British magazines lagged behind their continental and US counterparts in quality.²⁴ Cannon attributed the success of US magazines to a strong national industry coupled with a regionally-focused press which made a position at a national magazine favorable to an aspiring journalist as opposed to Britain with its strong national papers and relatively anemic magazine sector. American magazines were popular and widely read in Britain and were, as Cannon notes, doing a better job at reporting on British youth culture than their UK contemporaries, citing a recent survey of the London music scene by New-York based *Eye* magazine as an example of the “gulf in quality” between it and the recently-launched *Cue* and *19* in London.²⁵ *Eye*’s appeal was its ability to cover “new ground”, reporting at “the speed of the fastest events” and propounding the notion to the readers that “the world is theirs.”²⁶ Cannon ends his piece

²⁴ Geoffrey Cannon, “A Depressing Industry,” *New Society*, March 21, 1968, 424.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 425.

²⁶ Cannon, “A Depressing Industry.”

with the claim that “footloose foreign editors” would do well to come to Britain and suggests that until young British editors rise to the challenge, interested readers should “subscribe to foreign magazines.”²⁷ Cannon keenly sensed their inferiority and suggested that the remedy was for native talent to orient itself toward the American model of production (if not to reproduce their content) so that Britain’s industry could keep pace.

THE NEW BRITISH PHOTOJOURNALISM

Due in large part to *Picture Post* and the work of practitioners like Bill Brandt, Kurt Hutton and Bert Hardy, the predominant photographic tradition in Britain by the 1950s was photojournalism. Venerable as the old guard was, a new generation of social realist photojournalists was to arrive on the scene by the late 1950s. As Gillian Whiteley has identified, a strain of social realism ran through British photographic and artistic practice since the 1930s but found its true expression in the 1950s as the effects of social policy and the privations of the post war world governed British politics.²⁸ Joining the Kitchen Sink painters like John Bratby and Jack Smith and Angry Young Men of the theatre like Joe Orton and John Osborne, the “Young Meteors” of British photojournalism carved out a niche as socially-conscious photographers who sought to represent ordinary life compassionately and to prompt social change by documenting injustice.²⁹ Young photographers like Don McCullin, Philip Jones-Griffiths, Patrick Ward and Penny Tweedie operated in an increasingly international publishing context, and this

²⁷ Ibid., 425.

²⁸ Gillian Whiteley, “Re-Presenting Reality, Recovering the Social: The Poetics and Politics of Social Realism and Visual Art,” in *British Social Realism in the Arts since 1940*, ed. David Tucker (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 146.

²⁹ The phrase “young meteors” is taken from Jonathan Aitken’s 1967 survey of movers-and-shakers in London. Martin Harrison, *Young Meteors: British Photojournalism, 1957-1965* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998), 5.

important component to transatlantic photographic exchange meant that photographers could earn a living commercially while pursuing personal side projects. Photo agencies like Viva, Magnum and Globe supplied pictures to magazines internationally and their stables of peripatetic photographers from across the world fed off each other's ideas and energies. In Britain, David Bailey and Terence Donovan, whose fashion work drew upon the British documentary aesthetic, started working and selling their photographs internationally. In doing so they became "increasingly aware of the highly professionalized support networks available to some of their competitors, in particular the leading Americans," prompting a reorientation towards the US market.³⁰ As the transatlantic traffic intensified, heightened by the buzz of swinging London, many photographers who enjoyed success in Britain like Brian Seed and Harry Benson found their way to the US where the money and support were more appealing. Many British photographers including David Hurn and Colin Osman could sell photos to US publications, the proliferation of which and higher fees paid must have seemed a very attractive option.³¹ The bigger, more diverse market for pictures in the US reinforced Britain's status as a photographic backwater compared to its more advanced cousin.

While *Life* and *Look* magazine in the US struggled on throughout the sixties, the oft-cited demise of *Picture Post* (first published in 1938) in 1957 left Britain without the popular national weekly news magazine which at the height of its powers during the Second World War was the most widely read periodical in the country. It not only inspired up-and-coming photographers with its ability to show *and* tell but also provided

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

³¹ A short manual published at the time makes the difference in price plain: the top of the market, it claimed, would pay £500-600 for a picture story. Advice was also given on how to "slant" the photographs "you can go one of two ways- either making them as American or as British as you can." The latter option is desirable (subjects should be "distinctly British") for magazine editors who gain "the effect of an international magazine without having to send anyone abroad." *How and Where to Sell Your Pictures for Dollars*. (London: Henry Greenwood & Co., 1960), 1.

employment for producers of picture-stories. The majority of press photographers still worked for the national and regional press, but Britain's premier venue for narrative picture stories was lost with *Picture Post*'s closure in 1957. Cambridge-based *Image*'s article "The Great Mag Race" from 1961 summed up the state of the medium with the pronouncement, "there are plenty of things wrong with British journalism, and one of the worst is that we have no good picture magazines," citing the "incomparable" *Paris-Match*, *Life* and *Look* as ways to do it better. There were bright spots, however, in youth-oriented lifestyle magazines which still featured picture stories: *About Town* (later *Town*) is described as "half of the nearest thing we have to a picture magazine" and *Queen* as "completely unpredictable but always stimulating."³²

Both *Queen* and *Town* were to bridge the gap between the waning sphere of popular photojournalism and the newer world of fashion photography in Britain, providing regular employment for the "terrible three" of British fashion and advertising photography Terence Donovan, David Bailey and Brian Duffy.³³ As Anne Braybon notes, *Town* derived stylistic inspiration from New York's *Show* magazine, importing the perceived glamour of the US magazine world.³⁴ The magazine had high production values and produced memorable portfolios from Don McCullin and William Klein, among others, that were designed to augment the magazine's up-to-the minute feel.³⁵ *Queen*, a looser, more gossipy magazine, also commissioned memorable portfolios,

³² "The Great Mag Race," *Image*, no. 4 (May 1961): 27.

³³ The moniker referred to, as Jennifer Craik puts it, their "irreverent attitude to the pretensions of fashion and a low opinion of its protagonists." Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (Routledge, 2003), 103. Duffy's work featured in the May 1968 edition of *Creative Camera*.

³⁴ Anne Braybon, "About Town: A Case Study from Research in Progress on Photographic Networks in Britain, 1952-1969," *Photography and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2008): 100.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 100-102. *Town* ceased production in 1967, demonstrating just how volatile the market was for such publications. As noted in *Creative Camera*: "*Town* gave a great deal of encouragement to young photographers. It will leave a lamentable gap in the picture-press." "Views and News," *Creative Camera*, no. 44 (February 1968): 41.

perhaps the most important in this context being Bruce Davidson's images of England reproduced in a twenty-page portfolio "Seeing Ourselves as an American Sees Us."³⁶ Youth-oriented and ahead of the times, *Town* and *Queen* introduced their audiences to high-quality images and design, features that were also evident in the color supplements to the Sunday newspapers, another important venue for photographers.³⁷ "Suddenly," as Martin Harrison states, "the situation was wide open. Boundaries between different disciplines were dissolved in the polyglot context of a society edging toward a new era."³⁸ Often the Cinderella of the arts, photography was edging towards greater recognition by the cultural elite but it would take a concerted effort to get it there.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRECURSORS AND CONTEMPORARIES: *CAMERA WORK*, *APERTURE* AND *CAMERA*

Photographic magazines have differed in the degree to which their audiences saw them as temporary diversions or items to be kept, referred back to and cherished. Unlike art world contemporaries like *Artforum* and *Studio International* which might be read by its audiences for the gallery advertisements as much as the articles, the more purist art photography periodicals with their aversion to or reluctant embrace of advertising and emphasis on fine production aimed to be discrete art objects. In photographic terms, Alfred Steiglitz's seminal *Camera Work*, published from 1903-1917, was the primogenitor of the photographic magazine as art object: such was its achievement that it was many years before anything of comparable accomplishment and quality appeared in

³⁶ Bruce Davidson, "Seeing Ourselves as an American Sees Us: A Picture Essay on Britain," *Queen*, April 12, 1961, 106–127. *Queen* also published Davidson's photo essays "The Statue of Liberty" and "Brooklyn Teenagers."

³⁷ Documentary photography was strongly represented in the color supplements, and provided a forum for both older and up-and-coming photographers. An interesting example of the former is Russell Lee, "The Super University of Texas," *The Observer Magazine*, February 14, 1965, 18–29.

³⁸ Harrison, *Young Meteors: British Photojournalism, 1957-1965*, 97.

the form of *Aperture*. Although in later years *Camera Work* turned its attention to paintings and emerging European modern art, Stieglitz's magazine still set the bar for the standard of reproduction, meticulous quality of design and a single-minded notion of what types of photography deserved promotion and recognition. Stieglitz's strict editorial control and use of the magazine as a vehicle for his own and the photo-secession's ideas was designed to secure a place for photography (especially his and his cadre's) in the pantheon of fine arts, a theme that resonated among more recent proselytizers Beaumont Newhall, Helmut Gernsheim and Bill Jay amongst others. *Creative Camera* never aspired to the purism of a periodical like *Camera Work* (it simply could not afford to) but Jay's *Album* shared *Camera Work*'s attention to lavish production and printing to give photographs the treatment they deserved.

Aperture, a magazine conceived at a conference in Aspen and published from 1952 on a nonprofit basis, was born of a similar impulse to further photographic art.³⁹ Emerging from a circle of eminent photographers that included Dorothea Lange, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall and Ansel Adams, the magazine set itself out to be "an invitation to 'the common ground for the advancement of photography;'" Ansel Adams' "we have nothing to lose but our photography!" appearing in its first issue as its clarion call.⁴⁰ Its first editor, Minor White, was heir to the spiritual tradition of photography found in Stieglitz's "equivalents," and in the magazine's early years he promoted this trend by reproducing images of nudes and landscapes by Wynn Bullock, Pirkle Jones, Paul Caponigro, and Frederick Sommer, all of whom shared White's affinity for metaphysical, personal photographs that alluded to mystical notions of place and self

³⁹ A benefactor, Shirley Burden, financed the basic costs of production, although subscriptions added to the magazine's coffers. Richard H Cravens and Melissa Harris, eds., *Photography Past Forward: Aperture at 50* (New York, N.Y: Aperture, 2002), 129.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

expression, the “mirrors” of John Szarkowski’s famous Mirror/Window dichotomy.⁴¹ Determined to promote a critical dialogue surrounding artistic photography, White also cobbled together any essays or occasional pieces he could find or commission, reprinting articles on photography from the *New York Times* and *New Yorker*, a practice that would be mirrored in the first years of *Creative Camera*’s existence.⁴² In 1965, responsibility for publishing the journal passed to Michael Hoffman, who turned the magazine into a quarterly publication and, despite his youth, steered the magazine towards publishing an older generation of avant-garde photographers like Paul Strand, Alfred Stieglitz and Edward S. Curtis. “The justification” suggests R.H. Cravens “was unassailable. There was little point in purveying the avant-garde of a medium whose most significant avant-garde had been so long neglected, unseen by a larger public,” a sentiment that would resonate equally with Jay and the Gernsheims.⁴³ *Aperture* would diversify into book publishing in 1968 and Hoffman went on to work as a curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art where he produced successful shows later published as monographs.

The similarities between *Creative Camera*, *Album* and *Aperture* point to a distinct mutuality of influence, even if *Aperture* was the lead partner in this relationship. In treating the photograph as art object, these magazines dedicated pages to individual photographs with reverent white borders and little, if any text to disrupt contemplation of the images. Certainly, White’s dictum that “profit motive must never dictate content” was a mantra to Jay and, to a lesser degree, Osman, and the magazine’s dedication to quality

⁴¹ John Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978), 21.

⁴² Similarly to *Creative Camera*, *Aperture*’s existence was not without financial hardships. *Aperture*’s financial nadir from 1963-4 was concomitant with a decline in photographic periodicals in the UK. In 1977, the enterprise was effectively bankrupt and had to be bailed out with a loan and an NEA grant. At a time when the myth of American photography’s robust finances was pervasive in Britain, it is noteworthy that *Creative Camera* weathered similar financial storms until a grant from the Arts Council saved the magazine from folding in 1981.

⁴³ Cravens and Harris, *Photography Past Forward*, 135.

was an inspiration if *Creative Camera* had a more commercial orientation out of necessity.⁴⁴ More formal relations were established when Osman's Coö Press, became *Aperture*'s British agent in the 1970s and one of *Creative Camera*'s former editors, Mark Holborn, became editor of *Aperture* in 1985.⁴⁵

A final contemporary of *Creative Camera* that merits attention is Swiss-based *Camera* magazine, edited by expatriate American Allan Porter from 1966 onwards. Originally designed as the in-house promotional magazine for the C.J. Bucher printing house, *Camera* was designed to present the best possible reproductions of images and shifted its focus from amateur photography to showcase fine art photography internationally. Produced in three separate languages, *Camera*, like *Aperture* aspired to permanence; its aegis was "priority to the visual, predominance in quality, simplicity in graphic presentation and variation in reproduction processes," it aimed to be "an international crossroads for photography."⁴⁶ Largely because of Porter's transatlantic connections, many American photographers were published in *Camera* which, like *Creative Camera*, became a place from which US-based practitioners could build an international reputation.⁴⁷ *Camera* shared with *Aperture* a monographic approach to photographic publishing with thematic issues such as the Peter Bunnell-curated Photo-Secession issue (December 1969) and a series on "Living Masters of Photography" (1972). Unlike *Creative Camera*, *Album* and *Aperture*, *Camera* did not have the presence

⁴⁴ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁵ Chris Boot, a leading UK photographic publisher became executive director of the Aperture Foundation in 2010. "Chris Boot Named Executive Director at Aperture," *PublishersWeekly.com*, October 19, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/people/article/44878-chris-boot-named-executive-director-at-aperture.html>.

⁴⁶ Allan Porter, "Editorial," *Camera* 45, no. 1 (January 1966): 3.

⁴⁷ Similarly to *Creative Camera*, *Camera* was criticized in some circles for a perceived American bias. Delbert Zogg, "The History of Camera Magazine, 1922 to 1975" (Master's Thesis, Syracuse University, 1976), 70.

of sustained critical voices in its pages as Porter wrote the vast majority of the introductory text. Porter suggested that *Creative Camera* “started on the right foot by stepping on mine,”⁴⁸ by using *Camera*’s existing international contacts to its benefit. Coo Press became distribution agents for *Camera* in the 1970s, and while the two magazines were competitors from one standpoint, the audience for both magazines institutionally and internationally was such that they could both survive simultaneously.

NORMAN HALL AND *PHOTOGRAPHY* MAGAZINE (1952-1965)

To the young photographers emerging from art schools and technical colleges, the musty R.P.S., *Amateur Photographer* and to a lesser extent *The British Journal of Photography* represented the very worst of staid, retrograde amateurism that had endured in Britain since the late 1930s. The criticisms that Hugo van Wadenoyen and Helmut Gernsheim had made in the decades prior could still be leveled at these magazines and institutions that sadly represented British photography if they did not publish the best work coming out of Britain. How-to magazines such as *Practical Photographer* and *Amateur Photographer* did provide a fertile ground for launching the careers of figures who would later go on to play important roles in the independent photography sphere as Bill Jay and David Brittain, both editors of *Creative Camera* did.⁴⁹ Although many of the new photographers were radical in their outlook, few initially dispensed entirely with the old structures that existed but rather tried to effect change within existing institutions such as the R.P.S., the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) or within the magazines.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁹ One of *Amateur Photographer*’s long-time columnists George Hughes is also notable in this regard. Hughes became an important figure in the promotion of independent photography in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly through his columns and his membership of the Arts Council committees on photography. Hughes, George, “Oh Yeah?,” *Amateur Photographer* 139, no. 3 (July 23, 1969): 100.

When these institutions proved inflexible, they struck out on their own. Many of the more progressive photographic ventures that began in the 1960s were born by dissatisfied young professionals who seized the initiative and created their own enterprises as antitheses to the establishment. As the newer visions of photography became more established both in the US and the UK during the 1960s and 1970s, and the young Turks settled into university teaching, gallery work and other fields, this in turn provided the means for creative photographers to support themselves (in some cases quite lucratively) and not compromise their artistic principles or social consciences

One publication that straddled the world of establishment photography and the pioneering ventures of the sixties was the innovative and important monthly *Photography*, especially under the editorship of Norman Hall (November 1952-September 1962) and Ian James (October 1962- September 1965). Probably because of the paucity of full series that still exist, *Photography*'s importance to the British photographic community has never been fully considered by scholars, but it was central in sustaining an international dialogue about the medium. Until Hall assumed the editorship, *Photography* was largely comparable to *Amateur Photographer* with its blend of pictorial portfolios and how-to guides, although the previous editor Harold Lewis had nudged it in the direction of "showing good pictures."⁵⁰ Hall, an émigré from Australia who served in the RAF during the Second World War and returned to Britain subsequently⁵¹ set out his stall in the November 1952 issue thus:

We intend to bring to Britain the work of many of the world's best photographers- and to show the best of British photographers to the world... we shall enlist the aid of famous photographers to tell us not so much 'how' they do it but 'why' ...where [photography] stands in the order of artistic precedence is a dull

⁵⁰ Norman Hall, "Interim Number," *Photography* 7, no. 11 (November 1952): 11.

⁵¹ "Mr. Norman Hall," *The Times*, May 24, 1978, sec. Obituaries, 19.

argument and not our worry. In its various forms we see it as a vital force, a new and growing literature, a vital tongue.⁵²

Like Gernsheim, Hall sought to go beyond the established middle-class amateur world of international salons and their ingrained pictorialism and to print more innovative work, pointing to international photographers who were challenging this model. In a critique of the 1955 London Salon that would match Gernsheim's screeds, Hall noted that the Salon was a "depressing reminder that London is badly in need of a first-rate exhibition of real photography" and looked forward to 1956 when London would host Edward Steichen's *Family of Man* exhibition which represented "the most remarkable collection of photographs ever assembled."⁵³ In 1961, he would repeat the criticism of the latest London Salon which had clearly fell on deaf ears six years hence: "O insipidity! O mediocrity! The same old corny clichés, the same old 'all-got-up-for-photographing' masks which pass for portraits, the same old simpering sentimentality, the same old lack of vision and understanding," while also issuing a withering assessment of the state of the medium:

... with the exception of this magazine, *Photography Year Book* and one or two papers like the *Guardian*, for instance, there is not much in the way of evidence to prove my belief that the British public is as receptive to good, significant

⁵² Norman Hall, "A Policy and a Pledge," *Photography* 7, no. 12 (December 1952): 13.

⁵³ Norman Hall, "Pathetic Fallacy," *Photography* 10, no. 11 (November 1955): 27. The Family of Man exhibition has rightly been criticized for its uncomplicated ideology of the 'oneness,' of humanity, its skewed view of women and its colonialist undertones. See Roland Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," in *Mythologies* (Vintage Books, 1993), 100–102. and Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (1981): 15, doi:10.2307/776511. As Bill Jay noted in a 1989 article assessing the impact of the exhibition: "Steichen's romantic ideology perfectly coincided with what the public wanted to hear, and see." Bill Jay, "The Family of Man: A Reappraisal of 'The Greatest Exhibition of All Time,'" *Insight: Bristol Workshops in Photography*, 1989, <http://www.billjayonphotography.com/Family%20of%20Man%20Exhibition.pdf>. This is not to say that the show was accepted without criticism in Britain, but to much of the photographic community for whom the show would at least have been a welcome change (if not a challenge) from the general pictorialist offerings.

photography as any other in the world, and that Britain has its share of real photographers.⁵⁴

For a man trying to broaden the photographic horizons of the British photographic public and yet also still sell magazines to amateurs producing these images, Hall's was a bold statement. *Photography* clearly offered an antidote to this, and in the same editorial, Hall called for serious investment in British photography by suggesting a rich benefactor might like to sponsor an annual exhibition of photography in London.⁵⁵ As regular contributor Helmut Gernsheim was at the same time prospecting around Europe and the US to try and find a home for his photographic collection assembled in Britain, the call must have seemed all the more urgent.

Much of *Photography*'s international verve came from its reprinting of reportage from far-flung corners of the globe, especially from members of Magnum and American reporters for *Life* and *Time* such as W. Eugene Smith whose work appeared in 1955. In this regard it mirrored *Picture Post* which had a decidedly international outlook in its stories and reportage since the Second World War. Indeed, its former editor Tom Hopkinson and reporter Thurston Hopkins were regular contributors to *Photography* and used the opportunity to concentrate on the processes of photography in the article rather than the story itself. When removed from their immediate photojournalistic context, the images and photo-stories were offered as good examples of photographic practice, accompanied by a short text explaining both the how and the why behind the pictures. Reframing photojournalism in this context drew attention to the merit of the photographs as objects in and of themselves and drew on the well-established British photojournalistic tradition while also expanding its international scope.⁵⁶ *Photography* championed the

⁵⁴ Norman Hall, "Opinion: London Could Do Better," *Photography* XVI, no. 10 (October 1961): 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ See, for example: Ian Berry, "South Africa Childhood," *Photography* XIII, no. 9 (September 1958): 24–27. and Tom Hopkinson, "Sad Days in the Congo," *Photography* XVI, no. 5 (May 1961): 50–53.

emerging generation of British documentarians such as Don McCullin, Roger Mayne, Philip Jones-Griffiths and David Hurn alongside more established photographic figures such as Inge Morath, Henri-Cartier Bresson and Fritz Henle.⁵⁷ In the wake of Britain's declining geopolitical role and the increasing ease with which information could be shared, publications like *Photography* set about embracing an internationalism that was expansive in its acceptance of 'good photographs' from all countries but simultaneously conscious of the need to foster indigenous talent.

While photojournalism was perhaps the most prevalent genre throughout *Photography*, Hall's (and later Ian James') broad editorial approach included reprinting pieces from the art photography scene in the US. Two original pieces by Minor White appeared a year apart in 1955 and 1956 and a report on the West Coast Photography symposium held at San Francisco State College by Ira Latour was published in June 1957: both of these were accompanied by generous portfolios of images.⁵⁸ William Klein's street photography was promoted heavily in 1956, and *Photography* acted as the distributor for *Life is Good & Good for You in New York: Trance Witness Revels* in the UK. *Photography's* readers were subtly primed to view the jarring images as one person's way of seeing, and to "think of [the photographs] as a form of literature and accept them as Klein's view of faces he saw on sidewalks, in shops, subways and streets and judge them accordingly."⁵⁹ As Robert Frank's intensely personal *The Americans* (1958) would not redefine the genre of social documentary along the same lines until its

⁵⁷ Hall put on an extremely successful show of Henri Cartier-Bresson's work at the R.B.A. Gallery in London in January 1957. As the advertisement for the exhibition declared, it was a show "Presented by PHOTOGRAPHY magazine in the interests of Photography. "Henri Cartier-Bresson Exhibition," *Photography* XII, no. 1 (January 1957): 21.

⁵⁸ Ira Latour, "West Coast Photography: Does It Really Exist?," *Photography* XII, no. 6 (June 1957): 26–44, 62.

⁵⁹ "William Klein," *Photography* 11, no. 2 (February 1956): 30–35.

1968 reissue, this was a very progressive insight. In the 1960s, two features on Weegee⁶⁰ and a large section on the teaching of Alexey Brodovitch informed readers of developments on the East Coast, namely the street photography that influenced an emerging generation of US-based photographers and modernist modes of teaching photography as a creative endeavor.⁶¹ In contrast to the more prolix *Amateur Photographer* and the *BJP, Photography* went one step better by making cutting-edge images the full-page focus of many of these articles as opposed to illustrations to accompany the text.⁶²

Muddying *Photography*'s message, however, was the need to carefully balance the promotion of sophisticated photography with an eye to keeping the appeal of the magazine broad enough to be commercially successful. Throughout its production, *Photography* shared with *Amateur Photographer* a penchant for cover images that vacillated from benign kitsch (puppies and children were particularly prevalent) to the vaguely seedy (almost every other issue had a 'glamour' model starring): while the content inside might have been more avant-garde, the print quality and necessity to sell issues revealed that *Photography* was awkwardly stuck between bringing readers the cream of current photographic practice while appearing to support the vestiges of amateurish pictorialism.⁶³ By September 1965, the barbarians were at the gate. In an editorial entitled "The Truth of the Matter," the new editor Dick Gee detailed a merger

⁶⁰ Norman Hall, "Why 'Weegee'?" *Photography* XV, no. 12 (December 1960): 5.

⁶¹ Alexey Brodovitch, "Brodovitch on Photography," *Photography* XIV, no. 2 (February 1964): 18–19.

⁶² Hall's library was donated to the Photographers' Gallery after it was purchased from his estate by Dorothy Bohm after his death in 1978. "The Norman Hall Reference and Slide Library" merged these books with Bill Jay's slide library that he had built up at the ill-fated Photography Study Centre at the ICA in 1972.

⁶³ As Williams notes, *Photography* did contain "a peculiar assemblage of European and American high amateurism as poorly selected single images". Williams, "Crowned With Thorns: Creative Camera 1965-1978," 224.

with *35mm Photography* and *Colour Photography* magazines (two hobbyist productions) with a shift away from the “emphasis on photojournalism and the avant-garde.”⁶⁴ While not explicitly outlining what the editorial policy was, the current issue featured:

Articles on the work of Tom Hustler, the celebrated society and fashion photographer of London; a pictorial feature by David Davies of *The Daily Mail* entitled Kids and Cars; an article describing how to go about photographing action; Bill Angove will discuss colour in advertising...⁶⁵

It was hardly state of the art material. As *Photography*'s photographic vision faded, *Camera Owner* was beginning to metamorphose into a magazine that would carry the flame forward.⁶⁶

STUDENT MAGAZINES: *IMAGE, ASPECT AND FORM*

The final set of publications that fed into the British photographic milieu in the 1960s were the magazines coming out of universities and art schools which provided spaces for up-and-coming photographers to publish their work. Often stylistically innovative and intellectually challenging, as precursors to and contemporaries of the underground press, these magazines sprung up as alternative spaces to the mainstream. Alex Seago's compelling survey of the Royal College of Art's (RCA) *ARK Magazine* demonstrates that art and design students were the first in Britain to develop what he calls

⁶⁴ Derek Stevens, “The Truth of the Matter,” *Photography XX*, no. 9 (September 1965): 6.

⁶⁵ Stevens, “The Truth of the Matter.”

⁶⁶ Hall's position would be vindicated after his departure from *Photography*. In 1967 he guest-edited the British Journal of Photography Yearbook, widely regarded as one of the best of its kind. Writing in *The New York Times*, Jacob Deschin glowingly referred to his “consistently fresh, humanistic and exploratory approach” and “sharp updating” of a periodical that desperately needed resuscitation. Jacob Deschin, “British Journal Updates Photography,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1966, sec. Arts & Leisure, 194. Hall also contributed to the London's special 1972 feature on Photography. Celebrating photography's “new status” Hall's piece was a late acknowledgement of his role in this. Norman Hall, “New Status After 130 Years,” *The Times*, December 1, 1972, sec. Special Report on Photography, 1.

a “postmodern sensibility” in the 1950s through importing techniques from American graphic designers and synthesizing these with a developing English tradition.⁶⁷ Photography, however, was a less respected element in the avant-garde journals, especially as it was not taught at the major art schools but at colleges with a technical and professional focus such as the London College of Printing. Len Deighton, arriving at the RCA in the early 1950s after a stint working as a freelance photographer, described the atmosphere as rather hostile towards the medium:

American advertising at the time was fantastic, especially the photography. When I went there to the College there was no one in the Graphic Design School who knew what a camera was... They called me ‘the photographer’ and they didn’t mean it as a compliment, either. They meant it as the most pejorative thing they could think of.⁶⁸

In contrast, the postwar growth of American universities and their absorption and expansion of art departments by the late 1940s created conditions that allowed photography courses to steadily flourish and by the late 1960s, thrive. As John Szarkowski notes: “Between 1964 and 1967 the number of colleges and universities that offered at least one course in photography increased from 268 to 440... by 1970 it was an underprivileged institution indeed that did not offer at least one course in photography.”⁶⁹ The first MFA in photography was offered by a US institution in 1963; by 1967 that figure had risen to thirteen and by 1972 there were fifty-two.⁷⁰ While photography was not immediately accepted in US art schools and it should be noted that most programs in

⁶⁷ In the same manner as subsequent photographic professionals, Robin Darwin of the RCA sought to establish links and exchanges with American universities (Yale in particular) that he had been so impressed with on a reconnaissance trip in the early 1950s. Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things: The Development of a Postmodern Sensibility*, 148–151.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶⁹ Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960*, 15.

⁷⁰ Bill Jay, “Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972,” October 2004, 10, <http://www.billjasonphotography.com/Magazine%20Memoirs.pdf>.

the 1960s were in their infancy, the situation was much more advanced than Britain which only had a handful of colleges teaching photography as a fine art, none of whom were offering the equivalent to a Master of Fine Art degree in photography.

While art-school snobbery toward photography in Britain continued into the 1960s, other student-led venues existed for photography, most notably Cambridge University's *Image* magazine whose silver cover of 1965 was the inspiration for *Creative Camera*'s iconic cover. Launched in 1960 and published irregularly until 1965, *Image* was a mish-mash of reportage, literary snippets and odd textual contributions from a wide range of sources which befitted a magazine which began when one undergraduate photographer asked another "would you like to start a photographic magazine?"⁷¹ The third issue of *Image* clarified the editorial agenda while indicating that the magazine was filling a perceived gap in the market for photojournalism:

There are those who will be asking IMAGE WHY? What the P*CT*R* P*ST is this thing? The answer is fairly simple: Image is a picture magazine produced by Cambridge undergraduates who believe in photojournalism, integrity and perception of reporting and who found the English scene lacking in these qualities.⁷²

Although published irregularly, *Image* was an important early publication venue for British documentary photographers such as Philip Jones-Griffiths, Don McCullin and John Bulmer. The magazine only published a few issues but it demonstrated the growing desire for publication venues for photography, and in particular was important in providing a relatively low-stakes venue for budding photojournalists to get their images into print in the years between *Picture Post* and the color supplements to the Sunday newspapers.

⁷¹ "Editorial," *Image*, no. 1 (May 1960): 1.

⁷² "Editorial," *Image*, 1960, 1.

A few years later in 1966, Guildford School of Art's photography department, by then the most progressive photography course in the UK, would publish its sole issue of *Aspect*. A sharply designed magazine with a minimum of text and a maximum of photography, this showcase of student talent is notable for representing the early work of Peter Turner, *Creative Camera*'s second editor, but also because of its clean layout, pages devoted to photographs and high-quality photographic reproduction. "The reason for producing this magazine," intoned editor Julian Calder, "is that we feel as students at a long-established school of photography, that it is time to produce an English magazine on the lines of the American and continental ones."⁷³ Calder continued by defending careers in the visual media that were "frowned upon" by teachers and career masters and "elders who are under the impression that art students are longhaired, uneducated layabouts." He stresses that "photographs are pictures, and there are merits in unusual effects and composition... we feel sure that many amateurs inhibit themselves by obeying the laws dictated by the leading amateur photographic magazines."⁷⁴ These themes would match the philosophical underpinnings of *Creative Camera* and reveal the success of the magazine at capturing the youthful culture that would overflow into British photography in the late 1960s.

A final footnote to photography and student magazines leading up to the emergence of *Creative Camera* was *Form*, a transatlantic production by three Cambridge University students, one of whom, Mike Weaver, was studying in the US. *Form* fit very much into the mold of highbrow avant-garde literary magazines, and self-consciously so: one of its recurrent features was a retrospective of "Great Little Magazines" both

⁷³ "Aspect: Journal of Guildford School of Art, Photography Department.," *Aspect: Journal of Guildford School of Art, Photography Department.*, 1966, 5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

contemporary and historical. From 1966 to 1969 *Form* published modernist poetry, art, design and architectural criticism (particularly of De Stijl, Bauhaus and Buckminster Fuller) and extended considerations of experimental art schools such as Black Mountain College in North Carolina. *Form*'s sole foray into photography, an article entitled: "New American Photography: the Authentic Vision" in March 1968 was unique in framing new American straight photography in literary and art historical terms.⁷⁵ Weaver prefaced a selection of photographs by Alice Andrews, Robert Fichter, Roger Mertin, Reginald Heron, Thomas Barrow and Joel Meyerowitz by quoting poet Louis Zukofsky's definition of objectivity: "the authentic presentation of THINGS in themselves."⁷⁶ Linking imagistic poetry to the straight photography tradition (the lack of manipulation, the notion of letting the subject reveal itself, a Puritanical materialism) Weaver rooted the new generation of photographers in an approach similar to the myth-and-symbol approach to American culture, claiming that the purity of their approach to photography (what Weaver dubbed "quintessence") represented an "authentic vision" rooted in the American soil.⁷⁷ Weaver's critical approach to contemporary photographic images would not become common in Britain until the late 1970s with writers like Gerry Badger and Ian Jeffrey taking up the mantle, and although this article is a very minor episode it is significant in signaling a direction in critical British writing about photography would take in later years.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Mike Weaver, "New American Photography: The Authentic Vision," *Form*, no. 7 (March 1968): 15–22.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 15. Original emphasis.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁸ Weaver subsequently became an important figure in American Studies in Britain. He founded the influential American Arts Documentation Centre at Exeter University in 1970 which housed a major collection of contemporary American photograph, and would later found the journal *History of Photography*. For a brief overview, see Messer, "The British Obsession: About to Pay Off?," 63.

Taking its pioneering spirit from Hall's *Photography*, imbibing the energy and freshness of student-run magazines and taking inspiration from the American-led quality photographic periodicals, *Creative Camera* balanced its influences well. Neither avant-garde art journal nor how-to photography guide, it was able to tap into the middle ground of photography and appeal to both photographic professionals and interested amateurs while pursuing an ambitious artistic agenda. Crucially, financial support from *Racing Pigeon* and later through book sales meant that the magazine could publish regularly and foster goodwill to its creditors. While Osman as publisher would still regularly worry about going out of business due to lack of income up until 1980 when the magazine did become imperiled, the notion that he could make converts of ordinary photographers meant that the magazine retained a certain accessibility to the reader, even if few middle-aged amateur converts materialized.⁷⁹ Aside from having to run seedy advertisements at the back of the magazine, from the 1960s to the 1970s the magazine remained solvent and published regularly without compromising its principles and sustaining its dedicated audience.

CREATIVE CAMERA: THE BILL JAY YEARS 1965-1969

From 1965 to 1968 *Camera Owner* morphed slowly into *Creative Camera*, becoming *Creative Camera Owner* in November 1967 and reorienting itself from publishing fewer how-to guides and more portfolios of photographs alongside commentary on the paucity of good imagery in Britain. Jay and Osman wanted to shift

⁷⁹ Osman wanted the magazine to have mass-market appeal, mainly because this would support the magazine financially. He courted amateur camera clubs, newsagents and photography shops in the hope of selling extra copies, but the reception he garnered was sometimes openly hostile. He was thrown out of a photographic equipment shop for publishing nude photographs which the proprietor thought were "ridiculous pornographic stuff." Osman, interview.

the magazine's focus towards serious photography but soon realized that there was an existing base of subscribers that they could not alienate. The piece "10 Commandments for Creative Photographers" by Paul Dane and illustrated by Don McCullin in the May 1967 edition epitomized this transition. The first commandment, "Sharpen Your Vision" urged readers to "build a personal collection of books by top photographers such as Bill Brandt... Aaron Siskind, Dorothea Lange and many others" and to purchase quality magazines such as *Camera* and the Czechoslovak *Fotografie*.⁸⁰ The seventh commandment was to "meet other photographers", the eighth to "steer clear of traditional pictorialism" and the tenth to be "honest in producing pictures purely and simply for your own pleasure."⁸¹ The instruction to "build a personal collection of books" reflects the means by which good photography was absorbed in Britain. Jay later recalled the following texts were important to British photographers at the time:

Observations, Richard Avedon; *The Americans*, Robert Frank; Aaron Siskind *Photographs* (all 1959); *Moments Preserved*, Irving Penn (1960); *Perspective of Nudes*, Bill Brandt (1961); *Killed by Roses*, Eikoh Hosoe (1963); *The Painter and the Photograph*, Van Deren Coke (1964); *A Way of Seeing*, Helen Levitt (1965); *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, Ed Ruscha (1966); *House of Bondage*, Ernest Cole (1967); *The Bikeriders*, Danny Lyon (1968). And there was always the "bookends" of the photographer's shelf: *The Decisive Moment*, Henri Cartier-Bresson (1952), and *Shadow of Light*, Bill Brandt (1966).⁸²

As is clear from the above, the majority of these works were American in origin where the photographic publishing industry, while still developing, outmatched its British counterparts. It is possible to see the American dominance of photographic publishing as another example of the US's cultural hegemony wrought large, but photographers like Jay were excited by American photo books and took pains to acquire them through

⁸⁰ Paul Dane and Don McCullin, "10 Commandments for Creative Photographers," *Camera Owner*, no. 35 (May 1967): 64.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁸² Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 3.

specialist art bookshops in London like Zwemmer's and eventually imported and sold them through *Camera Owner* and *Creative Camera*. The quality and preponderance of American publications validated photographers' sense that their enterprise was worthwhile and suggested to British photographers that they might develop the domestic industry along the same lines.

In what would become a familiar theme that echoed the efforts of Helmut Gernsheim and others in the 1950s, the August 1966 editorial echoed earlier calls for a National Gallery of Photography, lamenting that Britain's status as the leading nation in photography had long past and that the country needed a "show place where the general public can see not only the best of modern photography but also the best from the past."⁸³ The piece concluded with a quote from Stieglitz, "one of the greatest photographic editors": "Photography is my passion, the search for truth my obsession," a well-travelled quotation that best summarizes Jay's attitude at the time.⁸⁴

Early on under Jay's editorship, the American influences were not only increasingly apparent, American practice was set up within the pages as worthy of emulation. John Benton-Harris, an American ex-serviceman working as a photojournalist in London was profiled in 1965 in an article entitled "The American with the Flexible Eye" which showcased his images of New York and again in July 1967 with a portfolio of images taken in London. The text accompanying the former breathlessly noted the young photographer's success at selling one of his photographs to The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) while providing a model work ethic with an emphasis on perseverance and vision: "if you seriously go hunting and give yourselves things to look

⁸³ "Camera Owners Need... a National Gallery of Photography," *Camera Owner*, no. 26 (August 1966): 3. Later pieces pointed explicitly to the fact that the Museum of Modern Art in New York had "displayed photographs for the last twenty-seven years" and that "even Czechoslovakia has plans for a Prague Photographic Gallery." "Views and News," February 1968, 45.

⁸⁴ "Camera Owners Need... a National Gallery of Photography."

for then it will come.”⁸⁵ The latter article discussed his dedication further: “if John Benton-Harris is intolerant of, and sparked into violent abuse at sham and insignificant pictures, he is even more super-critical of his own work.”⁸⁶ This type of article tapped into a burgeoning sense of excitement surrounding photography that had been building in Britain after the success of Bailey, Donovan and Duffy, and Michelangelo Antonioni’s 1966 movie *Blow Up* but attempted to reorient the buzz towards a purer sense of photography for its own sake.⁸⁷ That Benton-Harris was an American in London who had come from New York served only to heighten the grit and glamour, a narrative that would find its resonance in the later transatlantic example of Tony Ray-Jones.

In addition to meeting with Americans already in Britain, Jay was in contact with individuals in the magazine world in the US who could provide guidance on the current state of the US scene. He enlisted the help of Ed Meyers, a freelance photojournalist who had worked for *Modern Photography* in the US. Jay and Meyers had become friendly when Meyers visited the UK over the summer of 1965 and Jay subsequently employed him in 1966 to write occasional technical reviews reporting from the US under the headline “Modern Methods.”⁸⁸ When *Camera Owner* became *Creative Camera* and Meyers was working for *Popular Photography* his name appeared on the November 1968 masthead as the magazine’s “American Consultant.” This was an unpaid position, and Myers suggests that Jay included his name to give the magazine added international

⁸⁵ John Benton-Harris, “The American With the Flexible Eye,” *Camera Owner*, no. 17 (November 1965): 8. Benton-Harris remained in Britain and became an important figure in the evolution of *Creative Camera* and independent photography.

⁸⁶ John Benton-Harris, “A Professional’s Portfolio: London,” *Camera Owner*, no. 36 (June 1967): 128.

⁸⁷ Important as *Blow Up* was for putting photography center stage in Britain, the film was blamed also for polluting the field with young “knicker-clicking pseudos.” Bill Gaskins, “Young Photographers and the Language of Photography,” *Creative Camera Yearbook*, 1974, 39.

⁸⁸ Ed Meyers, “Modern Methods,” *Camera Owner*, no. 21 (March 1966): 28.

cachet.⁸⁹ Throughout the Jay and Turner years of *Creative Camera*, *Popular Photography* was one of the touchstones of the magazine, especially for surveying the US scene. Although largely serving an amateur audience, *Popular Photography*'s policy of publishing extensive essays and portfolios, provided for British editors, as Jay mentioned, a "one-step access to who was who in contemporary photography, especially in the USA."⁹⁰ Jay and Osman cultivated transatlantic ties in person, print and correspondence, and figures associated with *Popular Photography* would become strong advocates for what was happening photographically in Britain.⁹¹

Camera Owner's June 1967 edition is exemplary of the magazine's use of American photography in its formative stages. In-between the last vestiges of *Camera Owner*'s focus on photographic techniques is one of the first articles on the work of Raymond Moore, a key figure in British landscape photography whose contemplative and distinctive studies of the English landscape would find their analogue alongside the work of Aaron Siskind, Wynn Bullock and Minor White.⁹² A short piece on Don McCullin's work entitled "Two Faces" is followed by a lengthy, enthusiastic review of Robert Doty's book on the Photo-Secession published by George Eastman House and a review of Gordon Parks' work for *Life* appearing in a London exhibition accompanied by a few now well-known images. Frederick C. Cook, professor at the London College of Printing's "powerfully preaching" article "The Art of Photography" carried the tagline "the new revolution" which neatly summed up his hopes for his generation. Railing against the technical, theory based instruction prevalent at British colleges, "the real work

⁸⁹ Edward Meyers, "Creative Camera," March 25, 2012.

⁹⁰ Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 5.

⁹¹ Jim Hughes, Telephone, February 8, 2012.

⁹² Moore's work first appeared in *Amateur Photographer* in 1959: Moore, Raymond, "The Uncommon Object," *Amateur Photographer*, November 25, 1959. Along with Bill Brandt, he was the first of two British photographers to have their first major international solo exhibitions in the US rather than the UK.

begins”, Cook intones, “when imagination and ideas direct photography and use it as a means of expression.”⁹³ Bookending these is a report by photojournalist Raymond Irons on a story he produced while spending three weeks on a trawler in Iceland, rather bafflingly presented as an example for readers to “set themselves photo assignments” to further their photographic technique. The awkward transition from how-to to how-we-should-be-doing-it is plain, as was the magazine’s building of a cadre of support through the likes of Cook to advance its cause.

Another important dimension to *Creative Camera*’s oeuvre was established in November 1967 with the first installment of Prof. Aaron Scharf’s “Album” column, “a miscellany of extracts, illustrations, notes and anecdotes” from the history of photography.⁹⁴ Scharf, the American-born head of the History of Art at Central St. Martin’s in London was a key early ally of independent photography in Britain: his short book “Creative Photography” from 1965 was becoming widely read and pointed to a legacy of abstraction, experiment and play throughout the history of European photography.⁹⁵ Scharf and Jay struck up a friendship and started an informal discussion which revealed to Jay the rich history of photography that was still neglected in Britain despite the efforts of earlier champions like Helmut and Alison Gernsheim. Seeing that there was not only a strong living tradition represented by figures such as Bill Brandt, Brassai and E.O. Hoppe, Jay was realizing with Scharf’s help that he could make the case for linking current themes in photography with the past. Jay persuaded Scharf to turn into

⁹³ Frederick C. Cook, “The Art of Photography: A New Revolution,” *Camera Owner*, no. 36 (June 1967): 100.

⁹⁴ Aaron Scharf, “Album,” *Creative Camera Owner*, no. 40 (November 1967): 288. Writing a memorial for Scharf in *Creative Camera* in 1993, Jay attested that his American background “meant that he was not limited to the then English strictures of what constituted good photography.” Bill Jay and Mark Haworth-Booth, “Shy Scholar Who Said No to a Free Lunch,” *Creative Camera*, no. 321 (May 1993): 8–9. Jay would later title his own magazine *Album* but is not clear whether this column provided inspiration.

⁹⁵ Aaron Scharf, *Creative Photography* (London; New York: Studio Vista; Reinhold Pub. Corp., 1965).

a regular column in the magazine (a tradition later continued by his friend Van Deren Coke, professor of photography at the University of New Mexico)⁹⁶ that sought to enlighten British photographers in particular about the history of their medium. Like Newhall and Gernsheim, it had taken an American to awaken the British to their own photographic heritage.

The historical columns matched both Jay and Osman's growing proclivities as historical bricoleurs: the historical anecdote or overlooked naïve genius would always find a home in *Creative Camera* if they could make a case for their inclusion in the canon. If the thrill of (re)discovery and the desire to champion the underdog was important to Osman; for Jay, photographers of the past could show a tradition that would continue to influence contemporary practice. The obsessive "collecting" of personality types and country customs by Benjamin Stone, for example and the naïve vision of Jacques-Henri Lartigue were romanticized as examples of dedicated purists: for Jay, the link with the past spoke to a cohesion within photographic practice and pointed to a single-minded mania about the photographic pursuit that Jay, and to a lesser extent, Osman identified with. Here, the magazine suggested, were swashbuckling pioneers testing the artistic and technological limits of a new medium, originals with oracular visions who should not be equated with fusty upper middle-class late Victorian men gadding about their gardens with bellows and blankets.

Jay's attempts to educate his audience on the history of photography fell largely on deaf ears in Britain. A reader survey conducted in August 1968 revealed that the columns and "historical" pieces on Victorian photographers (Fox Talbot, Frank Meadow Sutcliffe and John Thompson) were notable examples, the latter pitched as Britain's

⁹⁶ Coke's photographs featured in a 1961 edition of *Photography* when he was an Assistant Professor at Arizona State University. Henry Holmes Smith, "Van Deren Coke," *Photography* XVI, no. 11 (November 1961): 36-43.

version of street photography) were the least popular features of the magazine, especially with well-known photographers who wanted to see more contemporary images.⁹⁷ Presaging Christopher Booker's influential argument in *The Neophiliacs*,⁹⁸ (although not matching Booker's assessment of American influence as largely noxious) Aaron Scharf's sharp response framed the reaction to what he perceived as a search for the novel at the expense of the past: "one of the reasons art has reached such an impasse is because it ignores history and instead feeds only on last week's output...to me a disdain for history is willful ignorance..."⁹⁹ At least in the UK, *Creative Camera* was read mostly for what was new in photography which was (largely) emanating from the US;¹⁰⁰ the task that Jay had set himself to educate the photographic public about the history of an exciting medium would ironically be too forward-thinking for the majority of its British audiences. Seeds would, however, be sown among people who would later occupy influential curatorial and educational posts.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Jay's disappointment at what he considered philistinism served only as inspiration to him for his own investigations into Victorian photographers and would be the focus of the bulk of his academic work after leaving for the US in 1972.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Jay, interview.

⁹⁸ Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs: A Study of the Revolution in English Life in the Fifties and Sixties*. (London: Collins, 1969).

⁹⁹ Aaron Scharf, "Comment," *Creative Camera*, no. 51 (September 1968): 293.

¹⁰⁰ Part of this reaction may be attributed to a sense that the older material was crowding out the new. See "Pix Are in (almost)," *The Observer*, June 22, 1969, 34.

¹⁰¹ Mark Haworth-Booth, curator of photographs at the Victoria and Albert museum recalls that when the circulation department was disbanded in 1976-77 a colleague gave him a stack of *Creative Cameras* as a kind of handing-on." Mark Haworth-Booth, interview by Val Williams, Cassette Tape, August 1992, C459/24, The Oral History of British Photography, The British Library.

¹⁰²"I believed then, and I still do, that photographers should know the history of their medium, examine its interaction with the other visual arts, and read and think. So I made no apologies for publishing historical images by John Thomson, Eugene Atget, Frank Sutcliffe, P.H. Emerson, John Heartfield, Erich Salomon among others, and the historical columns by Van Deren Coke and Aaron Scharf..." Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 11.

Contrasting Scharf and Van Deren Coke's historical interludes was "Young Contemporaries," a feature that began in December 1967 and was to become central to *Creative Camera* in its various guises in the Turner years from 1969-1981.¹⁰³ Included at the suggestion of Osman, the magazine dedicated a few pages of each issue thereafter to "introduce the pictures of a young photographer who, in our opinion, shows a considerable talent."¹⁰⁴ This move was both a response to the amount of images being sent to the magazine and the amount of visitors arriving at 19 Doughty Street, and also a savvy attempt to tap into the currents of photographic interest emerging from art schools in Britain and internationally.¹⁰⁵ A place in the magazine became a real achievement for up-and-coming photographers and could be a stepping-stone to a fellowship, grant or job in the future. Young Contemporaries' importance to the magazine cannot be overstated: giving readers a chance to be published alongside the masters of the medium on relatively equal terms (established photographers' portfolios were generally longer) highlighted the camaraderie of the photographic world and also demonstrated that, according to editorial policy, "good pictures" could come from anywhere if the honesty and commitment were there.

¹⁰³ The title was taken from a popular phrase first used to describe an exhibition of art school work at the Royal Society of British Artists in 1949. Philip James, ed., *Young Contemporaries* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1949).

¹⁰⁴ Ken Towner, "Young Contemporary," *Creative Camera Owner*, no. 42 (December 1967): 324.

¹⁰⁵ Osman attributes a surge of visitors from the US during the price wars between Laker Airways and more established carriers that famously opened up cheap transatlantic travel: "we had hordes of young Americans coming over from the states on cheap European holidays and they all brought their portfolios to see us. And it became very much a pressing problem and in the end we had to devise a system whereby you saw the portfolios you made appointments on one or even two days of the week, and you made them at half hour intervals." Osman, interview. Robert Lindsey, "Airlines in Bitter Struggle On Atlantic Charter Rates," *New York Times*, January 31, 1971, 66.

THE NEW YORK TRIP: A FIVE YEAR PROGRAM IN TWO WEEKS

One visitor to the *Creative Camera* offices who became vital to the evolution of photography in Britain is the photographer Tony Ray-Jones. In an often-recounted anecdote, Ray-Jones appeared at the *Creative Camera* offices in 1968 and bluntly told Jay that his magazine was “shit” but that “he had come to help him.”¹⁰⁶ Taken aback, Jay demanded to see Ray-Jones’ work and when presented with his photographs hired him as an unpaid consultant on the magazine.¹⁰⁷ Ray-Jones, who will be the focus of a subsequent chapter, had studied photography and design at Yale and subsequently under Alexey Brodovitch. Having cut his teeth as a freelance photographer in New York and having ensconced himself in the New York art photography world, Ray-Jones provided Jay with a perfect entrée to what was happening on the ground in the US.

At Ray-Jones’ suggestion, he and Jay embarked on a three-week trip to New York in September 1968, a journey that became “a rite of passage for many people involved in photography in Britain.”¹⁰⁸ Although still in the infancy of the photography boom, the US at this point must have looked like Shangri-La to practitioners like Jay who were ensconced in the comparatively austere British system. Jay’s schedule was a virtual who’s-who of photography at the time: he and Ray-Jones met with Robert Frank, Joel Meyerowitz, Weegee, Diane Arbus, Lee Freidlander, and Ralph Gibson, and flew up to the George Eastman House in Rochester and met curators Nathan Lyons, Harold Jones

¹⁰⁶ Jay, interview.

¹⁰⁷ Jay describes Ray-Jones’ presence thus: “From that day on, he was an irritating, exasperating monkey on my back, calling at any hour of the day or night, quizzing me on whom I had seen, what I had done, berating me for wasting time with “that phony-baloney,” a photographer whom he did not respect. Tony was my self-appointed conscience – and I respected and resented him for it.” Jay, “Magazine Memoirs: *Creative Camera* and Album, 1968-1972,” 9.

¹⁰⁸ Brittain, *Creative Camera: Thirty Years of Writing*, 4. The trip was also presaged by a 1968 article on Bruce Davidson entitled “Vignettes of Western Americans” where Jay enthuses about a “three-month trip across the US in a camper-truck, a marvelous experience in and of itself.” Bruce Davidson, “Vignettes of Western Life,” *Creative Camera*, no. 46 (April 1968): 124–25.

and Bill Jenkins and Tom Barrow. Evenings were punctuated with further meetings, dinners and drinks while Ray-Jones tried unsuccessfully to pitch a dummy of his proposed photobook to various booksellers.¹⁰⁹ While Jay had already been publishing a large amount of material from the US in *Creative Camera* it was this journey that crystallized his vision of photography: “we were hearing reports of a photographic revolution (photography as fine art) occurring across the Atlantic, and we hoped the same spirit would spread through Britain.”¹¹⁰

To Jay, the trip was a “five year program in ‘what’s going on in photography’ crammed into three weeks.”¹¹¹ Jay’s introductions ran the gamut of the great and the lowly in the gallery world, from John Szarkowski and the mandarins at MoMA to Norbert Kleber, a photographer who had run his part-time Underground Gallery out of his 51st Street basement since 1963.¹¹² Kleber’s dedication to photography mirrored Jay’s and it appears that his encounter with him and the photographers showing their work there profoundly affected him. To Jay, here were a group of photographers incredibly dedicated to their craft and as yet untainted by commerce.¹¹³ The New York scene was in its infancy: in 1968 MoMA’s gallery dedicated to photography was a year old and the only private photography gallery was only open in the evenings and at weekends when Kleber came home from his job at a camera shop.¹¹⁴ Although clearly more advanced

¹⁰⁹ Jay, interview.

¹¹⁰ Jay, “Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972,” 10.

¹¹¹ Jay, interview.

¹¹² “Gallery Shows, Museum Exhibits,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1963, sec. Arts & Leisure, 138.

Jay probably met Gary Renaud here, a young American photographer working for the Pix agency whose pictures appeared in the May 1969 edition and whose untimely death would also leave an impact on Jay.

¹¹³ For a view of the New York scene in the mid-to-late 1960s, see A. D. Coleman, “Toward Some Future History of Photography, 1965-2000: Part I,” *The Photography Criticism CyberArchive*, 1999, <http://www.nearbycafe.com/photocriticism/members/archivetexts/photocriticism/coleman/colemanfuture1.html>.

¹¹⁴ Lee Witkin would open the Witkin Gallery in 1969, signaling a major shift in photographic consciousness in New York with collectors throughout the US more broadly.

aesthetically and institutionally than their British counterparts, Jay and Ray-Jones were more colleagues than apprentices where many of the movers and shakers were still relatively young and unknown outside of a specialist audience. The New York photo scene was informal and welcoming and although the people Jay met would go on to be internationally famous, influential and wealthy in subsequent years, superstardom was yet to make photographers inaccessible. As he recounted: “in ’68 you could still knock on [Garry] Winogrand’s door and he would show you six hundred photographs that night.”¹¹⁵

LETTERS FROM AMERICA: ROBERT FRANK AND ROAD TRIPS

Due to its location in the UK, *Creative Camera* was naturally not always able to report on US trends immediately, but in several respects the magazine was ahead of the curve. Beginning June 1969 the magazine published the “Letter from New York” column by Robert Frank, quite a coup, given the photographer’s famously gruff nature. The columns were chatty stream-of-consciousness reports detailing the happenings in the US photography scene. Their main purpose seemed to be charting Frank’s own personal trips across the US filming documentaries and on entertaining diversions such as attending a conference in an abandoned tile factory in Albuquerque, New Mexico with Danny Lyon.¹¹⁶ The second installment of the column was accompanied by a visually arresting reproduction of one of Frank’s contact sheets; the rat-a-tat patter of his writing matched by the rapid-fire images and gave a rare glimpse into his working methods. The columns’ freewheeling mention of publications, happenings and straightforward assessments of the value of certain photographic intellects (Nathan Lyons was a “terribly boring guy to

¹¹⁵ Jay, interview.

¹¹⁶ Robert Frank, “Letter from New York,” *Creative Camera*, no. 61 (July 1969): 234.

listen to” but had a high-level awareness of photography; Ken Heyman’s book on Leonard Bernstein was “absolutely worthless, pretentious shit”¹¹⁷ must have excited young photographers: here was a transatlantic hero casually chatting about the details of his life and revealing the excitement and vivacity of the American scene. Stories of shows in Philadelphia, adventures on the beach in the Hamptons with a cadre of young American photographers such as Ralph Gibson and attending film screenings across two continents, Frank painted a picture of an engaging, culture-filled existence in New York that confirmed its place as the premier photographic destination and tapped into already pervasive myths about the excitement and possibility America afforded British youth. As David Brittain notes:

Creative Camera sold its readers dreams. The reader was perceived to desire role models who were dedicated to pure photography while being impervious to the siren lure of commerce.¹¹⁸

Preserving an individualistic, inner-directed practice that was not in service to another commercial enterprise was a lofty goal, especially given the impoverished circumstances of most photographers including those working on newspaper assignments. Magnum photographers like Dennis Stock, Roger Malloch and Leonard Freed and many others joined Frank as globetrotting pioneers of photographic freedom. Magnum’s democratic organizational structure, the photographers’ control of their own images and relative freedom to choose their own assignments were enviable compared to most professional photographers whose images had to satisfy clients with more exacting preferences.

Throughout 1968-1969, *Creative Camera* featured a wide spectrum of American photographers’ images ranging in style from Bruce Davidson’s documentary images of

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Brittain, *Creative Camera: Thirty Years of Writing*, 9.

Britain to the abstract photo-mosaics of Ray Metzger. Metzger's work had appeared in George Eastman House's *Persistence of Vision* in 1968, a seminal exhibition of experimental photography curated by Nathan Lyons: including such then-challenging images with the more traditional documentary was a rather radical proposition.¹¹⁹ In 1968, Arthur Tress's ethnographic images of Sweden, a country where he had been working for two years, were published and hinted at the surrealism that was to be a prominent feature of Tress' work throughout his career.¹²⁰ Burk Uzzle's photojournalistic images of ordinary America turned extraordinary (entitled "Strong, Simple Messages that Tell the Truth") appeared in June 1968 and epitomized a strain of road-trip photographic Americana which ran through the magazine throughout the Jay and Turner years; a thread which alluded to the inspiration of the work of Robert Frank and Walker Evans but also promoted the (Western) American landscape as *the* stage set for serious photography as much as Weegee and Winogrand would do for New York. Uzzle poetically recounted his journey "hitch-hiking across the US with two Leicas" as a tantalizing tale of discovery and exploration straight out of *On the Road*: "once I scribbled in a camera case 'photography is a love affair with life.'"¹²¹ Tony Ray-Jones' seminal selection "Photographs of America and England" appeared in 1968 and Joel Meyerowitz's short portfolio of "My European Trip", a title perhaps a little tongue-in-cheek, appeared in the December 1968 issue. Footloose and peripatetic, the energetic transatlantic wanderings of these photographers (and their exclusive photos for *Creative Camera*) were inspirational

¹¹⁹ "Ray K. Metzker, "Photographic Mosaics," *Creative Camera*, no. 44 (February 1968): 54–55. Jay recalls that these types of images were controversial because "any time you showed a picture that was out of the Cartier-Bresson, Gene Smith mainstream, you had people fighting about it." Jay, interview.

¹²⁰ Tress would become a significant inspiration to gay photographers in Britain in the 1980s in particular with his psychologically dense, brooding male nudes that ushered in a renaissance in the photographic exploration of the male body. Arthur Tress, Telephone, January 19, 2012.

¹²¹ Burk Uzzle, "Burk Uzzle: Strong, Simple Pictures That Tell the Truth," *Creative Camera*, no. 48 (June 1968): 192–95.

to a generation of recent graduates from photography programs at Britain's newly-reforming art schools; if *On the Road* set aspiring writers in search of America, it was photographs like Uzzle's, Dennis Stock's, Danny Lyons' and Robert Frank's that launched a thousand photographic trips.¹²²

Following a tradition initiated by Helmut Gernsheim, Hugo van Wadenoyen and others, Jay advocated a root-and-branch reform of photographic institutions with an iconoclastic zeal. His editorials in *Creative Camera* were most often jeremiads that voiced his dissatisfaction with the photographic establishment (and offered a solution) as opposed to a gentle introduction to the photographs within. Although the magazine was in and of itself an alternative space for photography and thus to current mainstream practice, the editorials give insight into the battles being fought by Jay and his contemporaries. In July 1968, his target was British photography schools. Noting that Magnum photojournalist Patrick Ward was rather ashamed of his photographic education, Jay railed against colleges in Britain that "taught the how and not the why" and labeled them "sausage machines, churning out the same monotonous mediocrity."¹²³ Again using an example from the US (probably influenced by his recent encounter with Tony Ray-Jones) he asked "where is Britain's Alexey Brodovitch?" lamenting the lack of inspirational figures interested in developing students' individual visions.¹²⁴ Mirroring Norman Hall and Helmut Gernsheim's critiques, and demonstrating how slow progress was in British photography, Jay used the example of the London Salon in November 1968 to attack aesthetic standards. The "trite photo-clichés" propagated by the Salon led inevitably to the "plethora of appalling photographs that assault our eyes every minute of

¹²² For an account of one of the more radical challenges to teaching practice, see Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution* (Frances Lincoln, 2008).

¹²³ Bill Jay, "Comment," *Creative Camera*, no. 49 (July 1968): 222.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

every day, from early morning newspapers to late-night television.”¹²⁵ January 1969 brought an attack on P.O.Bs (“print-oriented bastards”) in the media who used photographs of young photographers they employed carelessly. “When the going gets tough,” readers were admonished to “remember W. Eugene Smith whose life and fight for control over his own pictures has been a constant source of inspiration for young photographers.”¹²⁶ In February 1969, Jay discussed the need for developing a collectors’ market for photographs, citing gallery practices in the US whereby photographers could sell their prints as selected by the gallery owner as a good example to follow.¹²⁷ Jay reprinted an article from *Art in America* by Peter Bunnell entitled “Photographs for Collectors” that would be important in defining the market in the US and would later frame *Album*’s print sales policy. March 1969 brought a tentative approval for “manipulated” images from the likes of Jerry Uelsmann, acknowledging that *Creative Camera* had mostly published “pure” photography but that if a photographer’s “honest vision” could be communicated through manipulation without compromise then this could expand the boundaries of the photographically possible.¹²⁸ In most occasions, US photography could offer an alternative to sleepy, backward Britain: Jay not only sensed that change was on the horizon, he was urging his audience to advance the developments he had seen for himself in New York.

¹²⁵ Bill Jay, “Comment,” *Creative Camera*, no. 53 (November 1968): 375.

¹²⁶ Bill Jay, “Comment,” *Creative Camera*, no. 55 (January 1969): 4. In his interview for the Oral History of British Photography, Jay noted how prints were treated as disposable by magazine editors (including him) up until the late sixties. A change in attitude was signaled when American photographers started asking for their prints back to sell. It was not until the 1970s with the rise of commercial galleries that most photographers would do this. Jay, interview.

¹²⁷ Bill Jay, “Comment,” *Creative Camera*, no. 56 (February 1969): 47.

¹²⁸ Bill Jay, “Comment,” *Creative Camera*, no. 57 (March 1969): 87.

DAVID HURN'S FLAT AND THE LONDON UNDERGROUND

One of Jay's important confidants during the late sixties was David Hurn, a key figure in early Anglo-American photographic networks who became one of the most important people in facilitating transatlantic contact between US and European photographers. Hurn's career in photography had started in 1956 on his discharge from the army. He subsequently worked as an agency photographer, selling his photographs of the 1956 Hungarian uprising to *Life* magazine, and supplemented his income by shooting freelance stills and fashion photographs.¹²⁹ After a stint in New York he relocated to Bayswater in London in 1960 to work for *Harper's Bazaar*. Hurn maintained a separation between his commercial fashion photographs and his personal work; although a documentary style informed his images, Hurn acknowledged a need to make money but considered those other-directed images as a means to an end.¹³⁰ Appearing in Ken Russell's "A House in Bayswater," a 1960 short film that captured the bohemian spirit of the titular house's residents before its demolition, Hurn narrates a scene featuring his photo shoot with a model thus: "the only reason I take pictures of girls is that I have to find some method in which I can earn enough money to live and take the photographs I want to take," mentioning that one set of commercial pictures sold to an American magazine allows him to work on his own projects for a month.¹³¹ Hurn photographed London coffee-bars and an emerging beatnik and other subcultural scenes that he was involved with as his own personal work while simultaneously producing film stills for El

¹²⁹ Harrison, *Young Meteors: British Photojournalism, 1957-1965*, 116.

¹³⁰ Hurn would use color for his commercial shoots and black-and-white for his own work. As Harrison suggests, personal projects often took forms that would not make them commercially viable: they may have been taken over a number of years or might not have commercial appeal at the time. Harrison, *Young Meteors: British Photojournalism, 1957-1965*.

¹³¹ *A House in Bayswater (1960)*, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFZIBYJ0_uY. Colin Osman also had notable successes selling his glamour work to American magazines.

Cid and later in 1967 made images of Jane Fonda on the set of *Barbarella* that would infamously grace *Newsweek*'s cover under the heading "The Permissive Society."¹³² Along with Ian Berry and Don McCullin, he graduated to full membership of Magnum in 1967, a move that would grant him more freedom to choose his own assignments and to use his personal vision to support himself. In 1964, he leased the ground floor flat of 4 Porchester Gardens in Bayswater from Magnum's London agent John Hillelson which soon became a crashpad for itinerant photographers, models and members of the London scene. In an interview with Graham Harrison, Hurn lists off some of the photographers who stayed there:

Leonard Freed, Josef Koudelka, Elliott Erwitt all stayed there quite a lot... Philip Jones Griffiths obviously, Bill Jay, Ian Berry, Don McCullin, Patrick Ward. Homer Sykes was there. John Bulmer, Bruce Davidson, Brian Brake, Sergio Larrain, Marc Riboud, Henri Cartier-Bresson, George Rodger, Eve Arnold, Bruno Barbey, René Burri ...¹³³

To this list can be added Richard Avedon as well as many other lesser-known figures in photography who contributed to the transient, like-minded coterie at 4 Porchester Court which was for international photographers in London the 1960s what gatherings at the 27 rue de Fleurus had been for writers and artists in Paris in the 1920s.

Jay befriended Hurn in 1967 after seeing his work in *Life* and from 1970 to 1972 lived in the flat while editing the final issues of *Album*.¹³⁴ Recalling his first meeting with him he remarked: "In his clarity of thinking, his direct approach to the medium, and his forceful utterances, I recognized a perfect template for my own, much hazier and

¹³² Hurn, David and Harrison, Graham, "David Hurn." The image appeared on the November 13th cover.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Jay, interview. "David Hurn is one of the first photographers of this stature that I went to see, and everything that he said made so much sense, his spectrum of photography was so much broader than mine. It still wasn't that broad, but it was certainly broader than what I had and he'd introduce me to other photographers- have you seen so-and-so's work and so on-and so he was very, very influential."

unformed, opinions and attitudes.”¹³⁵ Further to their encounter, Hurn guest-edited the September 1968 issue of *Creative Camera*, including portfolios by Charles Harbutt, Elliott Erwitt, Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson, and remained an editorial consultant throughout Jay’s tenure. Taking advantage of the flow of photographers coming into the country (particularly through Magnum) Jay set up lectures and photographic talks both in the flat (often cramming over 70 people in) and in local pubs. These gatherings, continued by Jay’s work at the ICA, were aimed at creating and sustaining a dialogue about photography in Britain. Two anecdotes surrounding the reception of American ideas about photography suggest the isolation of British photographers at the time: Jay describes Van Deren Coke, then-director of George Eastman House’s visit with slides of his “60s Continuum” show: “From the first image, of a finger stuck in food (Paul Diamond), the audience burst out laughing in derision and became increasing raucous as the slides progressed. Britain was not ready for the American artists!”¹³⁶ A similar incident occurred during a meeting at Hurn’s flat:

We had a knock on the door and it was an American photographer. And of course, we welcomed him in with open arms. This was new blood... he said well, before I can show you the pictures I have to tell you about them. So we thought that’s a little bit odd, people didn’t talk about photographs in those days. So I’ll never forget his opening sentence was. He stood in front of us: ‘I endeavor to make uroboric imagery. A uroborus in Jungian psychology is a straight line that encircles the universe and he went on and on like this like this, straight out of Minor White and we all looked at each other and David said ‘anyone want a cup of tea?’¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Bill Jay, “David Hurn: A Personal Appraisal of a Magnum Photographer,” 1997, <http://www.billjasonphotography.com/DavidHurnPersonalappraisal.pdf>.

¹³⁶ Jay, “Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972.”

¹³⁷ Jay, interview. The photographer in question is Clyde Dilley. A selection of his work can be found in: Clyde H Dilley and Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, *Photographs by Clyde Dilley* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1970).

Such avant-garde images and pronouncements were jarring, even amusing for an audience steeped in a tradition of committed, socially-oriented photography. Fortified by the aforementioned cup of tea, the photographers came back into the flat look at the work and warmed to the photographs on closer inspection.¹³⁸ While not initially receptive to the more obtuse strands of American photography, experimental work would later find a foothold in Britain, most notably coming through the channels of conceptual art and academically-oriented photographic practice. The initial sense of resistance can also be seen as a cultural distancing by British photographers from the more leftfield manifestations of American photography and culture. Both Coke's and Dilley's presentations were received with a guarded sense of what was acceptable in photography and also with the skepticism accorded to a suspicion of American hyperbole to the more reserved British.

Related to the gatherings at Hurn's flat, it is important to see *Creative Camera* and *Album* as rooted in the youth culture emerging in Britain during the sixties. While were not cut from the same countercultural cloth as contemporary magazines such as *International Times* or *Oz* with their radical blend of art, music and politics, they lived very much in the milieu of the underground press in Britain. Both Jay and later editor of *Creative Camera* Peter Turner imbibed the sixties doctrine of self-expression, and an antipathy toward antiquated authority seeped into the magazine. Culturally as well as photographically, the energy of the counterculture and radical politics was radiating from the US, and the underground press in Britain had a distinctly transatlantic feel to it: a few examples of the better-known figures are Jim Haynes (who had stayed in the UK after his military service had ended in 1956) who was a founding editor of London's *International*

¹³⁸ Jay, interview.

Times and *Friends/Frendz* which began as the British offshoot of *Rolling Stone*. Most influential of all perhaps was the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS), started in 1966 by John Wilcock, a British expatriate who was also instrumental in founding the *Village Voice*.¹³⁹ From its beginnings with six US-based magazines 1966, the UPS rapidly added new titles to its roster: a November 1966 listing in *The Rag* (Austin, TX) shows London's *Art and Artists* and *Peace News* alongside ten other North American papers.¹⁴⁰ By 1971, twenty British titles were included with representation from countries including from Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Hong Kong.¹⁴¹ Connections such as the UPS and the Liberation News Service (LNS) created and reinforced transatlantic countercultural and activist ties carrying cultural attitudes as well as information. These networks were crucial in forming a transatlantic sensibility that mirrored developments in other spheres such as popular music and film.

Just as the members of the underground press felt that they were providing a voice to underrepresented views not heard in the mainstream, so Jay saw his work as giving voice to new ideas about photography in a British photographic world mired in complacency and irrelevance. Particularly during the late sixties, a self-righteousness and anti-establishment confidence pervaded his magazines, even if it stayed relatively apolitical. The publication of Emil Cadoo's photos in 1967 is an interesting episode that illustrates *Creative Camera*'s often accidental relationship to the counterculture. Colin Osman recounted the story for the Oral History of British Photography in 1995:

¹³⁹ Steven Heller, "John Wilcock: The Puppet Master of '60s Underground Newspapers," *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/03/john-wilcock-the-puppet-master-of-60s-underground-newspapers/254564/>.

¹⁴⁰ "Underground Press Syndicate," *The Rag*, November 21, 1966, http://www.nuevoanden.com/rag/ups_roster1966.html.

¹⁴¹ Lewis, *Outlaws of America: The Underground Press and Its Context*, 179–189.

Many, many years ago in Paris, there was a black photographer who did some nudes called Emile Cadoo. And they appeared in one of these, I suppose one would call them Pre-Hippie magazines, you know, nice little portfolio. And he was in Paris at the same time so I went to see him and we ran a portfolio- never did discover what happened to him, I never saw his name again. But, you know, they were good photos.¹⁴²

Cadoo was living in Paris because he felt less racism and discrimination against his homosexuality there and also because he was caught up in a censorship scandal. Cadoo's dreamy double-exposed nudes had featured on the cover of Grove Press titles and infamously in the April/May 1964 edition of *Evergreen Review*, 21,000 copies of which were deemed "obscene" and seized by Police in Long Island,¹⁴³ only to be subsequently returned to the publisher after a judge, citing the unsuccessful case against Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* suggested that this label was outdated.¹⁴⁴ Osman, always opposed to censorship surrounding nude photography, championed his cause in Britain. He published Steichen's statement in support of Cadoo at the beginning of the magazine as his quote of the month: "I find nothing in these photographs that in the slightest way reflects bad taste, and certainly there is nothing pornographic conveyed. Any action that implies to the contrary can only be regarded as an infringement of the freedom of expression accorded to all artists who use the camera as a medium instead of another medium."¹⁴⁵ Other images of the counterculture found their way into the magazine, although they were mostly couched in terms of interesting images emerging from underground/social documentary photographers who were recording historic events as they unfolded, such as

¹⁴² Osman, interview.

¹⁴³ Coincidentally, Cadoo had illustrated Miller's 1963 *Sexus*. As Glen O'Brien noted in *Evergreen Review*'s 2002 discussion of the episode: "The issue contained works by Norman Mailer, Jean Genet, William Burroughs, Bryon Gysin, Michael McClure and Karl Shapiro-a who's who of the day's practitioners of perceived outrage-but what provoked the seizure was a portfolio of erotic photographs by Emil J. Cadoo." Glen O'Brien, "Emil Cadoo," *Evergreen Review*, June 2002, <http://www.evergreenreview.com/105/contents.htm>.

¹⁴⁴ "L.I. Drops Obscenity Charge Against Evergreen Review," *New York Times*, July 30, 1964, sec. Business, 54.

¹⁴⁵ "Views and News," *Creative Camera Owner*, no. 42 (December 1967): 300.

when *Creative Camera* published Roger Malloch's "Made in the USA" picture series documenting political unrest in April 1970, taken from the *America in Crisis* book.¹⁴⁶ The fact that the images came from the epicenter of the countercultural revolution would have made them all the more intriguing to a British audience; they had their counterparts in similar images in the British press, particularly those of the Anti-Vietnam protest outside the American Embassy in London in April 1968.

THE INFLUENCE OF MOMA AND JOHN SZARKOWSKI

Of paramount importance to British and European photography were the books and exhibitions emanating from MoMA in New York.¹⁴⁷ MoMA played a central role in disseminating both American art and photography from the 1950s to the 1970s through their International Program of Circulating Exhibitions (later titled the International Program). Although at first the program struggled under a general McCarthyist-era suspicion of modern art, the non-governmental status of the museum positioned it well for cultural transmission. Two 1956 travelling shows, *The Family of Man* and *Modern Art in the United States*, shown at the Tate Gallery were particularly important to the International Program's success in Britain. One of the program's early champions was Lawrence Alloway, then-assistant director of the ICA in London. A key member of the Independent Group at the ICA and a champion of American art (especially Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism), Alloway was instrumental in the transatlantic transmission of ideas and in the promotion of the American avant-garde in Britain. The reception of the

¹⁴⁶ A few odd non-photographic pieces were published.. The January 1970 edition of *Creative Camera* rather incongruously contained a two-page article reprinting selections from Chairman Mao's Little Red Book. "The Thoughts of Chairman Mao," *Creative Camera*, no. 67 (January 1970): 28–29.

¹⁴⁷ For a thorough treatment of MoMA's photography program see Christopher Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," *October* 22 (October 1, 1982): 27–63, doi:10.2307/778362.

American art world preceded the photographic by about ten years or so.¹⁴⁸ Word of new ideas in American painting had been trickling through to Britain in the 1940s and, according to Alloway, the 1956 Tate show along with Mark Tobey's one-man retrospective at the ICA in 1955 and a similar show by Sam Francis in 1957 set the new agenda and solidified the status of New York as more important than Paris.¹⁴⁹ Discourses surrounding the rugged individualism, directness and machismo of American modern painters, their focus on "the creative act" and "resolutions and continuations of problems European in origin and international in their scope"¹⁵⁰ would be mirrored in discussions of American photography in the 1960s and 1970s where heroic pioneers had staked their independence.

As Serge Guilbaut and Eva Cockroft point out, the largesse of this cultural diplomacy was clearly not innocent.¹⁵¹ On one pole, it is certainly possible to see governmental promotion of the New York school's artwork (and subsequent programs) as tacitly supporting American ideology simply because the artists themselves were products of an upbringing and education in the United States. This coupled with the straightforward fact that, as Jay Levenson points out, the museum curators believed in the importance of the

¹⁴⁸ The prevalence of photographic portraits of artists at this time makes an interesting corollary to the relationship between photography and art. The MoMA circulated "The Artist in His Studio" exhibition of portraits by Alexander Lieberman that came to London in 1961 was preceded by an exhibition of artists and writers by Ida Kar, held at the Whitechapel gallery in 1960. See Val Williams, *Ida Kar: Photographer, 1908-1974* (London: Virago, 1989). Another leading teacher and advocate for British photography, Jorge Lewinski, was also taking portraits of artists at the time, although his work presented as a discrete exhibition until 2005. Jorge Lewinski, *Portrait of the Artist: Photographs* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005).

¹⁴⁹As Alloway noted: "New York is now as firmly established as, at least, the rival of Paris and, for some people, the successor to Paris. English dealers visit New York and the West Coast of America, as they once only visited Paris, and on one occasion at least have been in advance of New York galleries." Lawrence Alloway, *Modern American Painting*. (London: United States Embassy, 1961), 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵¹ See Eva Cockroft, "Abstract Expression: Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum* XII, no. 10 (June 1974): 39-41. and Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

art and wanted to promote it nationally and internationally, is the inevitable by-product of the promotion of one school of art over another.¹⁵² For Guilbaut and Cockroft, though, the CIA's involvement in some of the international programs signaled the cooptation of art as cold war propaganda, an ideological weapon that pointed to the relative freedom and diversity of American arts as opposed to the stricture and similarity under the Soviet system. This freedom was expressed in modernist abstraction that reveled in self-expression and artistic autonomy rather than a politically-motivated realism.

As a Cold War ally and partner in the special relationship, the British establishment was particularly receptive to American ideas, but American art also found favor with the grassroots of British art. The rather dour and introspective subject matter of the Kitchen Sink realists in Britain was contrasted by the American-influenced Pop Art movement whose playful repurposing of American mass culture divested of the austerity of postwar Britain and the “geometry of fear” pervasive in its arts.¹⁵³ Through the ICA and other venues, British curators and gallery owners eagerly showed the latest American work emanating from the now-center of the art world. When photographic programs under the leadership of John Szarkowski began to circulate in the UK in the early 1970s, there was already a framework for the reception and dissemination of American art and photography. British audiences were acutely aware of the preeminence of MoMA for setting the artistic agenda and even more familiar with American cultural products at a time when revolutionary ideas from the US were being imbibed, transformed and domesticated; thus primed, MoMA shows were a glimpse of the future for British audiences and bore the certification of the world authority on art. In photography, as

¹⁵² Amy Horschak and Jay Levenson, “MoMA and the World: The International Program,” *Museum of Modern Art*, August 30, 2010, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/08/30/what-is-momas-international-program/.

¹⁵³ Arts Council Of Great Britain, *Geometry of Fear: Works from the Arts Council Collection*. (London: Arts Council, 2007).

Norman Hall suggested when discussing *The Family of Man*, the leadership and vision of Steichen and the funding available for the arts put the support system for British photography to shame by demonstrating the aesthetic superiority of American photographers amongst the international selection of images.¹⁵⁴

Described as “the First Viceroy of Photography” by Sean Callahan in a 1978 issue of *American Photography*,¹⁵⁵ John Szarkowski superseded Steichen at MoMA in 1963, a position that accorded him immense power over setting the photographic agenda nationally and internationally. Szarkowski’s influence permeated *Creative Camera* through the Jay and Turner years. *The Photographer’s Eye* was effusively praised in the July 1967 edition in a two-page review that outlined the book’s main ideas and lauded it for raising the issue of the “success” of pictures and how they can “increase our sense of possibility.” The review concludes: “we have seldom read a photographic publication that gave us so much pleasure and rich food for thought.”¹⁵⁶ In Szarkowski, Jay found a critical voice, someone who knew how photography worked, could articulate it beautifully and provocatively; he was also a photographer himself, a fact that appealed to Jay. In enumerating five formal characteristics of photographs (the detail, the thing itself, time, vantage point and the frame),¹⁵⁷ Szarkowski developed a formal language of photography that, according to Christopher Phillips, was “not only a checklist that could be held up to any photograph for the cool appraisal of its organizing logic, but also a range of stylistic alternatives that were explicitly regarded as “artist’s choices.”¹⁵⁸ The

¹⁵⁴ Hall, “Pathetic Fallacy.”

¹⁵⁵ Sean Callahan, “The First Viceroy of Photography,” *American Photographer*, June 1978.

¹⁵⁶ “The Photographer’s Eye,” *Camera Owner*, no. 37 (July 1967): 144. *Amateur Photographer’s* review meanwhile focused on the image reproductions which were “very well done in rich neutral gravure.”

“Bookshelf: The Photographer’s Eye,” *Amateur Photographer*, August 30, 1967, 320.

¹⁵⁷ John Szarkowski, *The Photographer’s Eye* (New York,: Museum of Modern Art, 2007).

¹⁵⁸ Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography.”

gnomic simplicity of Szarkowski's schema was appealing as it gave photography a language that was rooted in formal analysis (the focus of technical training in Britain) yet also left room for the *je ne sais quoi* of "good" photography's aesthetic appeal.

As well as laying out a formal agenda with which to assess photographs, *The Photographer's Eye* was a smorgasbord of historic images with an American focus: like Beaumont Newhall and Van Deren Coke, Szarkowski was an emissary whose canon-building was to have a lasting effect on Jay's conception of photographic history and the possibilities of the photographic image. Here, ready-made but still excitingly in-progress was a successor to Beaumont Newhall and Helmut Gernsheim's books (to be later continued in 1973's *Looking at Photographs*) and a tradition of photographic history culled from the archives of MoMA put into conversation with the present. Alive in America as opposed to its moribund counterpart at home at the time Jay took over at *Camera Owner*, this sustained reflexive photographic tradition suggested to Jay that a native version could be revived in the hope of adding British photographers to the largely American-focused canon propagated through US-based publications and institutions.

David Brittain suggests that "a Szarkowskian fascination with rediscovering the past—especially naïve genius"¹⁵⁹ colored the magazine, and to a degree this is true, especially given Jay's relative antipathy towards "academic" photography; that is to say, photographers who based their pictures on the fulfillment of ideas rather than attending to personal, humanistic concerns. Antithetical to verbose artists' statements and jargon-littered prose, Jay preferred to see the universal in photograph, a position he later clarified in an essay entitled "The Romantic Machine: Towards a Definition of Humanism in

¹⁵⁹ Brittain, *Creative Camera: Thirty Years of Writing*, 9.

Photography.”¹⁶⁰ In this, he separated photographs into two traditions: the naturalistic that “states what is” and the humanistic that “states what could or should be”. The best photographic work “is made by a photographer who, working from a deep rooted sense of self, pervades his work with his own value judgments.”¹⁶¹ This sense of the ethics of photography was key to the “honesty” in photography that both Szarkowski and Jay sought and promoted.

As Brittain notes, one of Szarkowski’s earliest articles reprinted in the magazine was in 1969, entitled “Photography and the Mass Media” the essay sets out some of the main themes to which *Creative Camera* would hew closely over the next decade or so. Szarkowski echoes a complaint that would have resonated with disaffected photojournalists on both sides of the Atlantic, that the magazines and newspapers they work for “erode the creative independence and accountability” of the photographer.¹⁶² Szarkowski discusses the movement of photography from a “mass medium” to a tool for self-expression and encouraged young photographers to look back at the photographic past to find “literary” as well as visual allusions.¹⁶³ Something as simple as “speaking to photographers as photographers”¹⁶⁴ was a radical and liberating concept and by defining their work as having autonomous artistic merit as opposed to being pigeonholed into reportage.¹⁶⁵ Szarkowski’s influence would continue throughout Turner’s tenure as

¹⁶⁰ Bill Jay, “The Romantic Machine: Towards a Definition of Humanism in Photography,” *The Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (December 1, 1978): 647–62.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 661.

¹⁶² John Szarkowski, “Photography and the Mass Media,” *Creative Camera*, no. 56 (February 1969): 62–63.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶⁴ Brittain, *Creative Camera: Thirty Years of Writing*, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Szarkowski’s later formulation of “Mirrors and Windows” to describe the two major strains of photography in America since 1978 was also crystallization of the two broad strands of photography (photojournalism and art-focused) in Britain that were clashing as the “shift from public to private concerns” that originated in the US began to take root. Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960*, 11.

editor¹⁶⁶ but would also become a lightning-rod for criticism of the magazine and would be held up as an example of the pernicious influence of “American photography” in Britain in the 1980s.¹⁶⁷ What was eagerly imported in the 1960s and 1970s would be challenged in later years as British photography sought to define itself against versus alongside the American straight photographic tradition.

MoMA’s centrality to British conceptions of art photography was epitomized in 1970 when their exhibition of Bill Brandt’s works arrived in Britain at the Hayward Gallery. The show, Williams notes “had acquired the talismanic quality that all things of American origin seemed to have in those days. It was British photography bewitched, reinvigorated, and brought back to life by a touch of transatlantic magic.”¹⁶⁸ Welcome and successful as the exhibition was, the show highlighted just how poorly British photography was treated in its own backyard. In the foreword to the exhibition catalogue, Robin Campbell, Director of Art at the Arts Council mentions that “it is appropriate that the first exhibition of photography presented by the Arts Council should show the work of Bill Brandt, one of our greatest photographers,” and goes on to thank John Szarkowski and Richard Palmer who organized the 1969 show at MoMA for being “the greatest help during the preparations for the London exhibition.”¹⁶⁹ This selective and flimsy

¹⁶⁶ In 1972, “New Photography U.S.A.,” John Szarkowski’s personal selection of young photographers circulated in the UK, visiting galleries in London, Sheffield and Cambridge. Szarkowski attributed the “exceptional vigor and independence” of the contemporary American scene to the familiarity of “independent” young Americans with the “twentieth-century masters” of photography, including Atget, Stieglitz, Strand, Evans and others. “The result” of this, he continued, was not “imitation but challenge and rejuvenation.” John Szarkowski, *New Photography USA* (London: The Photographers’ Gallery, 1972).

¹⁶⁷ One of the most pertinent critiques of Szarkowski’s influence was A.D. Coleman who deplored the vesting of so much power over the course of photography in a single figure. Interestingly, Coleman suggests that during the time when Peter Bunnell and Szarkowski were at MoMA (1968-1972), “the department was at its most dynamic.” A. D. Coleman, “On the Subject of John Szarkowski: An Open Letter To the Directors and Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art,” in *Light Readings: A Photography Critic’s Writings, 1968-1978* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 287–93.

¹⁶⁸ Williams, “Crowned With Thorns: Creative Camera 1965-1978,” 225.

¹⁶⁹ Bill Brandt, *Bill Brandt: Photographs* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1970).

acknowledgement of MoMA's role in commissioning, assembling and producing the exhibition speaks to the Arts Council's embarrassment about having the first major retrospective of a British photographer in the UK be produced by an institution nearly 3,000 miles away. Britain, it was clear, would have to reclaim Brandt as one of its own, an ironic position given Brandt and many of his generations' continental heritage. Jay, a vocal champion of Brandt's work since the early sixties (he had commissioned Brandt to take a portrait of J.B. Priestley in 1969 while working for *Weekend Telegraph Magazine*), saw this as the nadir of the British establishment's failure to adequately support and recognize the importance of photography; the show only confirmed the righteousness of his desire to affect change on an institutional level, an effort he would undertake in his next two ventures.¹⁷⁰

ALBUM AND TRANSATLANTIC MAGAZINE PRODUCTION

Jay and Osman's relationship deteriorated in the middle of 1969. Jay had been editing the magazine part-time while working for the *Weekend Telegraph* and relations between the two had soured to where Jay was working on the magazine at night to avoid Osman. The situation reached its nadir in a local pub when Osman told Jay his services were no longer required. Two versions of the break-up exist; from both it is clear that Osman was unhappy with the direction the magazine was going and wanted to assert more editorial control, especially as he was paying for the production. Jay's version of the break-up is as follows:

I think the clash was that I was learning so fast and trying to get all of my new-found information, knowledge, enthusiasm back into the magazine, and it was

¹⁷⁰ Sue Davies, interview by Val Williams, Cassette Tape, November 1990, C459/7, The Oral History of British Photography, The British Library.

leaving Colin a bit behind. Also Colin was, of course, trying to increase the subscription rate of the magazine, he was picking up the bills, of course, and therefore pressuring to include more photographs of the how-to-do-it nature, and more photographs that showed nudes, or whatever.¹⁷¹

Osman's version is slightly different, and hints at a theme that emerges with *Album*, Jay's next venture:

Bill thought that the future of the magazine was in America because that's where the colleges were at that time. And he wanted to move the whole operation to America and obviously there was no way I could do that because that would have cut me off from my bread and butter. And this is where we agreed to part ways, and he went on to become a professor.¹⁷²

Entranced by what he saw happening in New York, Jay's increasing orientation towards the US would find its expression in his own transatlantic publication that aimed to do the same cultural work as Stieglitz, Coke, Newhall and Gernsheim had done before him: bring American ideas about photography into conversation with British ones.

Almost immediately after his departure from *Creative Camera*, Jay started work on *Album* magazine, a publication whose influence would transcend its twelve-issue run. Founded with a fortuitous £4000 investment from TV producer and photography enthusiast Tristram Powell, *Album* was set up to be Jay's ideal version of *Creative Camera*. The seeds of *Album* may also be found in Jay's admiration for small photographic magazines, particularly the American-edited *Camera* and those like *Aperture* coming directly out of the US. Jay's admiration for US publications can be seen in the September 1968 edition of *Creative Camera* introduced the *Boston Review of Photography* thus:

So many journals are full of irrelevant drivel, so few publish outstanding pictures. Those that do are usually non-commercial and therefore lack the funds to promote their own magazines. This is why you may never see or hear of them which is a

¹⁷¹ Jay, interview.

¹⁷² Osman, interview.

pity. So, for your pleasure and inspiration, we will attempt to dig them out. One small yet beautifully produced photo-mag is *The Boston Review of Photography*. Very much a one-man band, its editor is Stephen G. Perrin...each issue is paid for by supporters who have included Wingate Paine and Minor White.¹⁷³

Jay believed fervently in his “one-man band” vision and was convinced that there was enough of an audience of individuals serious enough about photography that would support his magazine by subscription alone.

Printed in a large format on high-quality paper and with no advertisements, *Album* aspired to be an art object that transcended the ephemerality of other magazines. The photographs contained within were objects to be pored over, cherished and studied as sources of inspiration.¹⁷⁴ Similarly to *Creative Camera*, *Album* featured portfolios of images, chosen this time by Jay in tandem with the photographers. Jay has described his time editing *Album* as “seventh heaven,” drawing on the links he had forged on his trip in the US to populate the magazine with unseen images and original works by Imogen Cunningham, W. Eugene Smith, Les Krims and David Hockney amongst many others. Though the magazine did not draw solely on the work of US photographers as there was a large representation from European practitioners, nearly two-thirds of the magazine’s photographic and textual content originated in the US and were commissioned by Jay or reprinted by permission. To any casual observer, it was clear from whence the bulk of worthy photographic material was flowing from.

Unlike *Creative Camera* which was later to publish a good deal of reader-submitted photographs, Jay only published two unsolicited portfolios out of hundreds received during *Album*’s run, from Emmet Gowin and Allen Dutton, both of whom would see considerable subsequent success as both photographers and educators. This

¹⁷³ “Views and News,” *Creative Camera*, no. 51 (September 1968): 293.

¹⁷⁴ Even shortly after its publication ended, *Album* had achieved cult status. As William Messer noted in 1977: “Single copies of *Album* are now collectors’ items; complete sets are next to extinct.” Messer, “The British Obsession: About to Pay Off?,” 53.

practice can, in part, be attributed to the short run of the magazine and the necessity of having a body of work to publish but it also attests to Jay's obsessive canon-building that was evident in *Creative Camera*'s early years but found its true expression in *Album*.¹⁷⁵ Jay added his editorial voice to the conversation sparingly (the first issue aside), contrary to his former missives. When he did produce an editorial, such as in *Album 7*, the tone had shifted slightly from his *Creative Camera* days to centre on the photographs and less on the politics of the British photographic establishment. Jay summarized the agenda of the magazine thus:

The accumulative effect of each issue will be to set a standard for fine photography that cuts across a broad range of the photographic spectrum, not carving out a groove of personal hang-ups. Do not think that every picture we publish has our personal approval. It hasn't. We would deliberately publish portfolios by photographers whose work we personally do not respond to, but which we feel has an honest validity and which is a use of the medium that ought to be shown to young photographers in order to make them aware of the range of the medium.¹⁷⁶

The audience may not have liked certain photographs, but they were better off for having seen them. The above quotation also alludes to Jay's continuing efforts to engage young photographers, a practice that continued within and without the pages of the magazine. Mimicking the goings-on at David Hurn's flat, *Album*'s offices in Holland Park were suffused with the radical sixties zeitgeist:

Mix in a constant flow of young photographers, volunteers, visiting European and American photographers, local street people, and the basement bustled with hippie life. Upstairs, also just beginning, were *Oz* and *Time Out* and other "underground" activities; down the road was John Cowan's studio in which Antonioni filmed much of "Blow up"; around the corner was Holland Park in

¹⁷⁵ Jay notes that Aidan Ellis, the magazine's accountant, wanted more editorial input before he was asked to leave the magazine. Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 17.

¹⁷⁶ Bill Jay, "A Few of the Ghosts Haunting Album," *Album* no. 7 (August 1970): 1.

which we picnicked among pot-smoking guitarists and girls dancing in flowing robes. We were at home.¹⁷⁷

Jay's "open door" policy meant that business was constantly (if pleasurably) being disrupted by photographers using *Album*'s offices to look at the latest photographic books and magazines and discuss photography: during the course of one afternoon, Jay recalls, about forty people stopped in.¹⁷⁸

The first issue of *Album* was published in February 1970. From the opening page, it is clear where Jay set out his agenda. In an editorial in reply to a comment made by US critic Robert Doty in *Infinity* magazine¹⁷⁹ about the paucity of "modern creative photography" coming out of Britain, Jay opens: "I am glad you are curious about English photography, and I am only sad that you are right in your assessments." Jay continues by enumerating past successes of British photography such as P.H. Emerson, Bill Brandt, Paul Martin, George Rodger and *Picture Post* and eulogizes the visionary photography "paddled furiously" across the Atlantic by Stieglitz that reached a dead-end in Britain. "While your predecessors, Mr. Doty, were busy adopting photography as a true folk art, their British counterparts wrote about soft lenses to the *Amateur Photographer*. They still do."¹⁸⁰ As a rejoinder, Jay mentions several photographers working contemporaneously: Don McCullin, Patrick Ward, Philip Jones Griffiths, but all "are photojournalists of the old (fashioned?) objective school. Pretty inbred lot, photographically speaking. Not *daring*. Know what I mean? Strange, I can't think of one name who is pursuing

¹⁷⁷ Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 12-13.

¹⁷⁸ Bill Jay, "Institute of Contemporary Arts: A Brief Report on the Desirability of Instigating a Photographic Study Centre," January 18, 1971, ACGB/32/107 1 of 2, Arts Council of Great Britain Records, Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Archives.

¹⁷⁹ Doty's quotation was from a review of Bill Brandt's work: "There is good reason to be curious about modern creative photography in England. There has been very little..." *Infinity* was the in-house journal for the American Society of Magazine Photographers from 1952-1973. Bill Jay, "Succinct and Sad," *Album*, no. 1 (February 1970): 1.

¹⁸⁰ Jay, "Succinct and Sad."

individual pictures in the more personal, subjective sense.”¹⁸¹ There were portents, though, of “another great era in British photography... the pressure is building up. The next years should witness the explosion of photography in Britain. Keep watching, Mr. Doty”.¹⁸² In lamenting a lost transatlantic connection, Jay revealingly acknowledges the debt owed to American photographers who kept the flame burning and suggests the glow will soon be reflected back over the Atlantic once Britain had caught on. British photography could be great once again, and with Jay and his acolytes at the helm rebuilding a usable past¹⁸³ of forgotten photographic pioneers such as Sir Benjamin Stone and championing a new vision of the potential of photography.

Album 1 was Jay’s photographic manifesto: it contained images from Bill Brandt (introduced by John Szarkowski), Sir Benjamin Stone, Eikoh Hosoe, Philip Jones Griffiths and Sylvester Jacobs, a young American living in Britain who would later be championed by Peter Turner and the Arts Council. *Album* contained a similar potpourri of quotes to *Creative Camera*, a practice borrowed from *Aperture*’s colophons and “Press Cuttings” section. These items were coupled with mentions of photography in the national press and book reviews, almost all of which were from the US. Publishing and including information as he was finding it, Jay was in the process weaving a mythology written by mainly American sages. The inclusion of an interview with Jeffrey Blankfort, then resident in London after working with the Black Panther Party, spoke again to the

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Doty responded in a letter: “Thank you very much for your good letter as published in *Album 1*. You have certainly delineated the thoughts I tried to express when writing my piece on Bill Brandt from which you quote. Congratulations. You have achieved a brilliant summation on the subject of creative photography in England. Congratulations, too, on the publication of *Album*. It is exciting, informative, and badly needed. The piece on Sir Benjamin Stone is incredibly valuable, and reveals him as a major artist who deserves a full-scale monograph on his life and work. Please accept my best wishes for the continued success of your publication.” Jay, “Magazine Memoirs: *Creative Camera* and *Album*, 1968-1972,” 14.

¹⁸³ Claire Sprague, ed., *Van Wyck Brooks, the Early Years: A Selection from His Works, 1908-1925* (Evanston, IL: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 219–226.

latent sense of radicalism swirling around the photographic world at the time. *Album* continued and also extended other features from *Creative Camera*. In a similar vein to Robert Frank's "Letter from New York," Magnum staff member Inge Bondi was conscripted to write a column on the latest US happenings.

Following Jay's interest in and endorsement of Peter Bunnell's argument about collecting photographs reprinted in *Creative Camera* in 1969, *Album* became one of the first venues in Britain for photographic print sales with contributors supplying prints of the portfolios included in the magazine for sale. Most of the *Album* prints, especially those made by Bill Brandt, were sold to American collectors, but the magazine conveyed the sense that this was an exciting venture that was doing its best to spark a market for prints in Britain that, again, lagged behind the US in its recognition of the value of these.¹⁸⁴ In deference to the wishes of photographers, both Brandt in *Album 1* and later W. Eugene Smith in *Album 2* selected and arranged their photographs for the magazine. Jay's willingness to make these concessions in the name of preserving photographic freedom almost went awry with Smith, whose layout was ironically sub-par despite his insistence that photo editors had previously ruined his vision.

Behind the scenes, the magazine's acolytes and fellow-travelers agitated for change in major institutions, in particular the R.P.S. who agreed to host monthly photography meetings and seminars as they wished to increase their membership after a period of decline. These proved very popular with the youth audience but did little monetarily as few young photographers were encouraged to join. Indeed, the plan backfired: older members were "offended about so much activity and noise and young people running around it destroy[ed] the peace and quiet of their sanctuary."¹⁸⁵ The final

¹⁸⁴ Jay, interview.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

meeting addressed what was wrong with the R.P.S. and *Album*'s invitation was unsurprisingly revoked. Jay and Hurn were also instrumental in setting up the short-lived Do Not Bend gallery, Britain's first gallery to regularly show a program of photography. Jay was contacted by Clody Hall-Dare, an aristocratic art enthusiast whose background in market research had suggested that there was a gap in the market for a photographic gallery, and who had been impressed with the free copy of *Album* she had received accidentally in the post.¹⁸⁶ The gallery opened in November 1970 in a flat just up the road from the *Album* offices. "Emphasis in our exhibitions will be towards tight self-contained one-man shows of extremely high standard," *Album* proclaimed, and fittingly the gallery opened with concurrent shows by American Roger Merten and east London documentarian John Claridge. Do Not Bend would not survive long but a more important successor followed very shortly thereafter. The Photographers' Gallery, founded in 1971 and run by Sue Davies, would develop into the UK's flagship gallery for photography. An employee of the ICA who had been inspired by Jay's passion for photography, Davis' wide-ranging tastes and shrewd management made it an important photography venue overnight. The agitation was happening in the right places and, in Gene Thornton's memorable phrase the case for independent photography was "beginning to be heard in the councils of the mighty."¹⁸⁷

It is important to see *Album* as a transatlantic enterprise rather than an international production, not least because of the predominance of contributors from the US and the UK. Jay was building on relationships he had forged on his US trip and incorporating US curatorial voices into the magazine such as Robert Sobieszek, Tom

¹⁸⁶ Janet Daly, "Breaking Bond Street Barriers," *The Guardian*, January 8, 1971, 10.

¹⁸⁷ Gene Thornton, "Hidden Away- Never to Be Seen?," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1970, sec. Arts & Leisure, 129.

Barrow and Beaumont Newhall from George Eastman House, an institution which *Album* dedicated the entirety of its sixth issue after Jay spent three weeks staying with Beaumont Newhall at his invitation. A showcase for Eastman House's collection, the magazine printed thirty-six uninterrupted pages of photographs running the gamut from unusual early daguerreotypes, Brassai nudes, portraits by Gertrude Käsebier and Rayographesque studies by Robert Heinecken. All of this was preceded by a lively letter from Eastman House on "the future of photography" by Thomas Barrow which suggested that "the future is as bright as those shaping it, and there are some very brilliant people making images at this time."¹⁸⁸ The number of young curators and educators working in photography in the US in 1970 was small, but the fact that figures like Thomas Barrow, Robert Sobieszek, Harold Jones and Peter Bunnell could not only have a career in photography but could actively shape its collection and curation was a major inspiration to Jay as he eagerly printed their work and concurrently set himself up as their analog at the ICA. Towards the end of 1970, William Jenkins of George Eastman House who came to work at *Album* on a leave of absence solidified the transatlantic links.¹⁸⁹

The comparison with the British state of affairs was made explicit with the December 1970 issue when *Album* looked at the R.P.S.'s permanent collection, an article included as a result of Jay's position on a Royal Commission reviewing the society's activities. In her article introducing the collection, Margaret Harker frames the discussion of the recent interest in collecting historical photographs in terms of a 1954 photography auction in Geneva and the sale of the Gernsheim and Louis W. Shipley collections to the University of Texas and George Eastman House respectively. In the light of this, Harker

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Barrow, "A Letter With Some Thoughts on Photography's Future," *Album*, no. 6 (July 1970): 3.

¹⁸⁹ Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 18.

presents a picture of a collection yet to be fully explored (the collection was only appraised in 1968, then valued at valued at £68,000) but one also steeped in prestige. Money, as ever with British photography, was an issue in cataloguing and arranging the collection and Harker made this explicit throughout her piece. Yet again, the US serves as a comparison: “a more advanced and sophisticated stage has been reached in the USA in respect of collections of photographs than is the case in Britain and other European countries... there has not been the finance available or the interest taken to produce these impressive results.”¹⁹⁰ As the collection’s focus was nineteenth century, any additions the R.P.S. planned were aimed at filling in mid-century gaps, and although “a close watch is being kept on present-day photography and possible future developments” Harker does not suggest any great thrust in this direction from the R.P.S., contrary to Eastman House’s catholic acquisition policy.¹⁹¹ Fittingly, *Album* 11 contained eight pages of photographs from the R.P.S. as opposed to the thirty-six from George Eastman House.

In a move which may signal Jay’s intentions from the outset (and also spelled the end for the enterprise), Jay mailed out over a thousand sample copies of the first issue to mailing lists he got from George Eastman House and from MoMA, lists that naturally had a large number of US addresses on them.¹⁹² *Album*’s transatlantic orientation was fiscally purposeful: not only were there more producers of quality photographs in the US, there were more consumers also. Despite its aims to shake up the British photographic scene, *Album* received very little critical attention in Britain. Where *Album* did receive plaudits, however, was from US photographic professionals. Jay eagerly printed (and subsequently repeated) glowing views of *Album* 1 from John Loengard of *Life*, MoMA’s

¹⁹⁰ Margaret Harker, “The Royal Photographic Society Permanent Collection,” *Album*, no. 11 (December 1970): 2.

¹⁹¹ Harker, “The Royal Photographic Society Permanent Collection.”

¹⁹² Bill Jay, “Album: A Memoir,” *History of Photography* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 1–9.

assistant curator Peter Bunnell, Helmut Gernsheim and Whitney Ellsworth of the *New York Times Review of Books* amongst others but a review from Paul Strand was of particular pride:

Album is a very distinguished addition to photo publication – shape, layout and content – Sir Benjamin Stone is a great new discovery – at least for me. That makes me want to sit down and look at the 25,000 legacy he has left us.¹⁹³

An endorsement from the one of the world's most preminent living photographers must have buoyed Jay's enterprise greatly. In a similar vein, a series of articles in the *New York Times* highlighted the effect that Jay was having on British photography. In September 1970, the Times' photography critic Gene Thornton recounted his visit to London to survey the photography scene. Taking in the reference collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the R.P.S., Britain's greatest collection hosted "treasures untold" but Thornton found it in tellingly uncatalogued disarray while it transitioned into new premises, a metaphor for a country mired in Pictorialism: "in America, no self-respecting photographer would dare call himself a Pictorialist. The word has been drummed out of existence by the combined efforts of Photo-Secession and the Museum of Modern Art."¹⁹⁴ Thornton outlined the major differences between Britain and the US, noting that there was no British equivalent to George Eastman House or MoMA, no regular exhibitions of photography at museums of the caliber of the Philadelphia Museum or Minneapolis Museum, "there is not even a coffee house gallery or bar with a photographic clientele."¹⁹⁵ Thornton found in Jay and his fellow enthusiasts a group

¹⁹³ Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 14.

¹⁹⁴ Gene Thornton, "Photography: Picture Story From Britain," *The New York Times*, September 6, 1970, sec. Arts & Leisure, 73.

¹⁹⁵ Gene Thornton, "Photography: Four Who Are Battling the British Establishment," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1970, sec. Arts & Leisure, 137.

bringing “hell-fire and revolution” to the British scene.¹⁹⁶ Thornton outlined the *Album* staff’s work in “Four who are Battling the British Establishment”¹⁹⁷ to bring new life to the British photographic scene. A key passage is worth recounting in full:

The editor of *Album* has great faith in American, as opposed to British, methods and part of his revolutionary program includes a whole-sale Americanization of British educators and curators. He would have a British photographic administrator spend six months at Eastman House and another six months touring American museums, galleries and universities, then return and establish a study center here... he would have all British photo-schools shut down for an international conference at which American educators would present papers.¹⁹⁸

Jay had never previously been as explicit about his desire to reshape British photography to resemble American developments. A growing association with American practitioners and a foothold in places like the R.P.S. had convinced Jay that, like many American cultural institutions to British observers, American practice signaled the future for the medium and he positioned his enterprises as the fulcrum on which this future would hinge.

Despite receiving fulsome praise from important photographic quarters, *Album* fell victim to printing debts and an over-optimistic subscription policy. Unlike *Camera*, *Aperture* and *Camera Work*, the magazine had no sustaining benefactors or non-profit foundations to bail it out. Having spent half the £4,000 budget on printing and sending out the first issues Jay attested for every person who subscribed “there were hundreds more who told us the equivalent of “the check is in the mail.”¹⁹⁹ The printers called in their debts in January 1971 and Jay was forced to move in with David Hurn as he could

¹⁹⁶ Thornton, “Photography,” September 6, 1970, 73.

¹⁹⁷ The four in question were Jay, Powell, *Album*’s sometime accountant Aidan Ellis and office manager Sally Hargreaves.

¹⁹⁸ Thornton, “Photography,” September 20, 1970, 137.

¹⁹⁹ Jay, “Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972.”

not afford the rent on *Album*'s offices. The magazine survived for another issue and then folded, leaving Turner and Osman's *Creative Camera* to carry the torch for creative photography in Britain. Penniless but not yet despondent, Jay turned his attention to producing occasional pieces for *the Guardian* on Elliott Erwitt's show at the Photographers' Gallery and a piece detailing his rediscovery of postcard magnate Francis Frith's huge collection of images and negatives while doing some work for Time-Life books. He would sell Frith photographs to American buyers for a small income, but this was not a practice he enjoyed.²⁰⁰ Teaching part-time and travelling to any art school, camera club or college that would have him, he continued to lecture those interested in photography of the need to effect change. Through this travel, Jay saw an opening to affect photographic policy institutionally at the ICA.

JAY AT THE ICA

The Institute of Contemporary Arts was the venue for Jay's last hurrah in British photography. Progressive, friendly to American art, youth-oriented and not averse to controversy, the ICA looked like an ideal venue from which to launch a photographic revolution.²⁰¹ In a December 1968 editorial in *Creative Camera*, Jay discussed a circular from the ICA asking readers to submit ideas to help plan future programs. Photography was not listed on the program of events that could be voted for, a disappointment to Jay as he "had hoped that the new look ICA would at last place photography in the broad spectrum of art" as it was "undeniably one of the major contemporary arts."²⁰² Jay urged

²⁰⁰ Jay, interview.

²⁰¹ An idiosyncratic review of the ICA's more progressive activities can be found in: Andrea Phillips et al., *Fifty Years of the Future: A Chronicle of the Institute of Contemporary Arts* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1998).

²⁰² Bill Jay, "Comment," *Creative Camera*, no. 54 (December 1968): 418.

readers to write to the ICA's director, Michael Kustow, to voice their opinions. Surprisingly, Kustow rose to the challenge and arranged the seminal show *Spectrum-The Diversity of Photography* which ran at the ICA from April 3 to May 11 1969. Capitalizing on photography's status as a fashionable medium, *Spectrum* was billed as a festival of photography and was championed by *Creative Camera* as the show that "could be the catalyst that explodes the growth of good photography in Britain."²⁰³ *Spectrum* was presented in two halves; the first entitled *Woman* was a selection of over 500 photographs of women presented by German magazine editor Dr. Karl Pawek under the auspices of the World Exhibition of Photography.²⁰⁴ Divided into sixty-one sections including Women Adorned, Her Voice, Women in Total War, and She, the exhibit's retrograde feel resembled a female-oriented (but mostly male-made) *Family of Man*. The other half showcased three British photographers (two broadly documentarian and one photojournalist): Dorothy Bohm, Tony Ray-Jones, Don McCullin, and an Italian experimental photographer, Enzo Ragazzini. Though the photographs were well-regarded in their own right, the events, discussions and film screenings surrounding the exhibition proved incredibly popular and lively. Jay moderated a panel on "Photography—Commodity or Art?" that included Tony Ray-Jones Philip Jones-Griffiths, Thurston Hopkins and David Hurn. A comprehensive program of film screenings touched almost every major motion picture prominently featuring a photographer (including *Blow-Up*, *Peeping Tom*, *Funny Face*, to name a few) and those made by photographers including Robert Frank, Peter Sellers and William Klein.²⁰⁵ The success of *Spectrum* proved to Jay

²⁰³ Michael Kustow, "Michael Kustow: Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts," *Creative Camera*, no. 58 (April 1969): 134.

²⁰⁴ Ainslie Ellis, "One Part Of the Spectrum: The English Seen," *The British Journal of Photography* CXVI, no. 5671 (March 28, 1969): 294–301.

²⁰⁵ "Spectrum- Films, Lectures, Discussions" (Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1969), TGA 955/7/8/9, Tate Archive: Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection.

that there was a groundswell of interest in photography and that, with the right stimulation, the ICA could be a beachhead for reforming British photography.

In 1971, Jay approached then-chairman of the Arts Council Lord Goodman to protest that the ICA did not include any further provisions for photography. After delivering an impassioned impromptu speech (which began “I’m Bill Jay and I’m angry”) he was appointed director of photography at the ICA there and then.²⁰⁶ Jay’s handwritten report entitled “A Brief Report on the Desirability of Instigating a Photography Study Centre” was a blueprint for the change Jay wanted to see. The introduction is revealing, as Jay again roots his analysis of the current state of the art in terms of a lost golden age: “until the turn of the century, Britain was the home of good photography. No other country could boast so much activity in publications, exhibitions and societies than this country.”²⁰⁷ There followed a description of Britain’s declension and America’s adoption of photography “as their folk art” to the situation today where “photography in the USA has reached such a position of power and respectability that painting and sculpture galleries and university courses are being closed to make way for photography.”²⁰⁸ Such hyperbole was coupled by Jay mobilizing examples of financial and curatorial support in the US to connote a sense of inferiority to Arts Council administrators. These served to “emphasize the ever-widening chasm between the growth of photography in the USA and Britain,” but also suggested that there are natural talents in Britain that need encouragement, and the Photography Study centre was proffered for fostering British talent: “I see an educational work room from which an aura of enthusiasm and ideas would spread throughout the photographic community; it would be the new Photo-

²⁰⁶ Jay, interview.

²⁰⁷ Jay, “Institute of Contemporary Arts: A Brief Report on the Desirability of Instigating a Photographic Study Centre.”

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Secession for Britain.”²⁰⁹ Jay suggested purchasing prints “particularly from the USA” to inspire young British photographers and in turn to buy prints from contemporary British photographers to supplement these “to achieve greater and faster international recognition.” An unrealized goal was a series of travelling exhibitions using the collection of donated and purchased prints, modeled on George Eastman House’s “constant stream of remarkable exhibitions and publications” that would bring revenue to the centre and fund additional purchases for a collection. Lecturers would be cost effective as they would normally talk for free. Jay used the example of Byron Shurtleff, vice-president of the Society for Photographic Education and professor at the University of Delaware who had recently lectured in Britain, to demonstrate that photographers “have all been only too ready to donate time and energy in starting a revival.”²¹⁰

The ICA staff’s resentment with the manner in which Goodman’s snap decision had been made was evident when Jay arrived in September 1970. He discovered that the only space he had been allocated was a storeroom. Unperturbed, this was soon converted into a dark room and space for a slide projector, slide bank (planned to be “the best collection of contemporary British photography anywhere in the world”) and tape-recorded interviews with photographers.²¹¹ William Messer, a young American resident in London who studied at the San Francisco Art Institute at the same time Tony Ray-Jones was teaching there and who would later become prominent writer on British

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ This talk found its analog in September 1971 when Bill Gaskins, head of photography at Nottingham and Derby colleges delivered a talk regarding his lengthy study trip to the US that promised “radical and provocative opinions about the teaching of photography in this country... he will be introducing taped interviews with such well-known American lecturers as Minor White, Ansel Adams and Nathan Lyons.” “Press Release,” 1971, TGA 955/8/14, Tate Archive: Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection.

²¹¹ An early stock list of slides donated to the study centre shows a strong bias towards contemporary British photographers but also included American photographers and curators such as David Attie, Irwin Dermer and Lee Witkin who donated slides when passing through. The slide library had 5,000 slides by the end of 1971 and Jay wanted to add another 20,000 to this total. “Photography Slides- Stock List,” 1971, TGA 955/8/14, Tate Archive: Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection.

photography and a curator at Ffotogallery in Cardiff, was conscripted to help out.²¹² Jay commandeered the ICA's main concourse and main gallery spaces for photographic displays (mostly by young photographers) and set up a library of international photographic magazines with a small collection of photographic books.²¹³ Weekly talks in a similar vein to the ones held in the *Spectrum* program (and informally at Hurn's flat) were initiated and given an institutional home: photographers visiting Britain would show work (Paul Strand was possibly the most notable)²¹⁴ and panel discussions on topics such as "the Photographic Press" proved very popular.²¹⁵ Jay had planned to obtain shows from American institutions so that "a cross-fertilization of ideas between American and British photographers" would follow and enrich British practice, but this did not occur during the short tenure of the centre.²¹⁶ Jay worked hard to create a "warm, informal atmosphere" that would both encourage latent interest in photography and, like *Creative Camera*, draw extant creative photographers out of the woodwork.

As a space for photography, the Photographic Study Centre succeeded beyond Jay's ambitions. Regular audiences of 200-300 people attended the talks which compared favorably to the rather anemic numbers for the other programs the ICA was putting on: at times the talks had to be invitation-only because of their popularity.²¹⁷ Likewise, the

²¹² Messer discusses his time in Britain in his introduction to: Nancy Howell-Koehler, *New Documentary Photography, U.S.A.* (Cincinnati Ohio: Images, 1989), 11–12. See also William Messer, "Photographs by William Messer," *Creative Camera*, no. 100 (October 1972): 330.

²¹³ Bill Jay, "The Photographic Study Centre: What Goes On," 1971, TGA 955/8/14, Tate Archive: Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection.

²¹⁴ Gerry Badger, "Bill Jay Dies," *The British Journal of Photography*. 156, no. 7737 (August 17, 2005): 6–7.

²¹⁵ Bill Jay, "Letter to Colin Osman," December 29, 1971, TGA 955/8/13, Tate Archive: Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection.

²¹⁶ As Jay opined: "It is a sobering thought that the G.E.H. has over 30 travelling exhibitions of an extremely high standard, built up since 1947 and not one of these shows has ever been to England." Bill Jay, "Institute of Contemporary Arts Photographic Study Centre," 1971, TGA 955/8/14, Tate Archive: Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

rotating gallery shows proved a popular focal point.²¹⁸ One of the ICA's aims with the centre was to develop more sustained interest in ICA activities, and the Photographic Study Centre underperformed in this regard; rarely would any of the people who attended photography meetings join the ICA or donate money to it. By early 1972, institutional support was foundering through a combination of low membership take-up and management clashes with Jay's forthright personality (according to Jay, he was "thrown out for filling the place with photography").²¹⁹ The ICA began to limit the exhibitions, send the slide collection to art colleges and enquire as to whether other venues could take over responsibility for the centre. Replying to a letter asking for her help in continuing the activities of Photographic Study Centre, the Photographers' Gallery's Sue Davies hoped that its program of events could continue as they were. She praised the centre's "flourishing" activities and singled out Jay's contribution: "I think you are getting marvelous results for [£]20 a week!.. His ability to enthuse people is very valuable and it's not like looking for a secretary if he has to be replaced. I feel that if Bill doesn't get accepted for New Mexico it would be well worth taking him on at a proper salary."²²⁰ Davies did not offer her space for the centre and it closed in mid-1972 when alternative premises could not be found. The slide collection did, however, find a home on permanent loan to the Photographers' Gallery.²²¹

²¹⁸ Jay, interview.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Sue Davies, "Letter to Lady Dufferin," March 6, 1972, TGA 955/8/14, Tate Archive: Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection.

²²¹ David Thompson, "Letter to Peter Bird Re: Photographic Study Centre at ICA," October 31, 1972, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

LEAVING FOR AMERICA

Without *Album* and the Photographic Study Centre, Jay was left with few outlets in Britain for his photographic advocacy, and felt that the nation had rejected him. A visit from Van Deren Coke changed his path permanently. Coke, sensing Jay's predicament, suggested that he come to the University of New Mexico to study in the History of Photography program there under his and Beaumont Newhall's supervision. Jay agreed, as it would be an especially good time to "recharge the batteries" and "sit in on classes."²²² Jay's recounting of the circumstances make the decision sound more casual than it probably was:

But I didn't think anything more of it until later; I mean this would be July of '72. I got a telegram saying 'Well if you're coming you have to come immediately because the school starts in August'. And I hadn't even thought about it.²²³

From Sue Davies' letter dated March 1972, it is clear that Jay had seriously considered the proposition and it was featuring in his plans for the future; indeed, rather than "sitting in on some classes" he had enrolled in a Master's Degree. A course of study under Van Deren Coke gave him the opportunity to formalize the autodidactic education he had been fervently pursuing since the early 1960s. Moreover, the links he had forged with Newhall and Coke were a passport out of a country where he was running out of allies to a place which had been a source of inspiration. Jay packed his bags and departed in the summer of 1972, leaving behind a Britain just waking up to photography.

When Jay arrived in Albuquerque, he was immediately shown around the university's art museum where Coke had built one of the best teaching collections of photography in the US.²²⁴ He had landed in a thriving, well-funded and progressive

²²² Jay, interview.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Susan Ehrens and Leland Rice, "Van Deren Coke at 80," *Black and White Magazine*, no. 14 (August 2001): 62–71.

photography scene: “I felt, within a week or two like a frontline soldier must feel being told the war’s over, you can now relax.”²²⁵ With his expertise in Victorian photography he provided a foil to his younger contemporaries who included Meridel Rubenstein, Nicholas Nixon and Joe Deal, the latter two of whom would be included in the William Jenkins-curated *New Topographics* exhibition of 1975. Jay reveled in the atmosphere and the Art History classes: it was a period where he imbibed the scholarly and social atmosphere without a worry about where his next meal was coming from or wrangling with those in the upper echelons of arts administrations.

Studying for a MA provided Jay with space to breathe but Coke’s ulterior motive was discipleship. Coke recognized Jay’s talent for proselytizing and exciting people about photography, wanted to nurture these and then wanted Jay to go back to Britain and “spread the word according to Coke.”²²⁶ As a leader in British photography, the graduate from Coke’s program would help shape the course of photography in Britain towards the expressive, art history model that Coke had helped to build in Albuquerque.²²⁷ Coke had been successful in placing photography students in positions US schools (such as Jerry Uelsmann in Florida) and now that the photographic revolution was spreading rapidly beyond the US’ borders, Coke wanted to seize the opportunity to shape the dialogue and dispatch disciples like Jay open up other countries to photography as an art form.²²⁸ Like many best laid plans, Coke’s failed to achieve its objective. Jay would not return permanently to Britain but would stay on in America, starting the history of photography program at Arizona State University, where he would remain until his retirement in the

²²⁵ Jay, interview.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ “History of UNM Photography Area” (The University of New Mexico, undated), <http://www.unm.edu/~photolab/history.html>.

²²⁸ Ehrens and Rice, “Van Deren Coke at 80.”

late 1990s. There he ended up teaching with William Jenkins, with whom he had worked briefly at *Album*, and Coke himself.²²⁹

Jay did not sever his links entirely with Britain, and he kept open the prospect of returning after his program was over, but by 1975 it is clear that he intended to remain in the US. In a 1975 letter to Ed Myers, his collaborator on *Creative Camera*, Jay requested a letter of support for permanent residence status. Jay cited his expertise in the field of British photographic history as a reason for special exemption and noted that he was “very, very anxious to stay in the USA.”²³⁰ Although in interviews for British periodicals Jay downplayed this, the allure of funding, the availability of jobs and the supportive atmosphere compared favorably to going back to the UK and starting from the ground up. In 1978, he wrote his own “Letter from America” column in the socially progressive British *Camerawork* magazine, ten years after he had published Robert Frank’s in *Creative Camera*. Jay related the story of his attendance at a recent photographic conference in Colorado with Robert Adams, the critical debate surrounding the *New Topographics* exhibition and took a sly jab at the controversial nudes of juvenile girls by David Hamilton.²³¹ Although the US was not perfect, it was an environment where he would be able to pursue funded research, champion students’ work²³² and continue to battle the establishment in departmental meetings.²³³

²²⁹ The person who would eventually fill this missionary role, Thomas Joshua Cooper, was instrumental in reforming British photographic education in tandem with Paul Hill at Trent University in Nottingham. Their coauthored article “Can British Photography Emerge from the Dark Ages?” is a seminal educational broadside. Paul Hill and Cooper, “Can British Photography Emerge from the Dark Ages?”.

²³⁰ Bill Jay to Ed Myers, December 8, 1975.

²³¹ Bill Jay, “Letter From America,” *Camerawork*, no. 10 (July 1978): 12.

²³² One of many tributes to Bill Jay’s teaching, Mary Virginia Swanson’s stands out: Mary Virginia Swanson, “Bill Jay 1940-2009,” May 13, 2009, <http://mvswanson.com/bill-jay-1940-2009.html>.

²³³ “I was fighting my colleagues like I had been fighting in England... I thought they were very dead and dull and I wanted to make something of this program. I didn’t want to be associated with any program that wasn’t the best so I was anxious to make it the best, so this also- this creates a lot of enemies. I’ve just introduced these new programs and I’ve had to fight these dullards on committees right through the university and it alienates people.” Jay, interview.

EPILOGUE: THE STATE OF THE UNION

Jay returned to Britain briefly in 1980 and while there delivered an address at the Newport Art Gallery at the invitation of David Hurn who was then head of the School of Documentary Photography at Gwent College of Higher Education.²³⁴ His address, entitled “Photography in America” reiterated the “Western” myth that American photographers and their European counterparts had appropriated for themselves (and that Jay had propagated in *Creative Camera* and *Album*):

They see themselves as pioneers, radical individualists, racing towards new freedoms, defending with the might of right their chosen paths of photography against ‘outsiders’ of all persuasions. This is no idle analogy. The myth of the West permeates the whole fabric of the American culture.²³⁵

The success of the American photo-establishment had also generated other problems: “mental compromises, excesses, lost goals, mental culs-de-sac, an overwhelming banality, a denial of the medium itself...”²³⁶ Railing against the flippant self-absorption and dilettantism of self-described student artists (“an artist today, a business major tomorrow”) Jay saw the problem as cultural: “photographers merely reflect the superficiality of the culture and, particularly, the banality of much of contemporary art,” declaring that “the failure of contemporary photography is the failure of the human spirit.”²³⁷ Jay also criticized the “neglect of non-artistic elements” of photography as a current academic trend in the US, the lack of quality inherent in work he felt was undistinguished and photographic education that elided the cultural, historical and social

²³⁴ David Hurn was a regular visitor to Arizona, consolidated by a US/UK Bicentennial Fellowship in 1979 where Hurn spent several months on assignment photographing Phoenix communities; Lewis Balz was the reciprocal visitor to Britain.

²³⁵ Jay, Bill, “Photography in America,” *The British Journal of Photography*. 127, no. 6259 (July 11, 1980): 660.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 661.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 661–662.

importance of the medium, promoted unintelligibility in criticism and parceled off art photography from other forms.²³⁸ The infusion of money into photography had not brought the results Jay wanted, but rather it had tainted the whole medium: his students were now producing work for a market rather than themselves and even established photographers were becoming pawns of the galleries that represented them.²³⁹ Finally, Jay berated the American photographic community for its insularity (as opposed to Britain's photographic community, which had a more international outlook) because of the information overload coming from within the US, in particular the Society for Photographic Education (SPE). The SPE was "very effective in propagandizing the work of American photographers in Europe, with the active aiding and abetting of photo-magazine editors on this side of the Atlantic... I bet every one of you can instantly recall the names of at least 20 contemporary American photographers... I assure you that the typical American art photographer cannot name one contemporary British photographer."²⁴⁰

Paradoxically, Jay's battle for the recognition of photography as an art form had been won, but when photography assumed the trappings of the art world and academic professionalization he felt it had lost its way.²⁴¹ The academicization of photography occurred concurrently with that of other disciplines, for example poetry and creative writing, as new programs consolidated in the 1970s to support the expanding amounts of

²³⁸ Ibid., 663.

²³⁹ Jay, Bill, "Photography in America, Part 2," *The British Journal of Photography*. 127, no. 6260 (July 18, 1980): 691.

²⁴⁰ Jay, Bill, "Photography in America, Part 2." In 1981, Linda Benedict-Jones, an American studying in Britain and who was working towards a master's degree at MIT rose to Jay's challenge and put on a show of contemporary British photography at the university's Creative Photography Laboratory in February 1981, partially funded by the British Council. Kate Salway, "Photography in Boston, Massachusetts," *The British Journal of Photography* 129, no. 6340 (February 12, 1982): 168–69.

²⁴¹ This is expanded upon in Bill Jay, "Southwest: The Petrified Forest," *Camera Arts* 1, no. 2 (April 1981): 12–13, 107.

degree-seekers and to supply employment for graduates.²⁴² For advocates like Jay, photography needed to be accorded a special status as an art form, in dialogue with but also separate from the other visual arts. Crucially, however, this did not mean hermetically sealing it off from its social and historical contexts. Another irony here is Jay's criticism of SPE's "propagandizing" when he had been engaged in a similar enterprise, but even if Jay's mission was to bring US photography to Britain it was always to stimulate rather than subsume; he suggests that the transatlantic relationship he tried to foster through ventures such as *Album* was increasingly one way. Jay's challenge to young British photographers was to redress that balance, and into the 1980s this would also mean challenging American influences and American "master" photographers.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the early years of *Creative Camera*, *Album* magazine and the early career of Bill Jay as a means of examining the routes by which US-based photographic practice inspired and influenced its equivalent in the UK in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The transatlantic independent/creative photographic dialogue fostered by figures such as Beaumont Newhall and Helmut Gernsheim continued in venues such as *Photography* magazine, student publications and through international photography agencies such as Magnum. Gatekeeping institutions like George Eastman House and MoMA could use their resources to promote American art and photography and by and large institutions and photographers in the UK were grateful for this, even if it did mean the slight embarrassment of importing shows of British photographers from abroad. By

²⁴²For a succinct description of this phenomenon, see the opening of Richard F. Teichgraber, "Beyond 'academicization': The Postwar American University and Intellectual History," *Modern Intellectual History* 8, no. 01 (2011): 127–46, doi:10.1017/S1479244311000072.

the mid-to-late 1960s, a serious and sustained effort to bridge the Atlantic was rekindled, and this dialogue found its expression in the triumvirate of David Hurn, Tony Ray-Jones and Bill Jay, the latter of whom would later make a conscious effort to reform British photographic institutions along the lines of American practice. Through visits to US institutions, correspondence and personal contact, a network of like-minded individuals was built up by Jay, Hurn and many others and an avowedly international community of photographers and photography magazines was flourishing, albeit one that was distinctly inflected by American stylistic and institutional practice. Magazines edited by Jay reflected and fostered this community, and he actively sought to shape both contemporary practice and a revival of historical attention to older methods by pointing to the way photography should be done. Jay shaped the dialogue through his ventures at *Creative Camera*, *Album* and at the ICA and although the work he set in motion would rightly be criticized for its exclusions, he laid the groundwork for those who were to supersede him and his ideas.²⁴³ Frustrated that his efforts were bearing so little fruit, Jay began to shape a life for himself outside the British system and would settle comfortably into an academic life in the US when the chance arose. His vigor and energy, not to mention the trail of controversy he left in his wake left a gap in Britain. As Don McCullin stated in a recent interview: “Whatever happened to Bill Jay? We needed him here.”²⁴⁴

To Britons looking enviously across the ocean, American creative photography seemed well-supported, innovative and years in advance of domestic activity, and to many influential people in the art/photographic world, the importation of methods and

²⁴³ Although he would criticize some of the directions in which photography was going on a later visit to Britain, Jay was elated that British photography had fared well. Powell, Rob, “Flying Visit: Bill Jay Is a Controversial Figure in Photography- Once Infant Terrible Now Perhaps Eminence Grise. Rob Powell Finds Out,” *The British Journal of Photography*. 141, no. 6462 (June 15, 1984): 612–14.

²⁴⁴ Anne Braybon, “The History Man,” *The British Journal of Photography*. 154, no. 75XX (August 22, 2007): 12–16.

styles from the US was a way of rejuvenating contemporary practice. Overtones of cultural imperialism were tempered by a deeply felt need for a radical shake-up of photographic institutions that energetic and forward-thinking Americans could bring to a country in the postwar doldrums. Although the relationship between US and UK-based photography was reciprocal in nature (as evidenced through *Album* magazine) most of the traffic was emanating from the US.

Coming from the cultural capital of the world, pronouncements from venerable US-based figures and institutions, promoted heavily by *Creative Camera* and *Album* seemed like the final word on the matter, missives from a country that had become synonymous as, in equal measure, a dream or a warning of the shape of things to come. Bill Jay's 1968 trip to New York confirmed for him that the future of photography lay in the United States, and in the next chapter I will discuss the influence of Jay's friend Tony Ray-Jones on the transatlantic flow of ideas between the US and Great Britain.

Chapter 3: “The people have a fine sense of drama:” Tony Ray-Jones, Americanization, and Photographing the English²⁴⁵

102 Gloucester Place is a tidy but unprepossessing Georgian terrace in west London that a passerby would be forgiven for not paying particular attention to. Overshadowed by local neighbors Madame Tussauds waxworks museum and 221B Baker Street, the fictional home of Sherlock Holmes, the building manages to distinguish itself with a pair of bright blue doors and a large green plaque to the left of the entrance. The plaque, reading “Tony Ray-Jones, Photographer 1941-1972,” erected by Westminster City Council, is placed on one of only three private houses in London to receive the prestigious historical markers for photography.²⁴⁶ It was erected three years after Roger Fenton’s home’s, nine years before the one on Lee Miller and Roland Penrose’s house and nearly twenty years before Bill Brandt’s residence was similarly adorned.²⁴⁷ Such an honor for a photographer—who died tragically young at thirty years old, had made his living mostly from magazine photography, had spent more of his adult life in the USA than the UK, and who had not lived to see his monograph in print—indicates the impact of Ray-Jones’ work on independent photography in Britain.²⁴⁸ Derek

²⁴⁵ This quotation comes from one of Tony Ray-Jones’ pages in his Filofax. Tony Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” ca. 1966-1972, 195, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection, The National Media Museum, Bradford, UK.

²⁴⁶ Westminster City Council’s Green Plaques scheme runs parallel to the more famous Blue Plaques scheme now administered by English Heritage, outlines that the person being honored must be “regarded as eminent by most members of their profession or calling; have genuinely contributed to human welfare or happiness and deserve recognition for it and are reasonably well known” and that “sufficient time has elapsed since their life to show their lasting contribution to society.” “Green Plaques Scheme,” *City of Westminster*, 2013, <http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/leisureandculture/greenplaques/>.

²⁴⁷ The blue and green plaques are universally popular in Britain and have become the subject of popular histories, such as: Stephen Fry, *Lived in London: The Stories Behind the Blue Plaques*, ed. Emily Cole (Yale University Press, 2009). The Westminster scheme began in 1991 whereas the first of the plaques, honoring Lord Byron, was erected in 1867.

²⁴⁸ It is ironic that the sign was put up by the Royal Photographic Society (in conjunction with Olympus Cameras), an organization that in the 1960s was the very sort of fogley-ridden body Ray-Jones railed against throughout his lifetime.

Sumeray's pithy description in the *London Plaques* guidebook is an excellent introduction to Ray-Jones' work, especially in the context of this chapter:

A graduate of the London College of Printing and Yale School of Art, he sought to document the English way of life at leisure from 1966-1969, 'before', he said 'it becomes too Americanised.' His posthumous book, *A Day Off* (1974) shows the results.²⁴⁹

Just as influential as Ray-Jones' photographs was his trailblazing example as an independent photographer for young British photographers. Additionally, he was influential in shaping *Creative Camera's* editorial policy and in introducing Bill Jay to the broader world of US-based photography. According to Jay, he was a passionate self-advocate, "a fiery, irascible critic of anything and everything that, in his opinion, smacked of "phony-baloney," that inflated the photographers' ego and technical virtuosity at the expense of truth and integrity.²⁵⁰ Ray-Jones' willingness to take on the photographic establishment, especially magazine editors, and his transmission of exciting new techniques and viewpoints from the US only increased his appeal to budding British creative photographers who now had someone from within their ranks to look up to.²⁵¹ His championing of the personal aesthetic over commercially-oriented work rejuvenated documentary photography in Britain, a minor revolution he was to usher in but not to see for himself.²⁵² News of his death occupied the entire front page of *Photo News Weekly*

²⁴⁹ Derek Sumeray, *London Plaques* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2009), 49.

²⁵⁰ Bill Jay, *Bill Jay's Album: Friends and Other Photographers*. (Portland, OR: Nazraeli Press, 2007), 123.

²⁵¹ Ainslie Ellis attested to this: "Like so many photographers who have seen the number of photographic exhibitions in art galleries in the States and the amount of well-produced monographs on individual photographers over there, Ray-Jones is impatient of the little that is done so far done in this country." Ellis, "One Part Of the Spectrum: The English Seen," 300.

²⁵² As Ellis reported, "[Ray-Jones] becomes intensely alive, fully alert to every overtone only when it is his own personal contribution that is being discussed." *Ibid.*, 294.

where Anthony Green described him as “without doubt... the most original photographer to emerge from this country for at least a decade.”²⁵³

After three years studying graphic design at Yale as an undergraduate from 1962-1965 and under Alexey Brodovitch at the Design Laboratory in New York, Ray-Jones returned from the US to record a country he found “grey,”²⁵⁴ but also intriguing. Ray-Jones’ work exploring English identity, memorably displayed in his 1969 exhibition “The English Seen” at the ICA in 1969 and in the posthumous *A Day Off: an English Journal* (1974), was the result of three Wanderjahre exploring English traditions by touring around the country in a Volkswagen van.²⁵⁵ The popularity of his English photographs has obscured the importance the formative experience of his work in the US; indeed, he was to return in 1970 and only came back to England in 1972 after being diagnosed with leukemia. As his friend Alen MacWeeney notes, his work on the English made him famous, but his aesthetic and ethos “[were] really founded and styled in America.”²⁵⁶

In this chapter, I explore Ray-Jones’ work in England in tandem with his work picturing American identity and culture. I pay particular attention to his photographs documenting traditional English customs as markers of national identity as counterparts to his images of American parades and social gatherings.²⁵⁷ I place this body of work in conversation with contemporary visual projections of English identity abroad

²⁵³ Anthony Green, “Tony Ray-Jones Dies,” *Photo News Weekly*, no. 666 (March 29, 1972): 1.

²⁵⁴ “Tony Ray-Jones: The Photographer Seen,” *SLR Magazine* 3, no. 4 (1969): 34–41.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 34. There is some disagreement over whether this was a Volkswagen or a Dormobile, the latter being more fittingly English.

²⁵⁶ Alen MacWeeney to Ainslie Ellis, May 23, 1972, C17/59 2002-5035_12, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

²⁵⁷ Frustratingly, for someone who by all accounts was never short of opinions, Ray-Jones left few definitive written statements about his photographs. His only published interviews were in *SLR Magazine* and *The British Journal of Photography* in 1969 and the furthest we can get to a definitive statement to his philosophy on his work comes from an October 1968 article in *Creative Camera* and his text for his 1969 exhibition at the ICA. Bill Jay makes an observation as to why Ray-Jones may not have been the most prolix: “He couldn’t write, I mean he wrote very beautifully but it would take him about two weeks to write three paragraphs. He was a real struggler.” Jay, interview.

(particularly to US audiences) from which Ray-Jones took inspiration and interrogate his photographs in the context of the debate surrounding heritage, Americanization and a search after an authentic sense of Englishness. Using the street photographic approaches of the new wave of New York photographers, Ray-Jones' photographs paradoxically work to reestablish an English identity as a bulwark against the inevitability of American cultural infusion. On the vanguard of a refashioning of English identity in the 1970s that was simultaneously radical and conservative, his allusive, personal vision articulated the productive cultural tension between conceptions of English and American identity that manifest itself in his photography.

EARLY LIFE IN BRITAIN

Holroyd Anthony Ray-Jones was born in Wookey, Somerset in 1941 into an upper-middle-class family, the youngest child of the artist Raymond Ray-Jones who died when Tony was eight months old.²⁵⁸ Ray-Jones' mother, Effie Ray-Jones was the recipient of an artists' pension, but by all accounts his upbringing had few of the material comforts that his family's class background would normally confer. He was sent to Christ's Hospital, one of the oldest and most traditional public schools in Britain, from age nine which proved to be a formative experience. Christ's Hospital required its students to wear an antiquated Tudor uniform, a burden that may partially explain Ray-Jones' later fascination with customs and tradition, a "ritualistic bond with history, for good or ill," Russell Roberts suggests, "would have etched itself on the memory of any

²⁵⁸ I take much of this biographical detail from the two most comprehensive texts on Ray-Jones' life and work from where much of this information is derived: Richard Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones* (Manchester: Cornerhouse Publications, 1990); Russell Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones* (London: Chris Boot, 2004).

pupil.”²⁵⁹ Ray-Jones’ “lifelong dislike of the English class system”²⁶⁰ stemmed from his school days and he rarely spoke about them.

From Christ’s hospital, Ray-Jones went on to the London School of Printing (LSP) to study graphic design, a college that would later become one of the pioneering institutions in the new photographic education by the 1970s. When Ray-Jones attended in the late 1950s, however, photography was seen as purely an adjunct to design and was taught from a strictly functional and technical perspective in most British universities, polytechnics and colleges. Nonetheless, there were faint murmurs of a change in attitude to photography, spurred by figures like Ifor Thomas at Guildford School of Art,²⁶¹ and Rolf Brandt at the LSP (brother of Bill Brandt) who directed Ray-Jones towards important aesthetic trends in European photography.²⁶² After graduating from LSP, Ray-Jones applied to the Yale School of Art and was accepted on the MFA Graphic Design program, his portfolio consisting of a small body of photographs casually taken from a taxi window in North Africa.²⁶³ Little information exists as to why Ray-Jones chose to pursue graduate work at Yale, but it seems probable that one of his tutors saw his native talent and encouraged him to apply to one of the world’s leading programs. The decision to go to the US would be formative for his photographic development, and his return would be a watershed for British photography.

²⁵⁹ Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 2004, 8.

²⁶⁰ Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 8.

²⁶¹ The role of educators such as Ifor Thomas in laying the foundations of the revolution in photographic education in Britain deserves further attention. A series of articles published in *Amateur Photographer* in 1951-1952 demonstrate his forward-thinking approach to “creative” photography. Ifor Thomas, “Creative Photography 1,” *Photography* 6, no. 10 (October 1951): 28–33. Ifor and his wife Joy died in 1967 before the revolution they had fostered would be in full bloom. “The Thomas Memorial Fund,” *The British Journal of Photography* 132, no. 5584 (July 28, 1967): 629.

²⁶² Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 2004, 9.

²⁶³ Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 8.

YALE AND THE DESIGN LABORATORY

It is perhaps inevitable that someone as deracinated as Ray-Jones would find in his first years in the US as many European influences as American. At Yale, Ray-Jones came into the orbit of Josef Albers, an émigré from Nazi Germany and Bauhaus refugee who taught at the influential Black Mountain College and later became the head of the graphic design department at Yale. Albers was a pioneer of color field painting and along with László Moholy-Nagy, who founded the New Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937, was among the wave of Europeans who opened up American art to European abstraction and constructivism; a process that would result in the aggressive machismo of abstract expressionism, promoted as the first world-beating ‘native’ American art.²⁶⁴ Programs such as Yale’s that absorbed and domesticated European avant-garde influences meant that American magazine design and production was world-leading by the 1950s. Little if anything exists about Ray-Jones’ relationship to Albers or his work (Russell Roberts speculates that Albers may have had an effect on his color work)²⁶⁵ but it is safe to assume that, at the very least, the international milieu of the department had an effect on him.

Famous names like Albers and later appointee Walker Evans generally draw the headlines when discussing the Yale graphic design program, but the real force behind the integration of photography within the program was Alvin Eisenman, an American graphic designer who was head of the graduate graphic design program.²⁶⁶ Eisenman introduced photography into the graphic design program in the 1951, a year after his and Albers’ appointments, and hired Herbert Matter, a Swiss émigré who had come to the US

²⁶⁴ See Serge Guilbaut’s celebrated account: *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

²⁶⁵ “Tony Ray-Jones: The Photographer Seen,” 35.

²⁶⁶ Evans started teaching in 1964, the year that Ray-Jones left Yale, and it is tantalizing to imagine the effect his tutelage might have had. See Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 2004, 9.

in 1936 to work with Alexey Brodovitch, to be the program's first photography teacher.²⁶⁷ Eisenman later called Matter a "triple-threat kind of guy. He was a consummate technician, but considered photography an art at its very essence."²⁶⁸ Friends with Jackson Pollock, Robert Frank and Willem de Kooning among others, Matter brought a wide range of influences to bear on his teaching from fine art, collage and graphic design. His approach fitted well with Eisenman's focus on teaching photography alongside art and culture, and who sought to hire instructors who could address these topics. This policy stood through the 1960s when Edward Steichen was interviewed for a teaching position but turned down because he only wanted to talk about his own photography; Walker Evans was hired because he situated his and other images within an artistic and visual milieu in his demonstration lecture.²⁶⁹ Even though Ray-Jones did not come under the direct influence of the author of *American Pictures*, the wide-ranging approach of Matter, Albers and Eisenman's teaching broadened his horizons and gave him license to bring influences from beyond photography to his work.

From 1962 to 1963 and in the middle of his studies at Yale, Ray-Jones took a sabbatical to photograph in New York, earning his first magazine commissions for *Car and Driver* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. While in New York he began attending the Design Laboratory Classes at Richard Avedon's Manhattan studio, run by Alexey Brodovitch, the ex-artistic director of Harper's Bazaar and one of the leading lights in American design and photography. Arriving in Philadelphia in 1933 and a refugee from the Russian revolution (where he had fought with the Whites) Brodovitch included many

²⁶⁷ Jerry L. Thompson and Alvin Eisenman, "Teaching the Practice of Photography at Yale: A Conversation with Alvin Eisenman, February 2006," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, January 1, 2006, 126, doi:10.2307/40514665. Bruce Davidson was among the first students to take Matter's class.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 127.

of the exiles from Nazism and the burgeoning postwar European scene in his circle and magazines. Like Albers, Moholy-Nagy and a host of others, Brodovitch brought with him from Russia a European avant-garde sensibility; other designers and pioneers in photojournalism like Stefan Lorant were to follow him to the US and have an equally revolutionary effect on American magazine publishing.²⁷⁰ Ray-Jones was attracted to such “transatlantic” figures such as Brodovitch, Josef Albers, Berenice Abbot, Jean Renoir and Weegee because they were, like he, split between two cultures. The cross-pollination of influence between the US and Europe, exemplified by (but was by no means limited to) the Lost Generation in the 1920s and the European émigré “artists in exile”²⁷¹ in the 1930s and 1940s was formative in establishing American dominance in art and literature into the second half of the twentieth century, something that was also to find its analog in photography.

Ray-Jones found inspiration in Brodovitch and his teachers at Yale’s eclectic modernism: his notebooks contain several pages of quotations from Jean Renoir (“every film should be a hunting party against clichés”), Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Berenice Abbott and Henri-Cartier Bresson.²⁷² Ray-Jones scribbled down a section from the introduction to Henri Cartier-Bresson’s *The Decisive Moment* in his notebook: “composition must be one of our constant preoccupations but at the moment of shooting it can stem only from our intuition, for we are out to capture the fugitive moment and all the interrelationships

²⁷⁰ Lorant had been editor of the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* in Germany and had set up *Picture Post* in Britain before working on *Life* magazine in its early years. A comprehensive biography, the result of several extended interviews with Lorant is Hallett, *Stefan Lorant: Godfather of Photojournalism*.

²⁷¹ I borrow this phrase from Joseph Horowitz, particularly for its utility in describing a number of immigrants who continued to think of themselves as exiles during their years in the US. Horowitz, *Artists in Exile: How Refugees from Twentieth-Century War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Arts*.

²⁷² Tony Ray-Jones, “American Notebook 1964-65,” C17/59 1991-5033_2, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

involved on the move.”²⁷³ These European influences Brodovitch cultivated were a result of the distance Brodovitch kept from US culture. An outsider with a dispassionate eye, he was nonetheless fascinated by American life and recognized that the US provided exceptional fodder for photography:

America is Vitality. It should be an endless inspiration to anyone with a camera. The strange combinations that take place here every day are an enigma which could happen nowhere else.²⁷⁴

Tony Ray-Jones would find similar vitality in the US, spurred on by Brodovitch’s encouragement and his own burgeoning interest in street photography.

As Roberts notes, the pages of *Harper’s Bazaar* became Brodovitch’s laboratory, and, aside from pioneering new techniques in layout and typeface design, “exposed Americans to the European avant-garde by commissioning work from leading European artists and photographers including Dali, Man Ray, Brassai, Model and Cartier-Bresson.”²⁷⁵ The list of famous names that had passed through the workshops was impressive, and included Irving Penn, Richard Avedon, Hans Namuth, Diane Arbus and Hiro. Ray-Jones’ notes from two classes run by Avedon highlight his approval of Avedon’s insistence that photographers avoid cliché,²⁷⁶ the photographic modernist’s equivalent of Ezra Pound’s dictum to ‘make it new.’ Alluding to the influence Brodovitch had had on design and visual culture in the US and beyond, Irving Penn suggested “all photographers, whether they know it or not are all students of Brodovitch.”²⁷⁷ A 1964 article in the British *Photography* magazine entitled simply “Alexey Brodovitch” attests

²⁷³ Ibid. Original emphasis.

²⁷⁴ Charles Reynolds, “Focus on Alexey Brodovitch,” *Popular Photography*, no. 49 (December 1961): 92.

²⁷⁵ Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 2004, 11. Andre Kertesz, Bill Brandt, and Bruce Davidson can be added to this list.

²⁷⁶ Tony Ray-Jones, “Avedon,” ca. 1964, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

²⁷⁷ Reynolds, “Focus on Alexey Brodovitch,” 79.

to this, enthusiastically recounting Brodovitch's intensely loyal young following and his idiosyncratic teaching style. Brodovitch disavowed the 'teacher' moniker and did not instruct in technique per se, but rather set students broad assignments only to critique their work unsparingly the next class. A 1964 list of assignments that Brodovitch gave, with very little by way of explication, included:

United Nations, Halloween, Broadway, juvenile delinquency, parades, Central Park, Chinatown, Harlem, markets, soft drinks, cosmetics, commercial products, jazz, personalities, fantasy, Dixie cups, lights and color, shadows.²⁷⁸

Students would return the next class with prints that they had worked slavishly on, only to have Brodovitch dismiss them with one or two words. According to Owen Evans in a 1979 *American Photographer* article, he "reigned as a benevolent, aloof and somewhat protective dictator who immediately saw the potential strengths of young photographers and guided them in those directions."²⁷⁹ For students like Ray-Jones who could stomach this criticism and also enjoy rare moments of praise from him, Brodovitch's influence was electrifying. Evans suggests that he "seemed to teach by his presence alone,"²⁸⁰ describing his attitude to teaching as "a Western counterpart of a Zen master. The goal of a Zen master's teaching is not simply the mastery of a skill but the mastery of a technique through the total mastery of oneself."²⁸¹ When he did give students more hands-on instruction, it tended to serve a similar function:

He would occasionally tell students to cut a small rectangular section out of a piece of cardboard and use this framed space to take mental pictures of the things around them until their ordinary everyday civilian ways of seeing became

²⁷⁸ Brodovitch, "Brodovitch on Photography," 18.

²⁷⁹ Owen Evans, "Zen and the Art of Alexey Brodovitch," *American Photographer* II, no. 6 (June 1979): 50.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

photographic ways of seeing. It was a remarkable discipline aimed at ending the division between informal and formal vision- a way of turning camera users into cameras.²⁸²

Comical as the image of earnest students wandering about New York with a cardboard cutout suspended in front of their faces might be, the method spoke of the total devotion to photography Brodovitch expected students to display and the individualized way of seeing he espoused. An account in the same issue of *Photography* by British student Peter Larson entitled “Life as a Brodovitch Student” contains an accidental allusion to the presence of Ray-Jones. Larson describes how he worked organizing the laboratories for Brodovitch for a reduction in the fee, taking attendance as one part of the job: “I’d tick their names off in [the] usual American style, [which] ranged from the weirdest sounding to a plain “Jones.”²⁸³ Larson describes the energizing effect the laboratory had on him and his fellow students, and how they would congregate after class:

I and a couple of other guys in the class would talk and argue and *live* photography, far into the night until the waiter would change from impatient to domineering, and we would leave as the lights were turned off behind us. Some nights I remember walking down about fifty blocks, from 57th Street to Greenwich Village, still arguing.²⁸⁴

Photography for Brodovitch’s acolytes became an obsession, an all-encompassing object of devotion where one could find true self-expression as an artist with enough vision and hard work. Brodovitch’s maxims were also guides that Ray-Jones took to heart, and were ideals that he tried very hard to live up to. Ray-Jones would take Brodovitch’s views on photojournalism particularly to heart:

The journalistic photographer must also be his own picture editor and art director. In a commercial job, the art director and picture editor should never be a substitute for the photographers’ thinking... it is up to the photographer to decide

²⁸² Ibid., 55.

²⁸³ Peter Larson, “Life as a Brodovitch Student,” *Photography* XVIV, no. 2 (February 1964): 20.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 21.

whether he will be the slave of *Life*, *Look*, *Vogue* or *Bazaar* or whether they will be his slave.²⁸⁵

An experienced and widely respected designer like Brodovitch could afford to make such statements; for a young photographer climbing a ladder in a profession with an entrenched system of apprenticeship and editorial control, this way of thinking was a dangerous prospect. Despite being a foolhardy if noble cause, it was a challenge Ray-Jones rose to. After his graduation from Yale, he went on to work closely with Brodovitch for American Heritage publishing on the ill-fated *Sky* magazine (never published) in 1965 before he returned to England.²⁸⁶ Brodovitch remained Ray-Jones' inspiration and mentor after he left the US: he would dedicate *A Day Off* to him, and his ashes were scattered in Arles, where Brodovitch's had been scattered a year earlier.

PHOTOGRAPHING THE USA, 1963-1965

Often overshadowed by his work on the English, the photographs that Ray-Jones made during his first stint in the US have been viewed with hesitant acclaim but have also been seen largely as juvenilia, probably because Ray-Jones himself described them as “isolated sketches.”²⁸⁷ As a young photographer coming into his own, and one who had shifted directions from the graphic arts, it is understandable that his best work would probably come later. Nonetheless, his formative period in the US was crucial to his project on the English. Roberts describes his years in the USA as an infatuation:

²⁸⁵ Brodovitch, “Brodovitch on Photography,” 19.

²⁸⁶ Brodovitch's influence was not limited to photographers; he taught magazine design and was to be important to magazine entrepreneurs too. Allan Porter, editor of *Camera* magazine, an influential publication that brought American photography to Europe worked under Brodovitch in the late 1950s. Anna Auer and Allan Porter, “Voyager between the Art Worlds – Allan Porter in Interview with Anna Auer,” *Photoresearcher*, no. 17 (April 2012): 2.

²⁸⁷ Ray-Jones, Tony and Charlton, Frank, “Tony Ray-Jones: Photographs from America and England,” *Creative Camera*, no. 52 (October 1968): 349.

[Ray-Jones was] intoxicated by various aspects of American life, ranging from the spectacle of New York City to humdrum daily routines. Advertising, street parades, crowds, shop windows and sporting events presented layers of Americana and kitsch that he avidly photographed.²⁸⁸

This was, of course, all new to him, and he was most certainly drawn to the spectacle of modern American life, especially in New York City, and to a lesser extent in New Haven. Spurred on by Brodovitch and his graduate school projects, Ray-Jones attempted, in his American work, to capture the essence of American life through synecdochal representations to represent and critique Americanness. A partial list entitled “Projects” in his notebook included:

- Negro Juvenile delinquents & community centre
- Parades
- The Hat and Hairdo (curlers, etc.)
- America by rail travel
- Negro America
- Town Hall and Register Office in Harlem
- Puerto Rico or Italian-based boats
- Store Front Churches
- Harlem hospital waiting rooms
- Vanity
- Sex seekers²⁸⁹

Other projects Ray-Jones itemized under the heading “Some Story Ideas” were “places where people gather,” “buildings of departure,” “open spaces” and “man’s institutions.”

- Sunnyside colony queens (German Folk Dancing, etc.)
- Festival of flowers (call Buddhist temple)
- Gipsies and Gipsy Weddings
- Indian Construction Workers
- Abyssinian Church Uptown- fashion
- Invisible people- shoe shiners in Grand Central
- People who ignore beggars²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 2004, 7.

²⁸⁹ Ray-Jones, “American Notebook 1964-65.”

²⁹⁰ Tony Ray-Jones, “Some Story Ideas,” ca. 1964, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

He also detailed ideas for a series on “Society Life” which included “Park Avenue: its inhabitants, its eating places,” “debutante coming out balls,” “daughters of the American Revolution,” “leisure-relaxing on Penthouses” and “Balls at Hotels (Americana, etc.),” and made a note to himself, “to obtain permission to shoot say am from *Town* or *Queen* and showing difference between English social life and American or get letter from *Town & Country*.”²⁹¹ These ideas signaled his desire to explore notions of class as they related to national identity, a theme he would pick up later in his work on the English.

One of Ray-Jones’ first published pieces signaled the thematic direction his work was to take by focusing on the social landscape, avoiding abstraction and the experimental techniques commonly taught for commercial photography. The autumn 1963 edition of the student publication *Yale Undergraduate* included Ray-Jones’ picture essay “Leisure Hours in the Spring”.²⁹² The front cover featured a group of students tied together during a game at a college social event, various images of bikes and people lounging about, a two-page spread of photographs of students helping out with local schoolchildren in New Haven, and then returned to more staid images of students lolling around and at play. Compositionally, most of the images of students are taken from afar, some it seems surreptitiously from behind bushes and branches, but the photographs of the volunteers working with schoolchildren are close-in and intimate. The irruptive contrast of the images of a student teaching young African-American students sandwiched between more indolent pursuits speaks to Ray-Jones’ own growing social awareness of class and racial contrasts, a commentary he would treat more fully in his series on the Dixwell community.

²⁹¹ Ray-Jones, “American Notebook 1964-65.” Original emphasis.

²⁹² Tony Ray-Jones, “Leisure Hours in the Spring,” *Yale Undergraduate* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1963). *Town & Country*’s UK equivalent is *Country Life*, a magazine that would become important for Ray-Jones on his return to England.

On his return to Yale in 1963, Ray-Jones moved to a working-class, mainly African-American, Dixwell neighborhood of New Haven. Richard Ehrlich notes Ray-Jones' fascination with the local community and his "ease of entry" into a segregated community in a town infamous for fractious town/gown relations. He photographed leisure spaces such as the Q House community center and made an extended series on the Daddy Grace church and a local barber shop [Figure 1].²⁹³ These were the first immersive studies he had done and his sensitive handling of the joy and humor in the prosaic activities painted a sympathetic picture of Dixwell's residents and their self-improvement efforts that ran parallel to the ongoing civil rights struggle. Rather than a passing engagement with Dixwell residents, Ray-Jones did his best to ensconce himself in the place he was living and set about engaging with it via the lens. This attitude would color his work in New York, too. He expressed a desire to photograph areas of the city "where people were all important," as he noted in a diary entry:

I feel it is time to make some kind of an estimation of what New York has and is. What is particular to NY. The extremes that NY represents. It is a dense bureaucratic metropolis. Bleak or lacking in soul. But around lie areas where people are all important. The so-called primitive areas and recreation, violence... 42nd St, Coney Island & other beaches, 125th St, Boxing, Wrestling, Orchard Beach.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ For a discussion of barber shops as a trope in American photography, see Geoff Dyer, *The Ongoing Moment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), 205–212.

²⁹⁴ Ray-Jones, "American Notebook 1964-65."



Figure 1. New Haven Barbershop, c.1963. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.

Harlem, the Great White Way and Coney Island were all ripe for crowd-watching but it is the phrase “so-called primitive areas” that give the clue to Ray-Jones’ feelings about which areas would provide the best subject matter for his images.

Many of Ray-Jones’ lists of ideas were speculative projects to sell to magazine editors, and they would go nowhere but the exercise proved fruitful as some of these ideas would eventually find expression in his English work. Many of the events featured in his lists involved immigrants to New York or displays of racial/ethnic minority rituals. As an Englishman in New York, Ray-Jones no doubt sympathized with the retention of cultural traditions in these communities and the expression of cultural identity. He does not seem to have sought out minority groups in Britain when he returned (despite a few notes to do so) but the influence on his sympathetic depictions of folk traditions speaks to a similar attention to the less powerful in society. The rough taxonomies Ray-Jones made followed Robert Frank and Walker Evans’ lead by detailing potential topics where national character was expressed and where he as a photographer, guided by precedent, could record his own personal view of a people.²⁹⁵

Rather than going in blind to photograph the US impressionistically, Ray-Jones thought it important to have a grounding in the aesthetic traditions of a country and gain a sense of the precedents to his exploration. A list of “People’s Work to Look At” also fleshes out some early influences. This included Sherwood Anderson, Richard Wright, Archibald MacLeish, Dorothea Lange, Aaron Siskind, Weegee, and Pare Lorentz. All of these writers and photographers fit squarely within the American modernist tradition and

²⁹⁵ Frank’s ‘list’ for his Guggenheim Fellowship application in 1954 is an influential precedent: “A small catalog comes to the mind’s eye: a town at night, a parking lot, a supermarket, a highway, the man who owns three cars and the man who owns none, the farmer and his children, a new house and a warped clapboard house, the dictation of taste, the dream of grandeur, advertising, neon lights, the faces of the leaders and the faces of the followers, gas tanks and post offices and backyards.” Reproduced in Sarah Greenough, ed., *Looking in: Robert Frank’s The Americans* (New York, NY: Steidl, 2009), 362.

with the possible exceptions of MacLeish and Siskind, all offer critiques of the American social scene. A consummate hustler, Ray-Jones had assembled an ambitious list of “people to see in US about pix [sic]” which was almost exclusively populated by photography’s movers and shakers: Beaumont Newhall, John Szarkowski, Arthur Siegel, Berenice Abbott, Walker Evans and Roy Stryker.²⁹⁶ Bill Jay has discussed the refreshing lack of hierarchy and camaraderie between those involved in photography during the 1950s and 1960s but this is a daunting list nonetheless and demonstrates the ambition of a young photographer emboldened by a passion for photography.²⁹⁷ One of the most democratic places of all were the streets of New York which were to form the backdrop for Ray-Jones’ first mature work.

PARADES AS NATIONAL DISPLAY

To someone coming from a culture more outwardly reserved, the riot of visual excitement, especially in New York, was beguiling. This expressed itself most prominently in the photographs he took of parades, one of the assignments Brodovitch repeatedly gave his students. From the beginning of his photographic career, Ray-Jones was most interested in photographing people, and, when photographing public events, found himself more drawn to the faces in the crowd than the pomp of the event itself. An unpublished series on the 1963 Newport Folk festival contains several photographs of Joan Baez but the majority are taken of crowds and the fringes of the festival and of blues performers, the style of music that would remain Ray-Jones’ favorite throughout his

²⁹⁶ Ray-Jones, “American Notebook 1964-65.”

²⁹⁷ Stryker’s inclusion on this list is an interesting parallel to Ray-Jones’ love of lists and “pre-visioning” of his photographic projects. For a discussion of Stryker’s shooting scripts for the FSA photographers, see Dyer, *The Ongoing Moment*, 2–9.

life.²⁹⁸ The earliest negatives in his archive are of parties, weddings and processions and of the Danbury Fair in Danbury, Connecticut in 1963. The contact sheets show close-up images of children and fairground rides juxtaposed with agricultural Americana, a visually captivating and technologically advanced equivalent to the village fairs of his youth.²⁹⁹ Ray-Jones went on to photograph the Columbus Day Parades in New York and New Haven, and photographed a string of ethnic parades from 1964-1965, including the St. Patrick's Day parades in New York and New Haven, Chinese New Year (which he would photograph again in 1971), and Italian and Puerto Rican street festivals, both in black-and-white and color. Ray-Jones' approach was less to do with the vagaries of chance but more a marriage of careful planning and measured flânerie once he had mapped out the territory. A list entitled "Aims" written in 1964 or 1965 before the Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York shows the planning Ray-Jones put into his images of parades. Listed as aims include "excitement, spectators, extract elements, movement" and tellingly "social commentary thru images" along with a note to self to "find out route" and "find out where to shoot ariel shots [*sic*]."³⁰⁰ Parades feature as examples of "American Nationalism" in a number of his notes.³⁰¹

In photographing New York and New Haven parades, Ray-Jones had learnt to turn his camera on observers as opposed to the parade itself to glean a range of emotions from the faces in the crowd. Typical of this is his photograph of a Puerto Rican parade in New York.³⁰² A middle-aged woman in the foreground holding two Puerto Rican flag

²⁹⁸ Tony Ray-Jones, *Newport Folk Festival, 1963*, June 26-28, 1963, C17/59 1993-5016 /1/53 Box 46, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

²⁹⁹ Tony Ray-Jones, *Contact Sheet: Danbury Fair, CT (NH8)*, 1963, C17/59 1993-5016 /1/11, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³⁰⁰ Tony Ray-Jones, "Aims," ca. 1964-1965, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³⁰¹ Ray-Jones, "American Notebook 1964-65."

³⁰² Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 42.

gazes through the camera's gaze, halfway through a thought. She wears a faux-military cap on top of her well-done hair, and her mink stole disrupts any notion that she may be a member of the military. The half-eaten ice cream in her right hand also signals that the situation is less controlled; in her right hand the fist that holds the flags looms at the viewer; it is less a fist shaken in anger than one that is gripping the unwieldy flags a little too tightly. The woman is a bystander, but the attention paid to her with the composition treats her as one of the parade, she is, however, a member of the parade of humanity that Ray-Jones is more interested in capturing. Behind her, a crowd of people look in all different directions, their attentions diverted by unseen distractions. The flags partially obscure a sign advertising "gadgets" and "gifts for all occasions" and a storefront replete with consumer goods. It is a well-composed yet quickly-taken image that contains a smorgasbord of glances, symbols, unexpected shapes and human emotions.

Ostentatious displays of national or ethnic pride in the US attracted Ray-Jones because of their populist nature and their novelty: they were contrary to the displays of civic pride in Britain which tended to center on class or labor (miners, for example, whom he would photograph in Durham in 1969), glorify the monarchy, or exist as small-scale celebrations confined to a particular community.³⁰³ As Simon Newman, Susan Davis and David Waldstreicher have identified, parades in the US have a long heritage of being vehicles for forging national identity³⁰⁴ and later celebrating or asserting ethnic and

³⁰³ It would not be until Ray-Jones returned to Britain that the Notting Hill Carnival, the closest analog to popular US parades celebrating national and/or ethnic pride, would begin in 1966 Britain and was not widely popularized until the 1970s.

³⁰⁴ Simon P Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Susan G Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

racial diversity within a national framework. The St. Patrick's Day parades³⁰⁵ that spread across the US in the nineteenth and early twentieth century are probably the most visible of this ethnic reassertion or, indeed invention of, ethnicity,³⁰⁶ and in the 1960s, parades by the Italian and Puerto Rican community that Ray-Jones photographed in New York can be seen as precursors to the resurgence in ethnic and racial cultural movements that reached their apex in the national consciousness in the 1970s and 1980s. 'New' by European standards, the public, urban spectacle of the parade in the US differed from the largely rural expressions of community and custom with their ineffable origins and the similarly 'timeless' displays of tradition of the ruling classes in Britain,³⁰⁷ but many of the parades Ray-Jones photographed sought to define aspirant communities vis-à-vis nationality and heritage. These parades can be viewed as a community's self-expression, ordinary people enacting their social identities as a means to visibility and celebration of identity, ideas that Ray-Jones would continue to explore with his work on the English.

Perhaps inevitably, given his proclivity for photographing occasions, his images from the US incorporate symbols and tropes associated in the European popular imagination with the US: flags appear with regularity; cowboys, cars and consumer goods were also sources of intrigue. Roberts characterizes his time in the US as more "a fascination with things rather than people,"³⁰⁸ but this statement, even when qualified (as Roberts does), is too broad a generalization. The material of American culture in Ray Jones' photographs exists in tandem with its people, just as the signs, street furniture and

³⁰⁵ For a detailed description of some of the class and power struggles inherent in celebrations of ethnicity, see David M Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

³⁰⁶ For a comprehensive discussion, see Steven D Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

³⁰⁷ This is further addressed in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³⁰⁸ Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 2004, 12.

costumes of his English photographs signify the trappings of English life. At times, the scale of parade floats, cars, buildings and kitsch threatens to overwhelm his American subjects: the gaudy excess of American culture is rendered almost hyperreal at such a scale.³⁰⁹ At least overtly, the parades Ray-Jones photographed celebrating ethnic heritage did not have a political message to make and were popular because the emphasis was on fun, display and people letting their guard down. Ray-Jones did photograph political demonstrations such as the “No More Hiroshimas” demonstration, a CORE meeting, and the Mobilization for Youth rally in 1964, but the bulk of his work on civic gatherings centers on occasions where people turn out on their days off. A note written immediately after witnessing the demonstrations at the Armed Forces Parade on May 16th, 1965 provides an insight into his motivations behind this. Ray-Jones’ registered his ambivalence to the spectacle of political unrest: “it wasn’t the actual parade of rockets, tanks and young simple plodding faces as much as the spectators ranked on either side, who with vacuous, endless bellowing hurled abuses at each other.”³¹⁰ Ray-Jones’ sympathies lay more or less with the “grimy kids from the E side” against the “plain, simple-minded fun loving hecklers” who “shouted for more bombs,” but he struggled with how to depict the scene photographically, and how to balance the view between both sides “in a comic light or just plain and simply be hateful... the problem to express the terrifying yet sad situation.”³¹¹ His dedication to record society was firm, but Ray-Jones vacillated on the photographers’ moral obligation beyond that of creating a record:

³⁰⁹ Inspired by Ray-Jones’ aesthetics, Martin Parr’s work has focused on the tawdry “stuff” of the seaside, suburb and society occasions. His use of lurid colors, tightly cropped extreme close-ups have a tendency to depersonalize his subjects to produce what many have thought of as a biting commentary on the shallow life of Britain under the tacky veneer. See Martin Parr and Ian Walker, *The Last Resort: Photographs of New Brighton* (Stockport, UK: Dewi Lewis, 1998).

³¹⁰ Tony Ray-Jones, “Sunday May 16 65,” May 16, 1965, C17/59 Box 3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

And yet, just to laugh it off? We as photographers, it seems have a commitment to the society at a time like this to lift the mask, to show just people carried away for or against something which could destroy us... myself as a recorder of fact and fiction cannot dictate right and wrong.³¹²

For a photographer whose images are so subtle, dispassionate and measured, focusing on political demonstrations meant taking a stance, or taking an unambiguous image, something he would ultimately shy away from. Ray-Jones did not see himself as a humanitarian “concerned photographer;”³¹³ his dual impulse to be both journalist and artist in the ‘new documentary’ mode meant a passion for photography first and a desire to affect change through photography later.

ROBERT FRANK, GARRY WINOGRAND AND STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

Ray-Jones’ immersion in New York life brought him into contact with the practitioners of a new type of street photography that abandoned the social reform agendas of prior practitioners like Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine. Photographers such as William Klein and Robert Frank took to the streets in a search for their own personal aesthetic, discovering the city through a lens and recording its ills as well as its idiosyncrasies. When Robert Frank arrived in New York from Switzerland in 1947 he found work as a fashion photographer for *Harper’s Bazaar* under Alexey Brodovitch³¹⁴

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Cornell Capa coined this term to describe photographers who wanted their images to spur direct action against injustice and human suffering. Fund for Concerned Photography, *The Concerned Photographer: The Photographs of Werner Bischof, Robert Capa, David Seymour (“Chim”), André Kertész, Leonard Freed, Dan Weiner*. (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1968).

³¹⁴ Frank was inspired by Brodovitch but perhaps because he was closer to Brodovitch in age, his admiration was less effusive than Ray-Jones’. As Sarah Greenough comments, Frank was “wary of the idolization Brodovitch inspired, Frank was nevertheless deeply inspired by his freewheeling experimentation... Brodovitch had no concern for the medium’s documentary qualities and no qualms about destroying the verisimilitude of the photographic image to increase its expressive power. Prizing spontaneity over craft, effort over technique and action and motion over stasis, he stressed the importance of emotional immediacy and authenticity.” Greenough, *Looking in: Robert Frank’s The Americans*, 18.

and also became friendly with Walker Evans, the great photographic chronicler of Depression-era America. Evans would write in support of Frank's Guggenheim Fellowship application for the project that would ultimately become *The Americans*, first published in France in 1958 and in the US a year later. Famously eviscerated by critics on its US publication (as was Evans' own *American Photographs*, a work Frank "used as an iconographic sourcebook").³¹⁵ Frank's picture of 1950s America pierced the veneer by highlighting racism, anomie and alienation. His allusive, aesthetically daring and disjunctive document upended all expectations for documentary photographs because they lacked a definitive message. *The Americans* was the antithesis of a nation supposedly confident with itself: it depicted the commercialism of American streets, lonely parking lots and restaurant booths, and used the visual motifs of American flags and cars to remove these objects from their exalted positions in American life. Although people are the focus of Frank's attention, the most common expression throughout is not a smile or a pout but a persistent admixture of apathy and boredom.³¹⁶ Blurry, high-contrast and taken at odd angles, the photographs broke with convention and brought a modernist aesthetic to American documentary photography that had been steeped in realism since the mid-1930s. Importantly, Frank also brought an individual vision to his subjects that said as much about the photographer as their subject. Frank's work demonstrated that social documentary did not mean a quest for objectivity; neither did it mean that photographs had to be didactic or depict the facts plainly.

³¹⁵ *American Photographs* (1938) has now achieved classic status but, as Tod Papageorge cautions, at the time it was viewed as a harsh indictment of American life, a work which did not exude the pathos or sympathy to the current state of life in the US. See Tod Papageorge, *Walker Evans and Robert Frank, an Essay on Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1981).

³¹⁶ This is not to say that there is not a certain appeal to the depiction of ordinary America, as Greenough has stated: "Frank also discovered a new kind of beauty in the magical allure of a jukebox glowing in a dimly-lit bar, the magnetic warmth of sunlight on a brightly polished table or chair, or the aching loneliness of a drive-in movie theater silently projecting its fantasies to a field of isolated cars." Greenough, *Looking in: Robert Frank's The Americans*, xix.

The influence of Frank is most evident in a piece Ray-Jones photographed for the *Saturday Evening Post* in June 1965 entitled “Ruffle of Colors, Flourish of Brass.” The tagline to the article encapsulates Ray-Jones’ attraction to the spectacles: “parades whip up nationalist fervor anywhere, but only in America are they a full-time national passion.”³¹⁷ As *The Americans* opens with an image of a parade, so Ray-Jones’ article includes an homage to the book’s iconic first image, of two people looking out from a window onto a parade, partly shrouded by an American flag. Ray-Jones recreates this image with balloons framing the spectators rather than the American flag. Likewise, his images of the parades concentrate on the crowd with the blurred image of the parade participants in the foreground. Ray-Jones also turns his attention to tuba and euphonium players, another iconic image of Frank’s. Whereas Frank’s tuba player is rendered faceless by his instrument, Ray-Jones’ tuba bell is detached entirely from the player’s body, the image of the parade reflected back in a colorful distortion. Other photos that reflect Frank’s themes in *The Americans* but were published elsewhere are a lone cowboy in Times Square,³¹⁸ as a counterpart to Frank’s downcast rodeo rider outside Madison Square Garden and another image of a woman looking into the white leather interior of a new Lincoln hints at Frank’s image of teenage boys in the back of a car at a similar auto show. Like Robert Frank, Ray-Jones catches people unawares; like Frank too, Ray-Jones’ world is unvarnished but in contradistinction Ray-Jones’ humorous juxtapositions of human and animal, relations of scale and general merriment set him apart from the more somber Frank. Colin Westerbeck notes also the quality of stillness in Frank’s work that balances out the noise and bustle of the street, a quality that Ray-Jones’ would later strive

³¹⁷ “Ruffle of Colors, Flourish of Brass,” *Saturday Evening Post*, July 3, 1965, 30–35.

³¹⁸ Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 73.

for in his work on the English.³¹⁹ Rather than the events themselves, Frank focuses on faces in the crowd, on spectators at civic or social occasions. Their contemplative glances amidst the hullabaloo of visual information at a festival tend to make them seem passive objects carried along by the inexorable tide of history even if they are; there is a certain melancholy inherent these images.³²⁰

The other great influence on Ray-Jones style started as a result of a chance encounter with another photographer who was under Frank's spell. *The Americans* was a seminal influence for budding New York photographer Joel Meyerowitz who was introduced to the book by an art director he worked with. Meyerowitz would later meet Garry Winogrand by chance on the subway with whom, despite being ten years older than him, he would form a loose photographic partnership from 1963-1966, joined later by Tod Papageorge and others.³²¹ The two Bronx natives were familiar with and fascinated by New York street life, and set out to record it with the fast and compact 35mm cameras so favored by Frank. They sought out "every public demonstration, every be-in in the park all of the gatherings in the Forties and Times Square"³²² for the photographic opportunities they afforded and the energy they could draw from them.³²³

³¹⁹ Colin Westerbeck, *Bystander: A History of Street Photography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 351.

³²⁰ Other key photographers of the British photographic scene in the 1970s, like Martin Parr, Chris Steele-Perkins, Brian Griffin and Daniel Meadows, have cited *The Americans* as one of the most important early influences. As Parr relates, to photographers such as he, Meadows and Griffin, the photographs were a vicarious pleasure, discovered while studying at Manchester Polytechnic: "The really significant photos I saw were by the Americans, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand, Diane Arbus: the people who were shown in Szarkowski's 'New Documents' show at MoMA in New York (1967) This was such a pivotal exhibition. They were so fresh and exciting. They took the kind of photographs you really hadn't seen before. The first book I bought was Robert Frank's *The Americans*. And I've still got that copy. I remember Brian and me looking at *The Americans* almost as if it were a dirty magazine, you know, as if it was something naughty. The staff at the Poly, at this particular point in time, didn't know what was going on in contemporary photography. Within six months, I was more knowledgeable than they were." Val Williams, *Martin Parr* (New York, NY: Phaidon, 2002), 31–32.

³²¹ Westerbeck, *Bystander*, 375.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ Meyerowitz uses the analogy of Weegee's Police scanner to describe Winogrand's method: "he was scanning the streets and also scanning his own instincts, constantly." *Ibid.*, 380.

Winogrand's famously fevered pace of composition and of shooting matched the rhythms of frenetic New York street life. Winogrand, Meyerowitz, Arbus, Friedlander and others were taking to the streets independently to produce their own vision of modern life, one that would reflect the increasing uncertainty and social strife; their photographs asked, as Nathan Lyons put it, "what constitutes the meaning of reality in pictures?"³²⁴ This new generation of documentary photographers, Lyons suggested, were less interested in depicting discrete events with a well-defined message like most photojournalists, but rather saw what might be extrapolated from their experience.³²⁵ As John Szarkowski would later write in the catalogue to the seminal *New Documents* exhibition (1969), "[the photographers'] aim has been not to reform life but to know it, not to persuade, but to understand."³²⁶

Ray-Jones became friends with Meyerowitz during his time off from Yale in 1963 when they met by chance encounter in the street. They hit it off instantly, and soon pursued a shared agenda, as their contemporary Alen MacWeeney states: "as a team [rather] than individuals they scoured the streets of New York looking for what they commonly believed to be the ultimate pictorial indictment of the city."³²⁷ Their shared passion turned into a nightly ritual:

Tony and I and another photographer we knew would sit and look at each other's slides, one or two rolls at a time, trying to understand what made a photograph. Technically, compositionally, emotionally, temporally... We were analyzing and grinding away at our pictures and liberating ourselves. I had this interaction with Tony as a peer whereas Garry was a really heightened intelligence already.³²⁸

³²⁴ Nathan Lyons, ed., *Toward a Social Landscape* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), 5.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ John Szarkowski, *New Documents: Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967), Museum of Modern Art Press Archives. http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/3860/releases/MOMA_1967_Jan-June_0034_21.pdf?2010.

³²⁷ MacWeeney to Ellis, May 23, 1972.

³²⁸ Westerbeck, *Bystander*, 392–401.

Sensing the effort he was putting in towards his aesthetic, Meyerowitz made the following assessment of Ray-Jones' American work:

When he was here he was struggling to give up the things he did well. He kept slipping back into that kind of graphic photography he needed to break loose from. He would get angry with himself when that happened and he was easily depressed. He was the kind of guy who talked to himself, reprimanded himself: 'Don't do this, don't make that sort of picture!' He allowed himself to get angry, for change. But in the end, I think he had to go back to Europe to achieve it.³²⁹

Ray-Jones switched to shooting exclusively in black-and-white in Britain after using both black-and-white and color in the US, whereas Meyerowitz stuck with color, a bold move as in the 1960s color photography was reserved almost exclusively for commercial work.³³⁰ In his interview in *SLR* in 1969, Ray-Jones discussed his decision to shelve color for black-and-white, mentioning that he had started shooting color because he didn't have a darkroom "and the cost of having black-and-white prints made in New York was phenomenal."³³¹ Color was also an appropriate format for the US:

With black-and-white there have been people like Robert Frank and Eugene Smith, who have done really fantastic work. It is hard to find any serious colour photographers who have done anything fantastic... I found America a very colour conscious country—colour is very much a part of their culture and they use it in crazy ways. You look down Madison Avenue during lunchtime and the colors just vibrate.³³²

The black-and-white aesthetic was something he would later adopt wholesale for his extended look at the English, a choice that probably had as much to do with the format

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 401.

³³⁰ Russell Ferguson sees in Winogrand's increasingly ambivalent attitude to printing his images in the 1970s and 1980s a metaphor for the exhausted nature of the modernist street photograph, especially after photoconceptualist artists such as Jeff Wall and Cindy Sherman started to stage street photographs, taking the element of chance out of the equation. Kerry Brougher and Russell Ferguson, eds., *Open City: Street Photographs since 1950* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 14.

³³¹ "Tony Ray-Jones: The Photographer Seen," 35.

³³² *Ibid.*

being the hallmark of art photography as the appropriate aesthetic for a particular country.³³³

Ray-Jones' work often hovers between the "decisive moment" of Cartier-Bresson image and the open-ended pregnancy of Robert Frank's. Unlike street photography practitioners Klein, Meyerowitz, Mark Cohen and especially Winogrand, Ray-Jones was not a particularly confrontational photographer who zipped in and out of a moment, stealing shots of passers-by and capturing close-in images of sometimes bewildered subjects. Ray-Jones generally thought through what he wanted to achieve with an image and pre-visualized the composition. He took several images in order to get a picture that coincided with what Stephen Shore dubs a "visual gestalt," a preordained vision that shapes the composition of the image.³³⁴ More reserved by nature, Ray-Jones retained a distance between his subjects and himself both physically and metaphorically. He would remain unhappy with this, despite this stance producing his best work, and would continue to try to narrow the gap between subject and photographer. A reminder to himself in his Filofax gives a clue to the working out of this approach: he famously wrote "get closer (use 50mm or less)" and "no middle distance," rules of thumb for someone wanting to push themselves to get better photographs and examine their subject closely.³³⁵ Despite their differences in approach, Winogrand and Ray-Jones became friends, their passion for good photographs linking them together. Winogrand came to

³³³ Although Meyerowitz was on the vanguard of color, it would not be until William Eggleston's 1976 show at MoMA that color photography gained widespread acceptance as a viable art medium, a revolution that would inspire British color pioneers like Paul Graham, Anna Fox and Martin Parr to usher in the British equivalent and divest it of its popular association with commercial and advertising photography. As Val Williams notes, Parr encountered *William Eggleston's Guide* in the late 1970s and was increasingly drawn to the use of color as a device to critique certain qualities of everyday people and objects "infused with a particular menace." Williams, *Martin Parr*, 155.

³³⁴ Stephen Shore, *The Nature of Photographs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 65.

³³⁵ An image of the list can be seen on Simon Roberts, "Tony Ray-Jones," *We English*, April 16, 2008, <http://we-english.co.uk/blog/?p=26>.

stay with Ray-Jones in his London flat and later introduced him to Bill Jay when they visited New York.

The final major influence on Ray-Jones was another European transplant to the US, Arthur Fellig, better-known as Weegee. Much has been made of Ray-Jones' love of European surrealist texts and films, linking him with a minor strain in British photography that runs through Bill Brandt and emerged around the mid-1930s.³³⁶ It is also true, however, that the experience of the American city opened him up to the surrealist potential inherent in the found objects and odd juxtapositions of American street life.³³⁷ Weegee, whose images depicted the psychological drama of the throbbing anonymous city rather than the perplexing residue of dreams, retains the random, chance nature of reverie that the city affords in his photographs. Self-taught and displaying a total dedication to his craft, Weegee was venerated particularly by the *Creative Camera* staff (by 1968, Ray-Jones was on board as an unpaid consultant) for his obsessive dedication to his art and for his self-taught, perhaps innate talent.³³⁸ When Ray-Jones and Jay caught up with him in New York in 1968, he was no longer the self-styled "Weegee the Famous," but a broken man whose pictures were largely underappreciated and whose career had been reduced in his last years to appearing in a trashy sex-romp very loosely based on his life entitled *The Imp-Probable Mr. Weegee*.³³⁹ He would die of a brain

³³⁶ Surrealism did not take off in Britain as a discrete movement in the same way as in continental Europe throughout the 1910s-1930s, and British art's more conservative orientation towards naturalism and realism is often cited as the reasons behind this. As Ian Walker argues, it is perhaps in photography that surrealism made manifest itself most prominently in Britain. Ian Walker, *So Exotic, so Homemade: Surrealism, Englishness and Documentary Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 7.

³³⁷ Westerbeck notes that this is how émigré John Gutmann described the "surrealist experience" of American life. Westerbeck, *Bystander*, 328.

³³⁸ His pseudonym was taken from a corruption of Ouija. As Roy Ald suggests, the name connotes "instinct, a sensitivity bordering on the psychic." Weegee, *Weegee's Creative Camera* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1959), 5.

³³⁹ Weegee's plight was highlighted by Jay in his book of portraits: "No one knows I'm still alive, he said, 'bring a pickup and take all this stuff away. Take everything before I die.'" Jay, *Bill Jay's Album*, 127.

tumor a few months after their visit, an almost-forgotten figure but in Ray-Jones' and Bill Jay's minds a heroic figure who combined an intuitive eye with an absolute absorption in photography.³⁴⁰

OBSERVING THE AMERICAN SCENE

In his final years in New York, Ray-Jones set himself up as a freelance photographer in 1964, and notably shot a series of images of British pop groups' American tours. These spoke to Ray-Jones' sense of Englishness in America, but were also images he could capitalize on as a British photographer working in the US amid the youthful Anglophilia associated with the "British Invasion."³⁴¹ He did include some clichéd images of screaming fans (a phenomenon which began in earnest in 1963) but was much more interested in capturing the commercial and handmade paraphernalia that the fans had brought with them. He also took some images of blues musicians in New York clubs whose tone differed from those of British groups. A selection of images of Muddy Waters, for example, uncharacteristically focuses on Waters himself almost exclusively and not on the crowds as was the case with his photographs of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.³⁴² For Ray-Jones, the blues counteracted the "phony-baloney" of

Like Ben Schultz before him and Brodovitch after, Weegee added to the list of photographic that sadly Ray-Jones would not outlive by very many years.

³⁴⁰ Weegee's popularity amongst the British photographic cognoscenti culminated in a major retrospective at the Side Gallery in the early 1980s. Much of his archive was subsequently given to Side by his widow, Wilma Wilcox in a bequest after her death. "Weegee Collection," *Amber Online*, 2013 2006, <http://www.amber-online.com/exhibitions/weegee-collection/detail>.

³⁴¹ Getting close to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones was also a tall order, especially at the Beatles' return to New York at Shea stadium in 1965. For a detailed explanation of their second American tour, American Beatlemania, and the "crowd of ten to twenty thousand cicada-like teenagers who had been waiting to hatch... for seven months" see Jonathan Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008), 180.

³⁴² Tony Ray-Jones, *Contact Sheet: Muddy Waters at Cafe Au Go Go, 1964*, Winter 1964, C17/59 1993-5016 /1/53 Box 46, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

American kitsch and spoke to an authenticity and lack of commercialism that plagued other forms of music; Bill Jay thought his portraits of jazz and blues musicians were his most successful work, and the affection for his subjects shines through.³⁴³ Ray-Jones' veneration for the blues was a little outmoded by the mid-1960s, and although he was certainly plugged into the artistic scene in New York he remained an observer of this culture rather than a participant. He hung out at the Chelsea Hotel with Meyerowitz, attended happenings and performance art, and photographed The Second New York Annual New York Festival of the Avant-Garde in 1964 which included Carolee Schneeman's *Meat Joy* and Karlheinz Stockhausen's "Originale."³⁴⁴ He seems to have enjoyed the spectacle of *Meat Joy* in particular, and his photographs of the event capture the spirit of the performance well, but his interest in radical art seems to have ended here. The blues, however, would be a lifelong love affair, and in England this taste for vernacular forms and quest for an authentic Englishness would take on new meaning.

Inspired by Frank, Ray-Jones took off across America in 1965 to pursue, as Richard Ehrlich put it, "a loosely-defined series on American cities", visiting and photographing some of the more unusual places Frank had photographed such as Belle Isle, Detroit.³⁴⁵ Rather than plan as he went along like Frank did, Ray-Jones sketched out a list of places to visit. A note entitled "A Social Study that Would be of Value" delineated this journey into three parts: The City (NY, Chicago Detroit), The Suburb (Los Angeles-Levittown) and the Country (Farm life and village, Vermont-Mississippi-

³⁴³ Jay, *Bill Jay's Album*, 124.

³⁴⁴ "Second Annual New York Festival of the Avant-Garde," August 1964, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³⁴⁵ Meyerowitz made his own Frank-like journey to Europe in 1966. Westerbeck, *Bystander*, 390. Images from this would be published in *Creative Camera* in December 1968, entitled, a little tongue-in-cheek, "My European Trip." Joel Meyerowitz, "My European Trip," *Creative Camera*, no. 54 (December 1968): 444–45.

Texas).³⁴⁶ The value of this ambitious yet never fully-realized study perhaps lay most in parsing the landscape of America and examining the social as well as the urban strata. It is unfortunate that Ray-Jones did not get a chance to shoot in the suburbs as his examination of Levittown might perhaps have been a cross between Bill Owens' sympathetic pictures of Livermore, California and the visceral, depopulated new west of the New Topographic photographers. The extended nature of the "social study" is the first indication that Ray-Jones was shifting his attention from magazine articles to studies that could potentially form the basis of a monograph. *The Americans* proved to Ray-Jones that the promise of independent photography, and the way out of photojournalism, lay in the photobook, an idea that would come to fruition when he toured his maquette *England By the Sea* around US publishers in 1968. A series of notes titled "Towards a Philosophy of Photography" shows Ray-Jones struggling with the anxiety of influence, noting that what has already "been done" by Atget or Cartier-Bresson should not be repeated. Ray-Jones notes his approval of Robert Frank who combined "documentary" and "design" successfully and ponders on the application of his approach to other subjects:

Is it enough to try & bring the eye & emotional perception of Frank to another world, that of high society or business? Much of Frank in his pictures is what he chose to photograph as well as how he did it. He dug up curiosities & made statements about life by using sometimes rather removed synthetic type images. We can pursue his manner of working but where will it lead us.³⁴⁷

Ray-Jones was to "dig up curiosities" in the soil of England and move beyond the clichés of New York street life in doing so, and it was turn a friend of Brodovitch who would mirror this assessment.

³⁴⁶ Ray-Jones, "American Notebook 1964-65."

³⁴⁷ Tony Ray-Jones, "Towards A Photography," May 16, 1965, C17/59 Box 3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

A diary entry in his notebook detailing a meeting with Ben Schultz (who had studied alongside Brodovitch at the Art Students League)³⁴⁸ at Time-Life Books in November 1965, just prior to his return to England sums up his outlook prior to leaving the US:

My color he [Schultz] said was much too empty, needed more information and of course lacked point of view. He liked the Times Square Cowboy and flags in window. New Orleans jazz men he liked but had seen similar pictures before. He said I should have spent longer with them. He said beware of picking American clichés... he asked if I was a journalist or an artist. I said journalist but of course wished to be an artist, of which we both agreed there are very few... it seems that we should pick the easiest way of making money in order to do our own work. He said artists worry about the photographs & not where they appear- so beware JONES.³⁴⁹

The ambition Ray-Jones demonstrated is evident not only by the fact of the visit itself, but in his acceptance of Schultz's advice. Even though *Time*, and particularly *Life*, so long the Holy Grail for photographers, had been losing their veneer in the sixties among young photographers, Time-Life Books under Schultz had an ambitious photographic publishing regime. Schultz was an admirer of new photographers such as Lee Friedlander as much as the old, had an enthusiasm for photography that rivaled Brodovitch, and was more loudly effusive, a trait Ray-Jones shared and was attracted to. During his time in New York the pieces of his photographic identity were well in place, and although he would balk at the term "artist" later, he was becoming an aspiring independent photographer in the American mold.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ MoMA, "From the Ben Schultz Memorial Collection" (Museum of Modern Art, February 8, 1968), MoMA Press Release Archives, Museum of Modern Art, New York http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/3998/releases/MOMA_1968_Jan-June_0015_15.pdf?2010.

³⁴⁹ Ray-Jones, "American Notebook 1964-65." Original emphasis.

³⁵⁰ Ainslie Ellis quotes Ray-Jones discussing William Hogarth when asking how he would define himself as a photographer: "I'm not an artist. I don't like the snob connotation of that word. I'm not specially [sic] sensitive and I wouldn't tolerate the stigma. I would like to be a journalist like George Orwell or as

Facing an uphill battle to gain work in the US because of a precarious visa situation, Ray-Jones began planning for a journey back home to Britain in 1965. Rather than continue to pursue his photographic vision by freelancing exclusively, the germ of a book on the English had formed, inspired by *The Americans*, his own exploration of America, and Bill Brandt's *The English at Home* (1936).³⁵¹ While his notes occasionally included references to places in Scotland and Wales, Ray-Jones' photographs were focused squarely on an examination of English as opposed to British identity. A note entitled "England" reveals that he was considering staying for extended periods in towns across the country to get a feel for "a cross-section" of the population.³⁵² Ray-Jones introduced his project thus:

A character analysis of the Englishman should be made and pointed out in some of the pictures. The Englishman is so much more approachable than the American... study what others have said about the country and reflect upon the truth... it is not enough just to show eccentricity, although the man in the street (mod or rocker) is eccentric in foreigner's eyes, but the pictures should indicate the eccentric NATURE. They should also show the stamina, stolidity.³⁵³

"Stamina and stolidity" and "eccentricity" were ultimately found in the tenacity of traditions and customs, and he would shy away from depicting Mods and Rockers, ultimately rejecting à la mode subject matter for a longer view of the nature of English

Hogarth was in his medium". Tony Ray-Jones, *A Day off: An English Journal* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974), 13.

³⁵¹ A 1967 assignment he completed for the US-based *Opera News* (for whom he had worked in New York) entitled *Britten Country* allowed him to experiment with landscape photography in the mold of Bill Brandt's *Literary Britain* (1951). Brandt's moody, high-contrast images with a narrow tonal range lent an air of mystery to the literary landscapes, and Ray-Jones did the same for Britten's Northumbria. Tony Ray-Jones, "Britten Country," *Opera News*, February 11, 1967, 12–15. As he wrote, Brandt was "the only photographer to produce an honest and personal document on the English people" and this assignment is Ray-Jones' homage to that heritage, hewing closely to his aesthetic and following in the footsteps of the master. Ray-Jones, Tony and Charlton, Frank, "Tony Ray-Jones: Photographs from America and England," 349.

³⁵² Tony Ray-Jones, "England," ca. 1965, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

life. His initial plans included photographing the aristocracy and the middle-classes, public schools, the military and “the race problem,” characteristic features of English life informed by his proto-social studies in the US. As he suggests, the photographs in his English project should include “a hint of where England is going,” and questioned whether “some things or people have progressed leaving others miles behind” or whether there was “much contrast of old and new.”³⁵⁴

After the initial idea had set in and an imminent return to England looked likely, Ray-Jones set about drafting a plan of attack. A list entitled “Plan A” involved returning to Britain in December, “letting “English mags know of [the] US,” a series of spells residing in European cities, obtaining work from National Geographic and finding a flat where he “should be able to entertain.”³⁵⁵ The plan was then return to the US and tour by car working on assignments and personal projects shooting Oil, Jukebox and Popcorn millionaires for potential sale to English magazines.³⁵⁶ An undated “Tentative Revisal [*sic*] of Plan A” suggested a slightly slower pace, noting that he should “get a little more exposure,” “look around England” visit potential magazines and publishers and “perhaps” return to the States to see publishers, etc. & if I do return must spend at least 6 months travelling.”³⁵⁷ Thus, with a rough plan, an aesthetic framework provided by Robert Frank, new documentary photography and street photography, and a growing ambition to climb the photographic ladder, Ray-Jones left for Britain, ultimately overshooting his aim to stay for a year by a good four.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Tony Ray-Jones, “Plan A,” ca. 1965, C17/59 Box 3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Tony Ray-Jones, “Tentative Revisal of Plan A,” ca. 1965, C17/59 Box 3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection. Original emphasis.

RETURN TO LONDON: A NEW SOUL IN A SWINGING CITY

Ray-Jones arrived in London in 1966, at the apex of excitement about new British culture. Although the revolution in design, art and music had deep roots, the London scene achieved international recognition in April 1966, when the city had been given a ringing American endorsement by *Time* which had announced on its front cover that it was now “The Swinging City:” stylish, modern and trendsetting after years in the postwar doldrums of rationing and low expectations.³⁵⁸ When he arrived at age 25, Ray-Jones was slightly older than many of the participants in swinging London, and his experience in New York had colored his view of the excitement about the new cultural forms. Indeed, his interview in *SLR* revealed that he thought London’s modernity artificial:

When I got back to England I found everything so grey that I didn’t see any point in shooting in colours—it didn’t seem to be an important part of our lives here. The only place where one really sees colour here is in the King’s Road or Carnaby Street and there it’s the synthetic type of colour dreamed up by fashion designers—very obvious colour combinations that aren’t that attractive.³⁵⁹

In anecdote repeated by Richard Ehrlich, “when [his friend] Juan Gomez asked him how ‘Swinging’ London was Tony replied that it was ‘swinging by the neck,’”³⁶⁰ indicating his lack of patience with the ill-fitting modernity he returned to in Britain. Concurrent with this modernization, was a strain of nostalgia for Britain’s rapidly shrinking empire and a post-war interrogation of the tenets of British (or, more often, English) identity. At the same time as the strains of psychedelic culture emanating from across the Atlantic were taking root, a repurposing of Victorian and Edwardian styles (the residue left from the upending of social controls, stiff morality and conformity, what Arthur Marwick calls

³⁵⁸ David Bailey, “ace photographer,” was mentioned in the original article. Piri Halasz, “You Can Walk Across It On the Grass,” *Time*, April 15, 1966, 38–46.

³⁵⁹ “Tony Ray-Jones: The Photographer Seen,” 35–36.

³⁶⁰ Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 15.

“the end of Victorianism”),³⁶¹ especially the trappings of urban bohemia, emerged. A vogue for extravagant turn-of-the-century military uniforms, abetted by the popularity of the *I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet* boutique on the King's Road and the Beatles' colorfully kitsch uniforms on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* enabled baby boomers to transgressively lampoon the war that they had been reminded of incessantly through their childhoods and also to enact a latent guilt for the peaceful and well-off lives they were living.³⁶² As Dominic Sandbrook notes, these cultural resurrections, alongside a growing ecological and spiritual consciousness, were reactions against a modernity that, by the late 1960s, was beginning to show some cracks in its veneer.³⁶³ For Ray-Jones, the retreat into the traditional from the modern was less a feeling that the social projects of the sixties were failing but rather a complicated negotiation between constructing a past from England's rich, long-contested heritage and attempting to define what Englishness was through the impress of American influence.

If London was swinging, independent photography in Britain certainly was not. Ray-Jones had traded one major metropolis for another, but compared with New York's nascent embrace of photography through MoMA and the Design Laboratory, London's centers for photography were in a state of arrested decay. Although the cultural revolution of the sixties was gathering pace across Britain, the predominant models for young photographers were the trendy fashion snappers epitomized by David Hemmings in *Blow-Up* (1966) and caricatured by Michael York's Tom Wabe in *Smashing Time*

³⁶¹ Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 113–123.

³⁶² For a comprehensive dissection of this phenomenon, see Michael A. Langkjær, “‘Then How Can You Explain Sgt. Pompous and the Fancy Pants Club Band?’ Utilization of Military Uniforms and Other Paraphernalia by Pop Groups and the Youth Counterculture in the 1960s and Subsequent Periods,” *Textile History* 41, no. 1 (2010): 182–213. Langkjær quotes from a Rank Organization short film about *I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet*'s clientele who “buy uniforms of the past to affront the uniformity of the present.” *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁶³ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties 1964-1970* (London: Abacus, 2009), 447.

(1967). While Ray-Jones would decry the glorification of such flashy, commercially-oriented work, it left a gap in the market for a young photographer like himself who imported a new way of seeing and held a burning ambition to produce a new portrait of the nation. As he implies in his interview for *SLR Magazine*, the sense that he was one of the few people seriously engaged in photographing the English was liberating:

England is just a virgin territory for me, and outside of the obvious beauty spots and the Changing of the Guard it has been remarkably little photographed. Most of the events I go to see I never see another photographer, except possibly local newspaper photographer who's taking the usual posed shots. In New York there would be a number of photographers at any event, just looking for good pictures. The strange thing is that with the exception of Bill Brandt, most of the more famous British photographers have made their reputation abroad while working on picture stories.³⁶⁴

Ray-Jones did not set out to become a reformer, but once he surveyed the detritus of the British scene, though, it was perhaps inevitable someone of his ambition would effect change. Ray-Jones' experience echoes that of American Thomas Joshua Cooper who arrived to teach photography at Trent University in the early 1970s and found the situation "absolutely shocking":

I came from a culture that (in spite of the fact that they didn't like the work I made and really didn't want to see it) really thought for fifty years that photography is an art form, as a part of fine art culture was an accepted thing in America to a place where the Creative Photography course at Trent was the only one of its kind. To try to have a serious discussion with people about photography as a fine art, not just as an art in itself but as a fine art, didn't make sense to anybody here... I thought I had ended up in the most backward part of the world.³⁶⁵

So comparatively advanced were young photographers who had been educated in the US, and so receptive was the young British audience that their advocacy for change seemed a

³⁶⁴ "Tony Ray-Jones: The Photographer Seen," 41.

³⁶⁵ Thomas Joshua Cooper, interview by Amanda Hopkinson, Cassette Tape, August 22, 1995, C459/73/1-3, The Oral History of British Photography, The British Library.

natural progression, especially at a cultural moment where agitating for change was not only popular but efficacious. The few who were laboring in Britain to change attitudes towards creative photography welcomed an influx of American talent and ideas. Like David Hurn's flat in Bayswater, Ray-Jones' residence at 102 Gloucester Place would become a hub for travelling photographers, and it was there that Ray-Jones entertained John Szarkowski in 1968 who bought some prints for MoMA's permanent collection. This was something Ray-Jones always viewed as a high-point in his career, and was something he rightly leveraged whenever he had the chance, as in the text he wrote for a potential classified advertisement for sponsorship: "Young photographer with work in Museum of Modern Art permanent collection genuinely needs patron to further his photographic social studies of Britain with book in mind."³⁶⁶

TRADITION, STABILITY AND MUDDLING THROUGH: LOOKING AT THE ENGLISH

While Ray-Jones was finding work for *The Radio Times* and *Cycle* magazine among others, he was also working out his plan for photographing England. Building on "Plan A" in the early months of 1966, Ray-Jones compiled a list to aid him in capturing the English character. The list "British Characteristics" is as follows:

- Love of tradition
- Love of stability
- Art of compromise or muddling through
- Privacy
- Uneventful
- Apathy and indolence (from security of welfare state)
- A countryside lacking in drama and yet the people have a fine sense of drama³⁶⁷

In comparison, "U.S. Characteristics" included:

³⁶⁶ Tony Ray-Jones, "Black Filofax," ca. 1966-1972, 145, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

Vision (as opposed to British Experience)
Idealism (as opposed to British Compromise)
Challenges (as opposed to precedents)
Innovation & Experimentation (as opposed to Tradition/Well Worn Path)³⁶⁸

The comparative element here gives a clue to Ray-Jones' project. He had spent nearly five years in the US exploring American customs, and now he had a chance to return with an outsider's eye to examine his own heritage. In England his practice was wiser and more mature, as Ehrlich and Roberts have noted, but although he was less wide-eyed, his vision of England derived from a comparison with an America that he had explored and that had been frequently imagined through many photographic lenses. As there were fewer English antecedents to his national project (save Brandt and the *Picture Post* photographers)³⁶⁹ Ray-Jones was freed to include and invert the English "cliché" through the aesthetics of New York street photography. The subject matter may not have been entirely new; (one list he made suggests that he was scouring old *Picture Posts* for ideas) but the vision that he brought to it was unique.³⁷⁰

Ray-Jones initially designed his trip to be comprehensive, covering the whole country and different modes of life. Impatient with photographers who spent little time in a country while attempting to distil its essence,³⁷¹ he attempted to get to know a place

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 143.

³⁶⁹ There were other little-known works published in the 1950s that took a more socially-oriented approach to picturing Britain such as Swedish photographer Kurt Gullers' *England Photographed*, published (not coincidentally) in the same year as the Festival of Britain. Kurt Gullers, *England Photographed* (Watford: Odhams Press, 1951).

³⁷⁰ Ray-Jones, "Black Filofax," 106.

³⁷¹ In his interview for *SLR*, Ray-Jones noted the importance of cultural immersion: "The photographer has a lot of problems as well. He's sent out on assignment and given two weeks to sum up a country. How can he do it? He doesn't know the culture, language or anything. So he goes and takes some sunsets, or some shots taken through leaves of natives carrying bundles of straw and that's it... but if you go off on your own and spend as much time as you like on the subject, then you're going to get much more out of it." "Tony Ray-Jones: The Photographer Seen," 36.

before picturing it. A comprehensive list of spaces that might illuminate a unique aspect of life in a town was written in his notebook:

“On Arriving in Towns Look for These”

(Get map from town hall or Tourist Bureau)

- A. Central Square
- B. Old Town
- C. New Town (development)
- D. Poor Quarter
- E. Rich Quarter
- F. Suburbs
- G. Apt Buildings (Blocks of Flats)
- H. Foreign Nationality Quarters
- I. Station
- J. Town Hall
- K. Parks or common
- L. Markets
- M. Library
- N. Museum
- O. Bus Station
- P. Factory Area³⁷²

The “Tourist Bureau” image of the town is an aspect of the English image I shall return to, but it is notable here that he sought out a mixture of public places that might yield interesting pictures. Along with typically English places, Ray-Jones enumerated types of people to photograph throughout all strata of society:

Top: Aristocrats, Bowler-Hatted Gents

Middle: Cockney, W. Country, E. Anglia, N. Country

Youth: Rocker, Hippie/Beat/Rock, Liberal (beard, etc.), Mod, Varsity, Hooray Henry, Chinless woman.³⁷³

Like most photographers of his generation, his best work focused on the upper and lower levels of British society, because therein characteristically lay the gaudiest and most

³⁷² Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” 59.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 98.

ostentatious displays of national characteristics.³⁷⁴ Ray-Jones did make vague plans to photograph “youth” but this was generally restricted to public schools, markets, and hippies; he made plans to buy the youth-oriented magazines *International Times* and *Melody Maker* to familiarize himself with the culture.³⁷⁵ Having grown up acutely aware of the British class system and returning from a more status-obsessed rather than class-obsessed America, it was a natural progression to show Britain in a different light.

Ray-Jones’ found gaining entrée into upper-class homes and events to be a challenge. He does not appear to have made any serious attempts to “try to stay with people- the rich, royalty, earls, dukes, etc.” which he mooted as a tactic, and it is hard to say if his plan to “ask Uncle Edward” bore fruit.³⁷⁶ He considered trying to gain access to certain hallowed halls, by placing an advertisement in *The Times* and *Tatler* with the message “Serious creative photographer completing book on England needs to photograph garden parties, balls, country estates, etc. Any invitation or information would be extremely welcome.”³⁷⁷ Most of the photographs taken at society events and at public schools occurred on public occasions; his wish to photograph behind the scenes was realized at Queen Charlotte’s Ball and a society wedding in the midlands in 1967. These reflected ideas that had formed in America where he intended to photograph their

³⁷⁴ A notable exception is the work of John Myers whose *Middle England* series of portraits taken from 1972-1979 documented the middle-class of Stourbridge, a town in the English Midlands and has seen a welcome recent reissue: John Myers and Ikon Gallery, *Middle England* (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 2011). In a 2012 interview, Myers discussed how his project sought to portray the ordinary: “The term Middle England has got to be seen generically. What it really means is this is the kind of England most of us live in, the world of suburbia, the world of substations, people that are not famous, that are not picturesque... they don’t walk around doing maypole dancing or these kind of exotic English festivals, they’re not strange, they’re just normal people. The world that they live in is the world that we all recognize.” *John Myers: Middle England*, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FXwUeXERZQ>. Myers was influenced by Walker Evans’ and Diane Arbus’ portraits, and the printing of Myers’ 1974 publication of *Middle England* was modeled on MoMA’s *The Photographer and the American Landscape*. John Myers to Barry Lane, 1974, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁷⁵ Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” 113.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

US counterparts. The “tradition,” “drama,” and “stability” Ray-Jones was searching for was realized in his photographs of high society, but he would also turn to the working-class folk for what he deemed to be the more quintessential expressions of Englishness.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH

Ray-Jones’ notes from the mid-1960s also delineate a number of books to consult for his English project including an extensive selection on the English seaside,³⁷⁸ and a parallel list of books about British character.³⁷⁹ Importantly, many of the books on his list were dissections of British culture that paid particular attention to the effects of a ubiquitous American culture on the nation, and many were written from the perspectives of people who were outsiders because of their class or nationality. Z. A. Grabowski’s 1967 work *The English Psycho-Analyzed* (appearing twice on the list) is a dissection of the country’s proclivities and obsessions through Freudian psychoanalysis, a lens often used to humorous effect. In a description that must have resonated with a newly-arrived Ray-Jones, George Mikes in the preface describes Grabowski as an anglicized Pole who “goes on looking at this British land with the eye of an outsider—an outsider who knows all the secrets of the insiders.”³⁸⁰ The theme of looking in on the country was mirrored by another book on the list, Anthony Sampson’s *Anatomy of Britain*, first published in 1962. *Anatomy of Britain* is a penetrating and comprehensive taxonomy of the power structure of Britain, particularly of the ruling classes, describing, as Sampson puts it “who runs it and how, how they got there, and how they are changing.”³⁸¹ In language that resonates

³⁷⁸ Tony Ray-Jones, “List of Books about British Seaside,” ca. 1966-1968, C17/59 1991-5033_3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

³⁷⁹ Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” 178.

³⁸⁰ Z. A. Grabowski, *The English Psycho-Analysed* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1967), vii.

³⁸¹ Anthony Sampson, *Anatomy of Britain* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), xi.

with Ray-Jones' approach to photography, Sampson's book is offered "as an informal guide to a living museum, describing the rooms and exhibits as I found them, giving basic hard facts and frequent quotations from others but not hesitating to add my own comments."³⁸² The book's section on leisure accentuates its importance as an expression of British life, a fact mirrored by Ray-Jones who would successfully depict leisure across classes in the 1960s. Television, ten-pin bowling (an American import), motor racing, dancing and holidays abroad are grouped by Sampson as "signs of a bingo age" where the austerity and thrift of the industrial working-class was giving way to freer spending and more overt displays of wealth. Sampson questions this transition, as he sees an irreparable change in British life:

Will the privacy and mild eccentricity of English leisure be gradually worn down by the bombardments of motor cars, Wimpy bars, bowling alleys, and, above all, mass advertising and TV- producing a gregarious Americanized society, with the same status-races?³⁸³

Ray-Jones captured this transition to mass cultural Britain well, and his drive to record "disappearing" customs that would be lost in this popular revolution mirrors Sampson's worry about Britain's future.

Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*'s (1958), a book that made more than one appearance on Ray-Jones' list, was also concerned with the ill-effects of American mass culture as a danger to traditional working-class cultures. Hoggart, a working-class academic in the Adult Education department of the University of Hull, and later a founder member of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, published *The Uses of Literacy* as an attempt to contextualize and dignify the social patterns of working-class life as a complex relationship of the public and

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid., 579.

private.³⁸⁴ It was also meant as a defense of working-class cultural practices as “a distinctly native, British folk culture” against the deadening forces of Americanized mass media culture.³⁸⁵ Hoggart critiqued the acceptance of untrammelled “progressivism” (i.e. social and technological progress) among the working-classes and their orientation toward the US media for their cultural cues:

To me, the most striking feature in working-class attitudes to America is not a suspicion, though there is often that, nor resentment at ‘bossiness’, but a large readiness to accept. This arises mainly from the conviction that in most things the Americans can ‘show us a thing or two’ about being up to date. In so far as to be up to date is to be felt to be important, America is the leader; and to be up to date is being made to seem very important.³⁸⁶

American comics come under fire for “page after page” of “big thighed and big bosomed girls from Mars” and “gangster’s molls;”³⁸⁷ American serials or “sex-and-violence novels” are described as “debased Hemingway” in style,³⁸⁸ and pseudo-American shirt shops on the Charing Cross Road are portents of a worrying veneration of pseudo-culture. As Graeme Turner notes, Hoggart’s semi-autobiographical work evokes a nostalgic world of working-class life pre-mass media where culture is made within social constructs of working-class society.³⁸⁹ Americanized mass culture “provides no substitute for a popular culture experientially connected to the social conditions of those who produce and consume it.”³⁹⁰ His rather dewy-eyed description of learned working-class folk during the late nineteenth century is instructive:

³⁸⁴ Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 39.

³⁸⁵ Bill Schwarz, “Britain, America, Europe,” in *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity*, ed. David Morley and Kevin Robins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 157–59.

³⁸⁶ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* (London: Penguin, 2009), 167.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

³⁸⁹ Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, 38–9.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

Their reading was likely to be wide, solid and inspiring. They read volume after volume of Morris and Ruskin. They read George Henry's *Progress and Poverty* (1881) and Blatchford's *Merrie England* (1894). Over a million copies of *Merrie England* were sold at a penny each.³⁹¹

The imperiled customs of Ray-Jones' photographs mirror the plight of the urbanized working-class "folk" of Hoggart's England, swept along by the tide of change, complicit in their fate but controlled by forces more powerful than they.³⁹²

COUNTRY LIFE AND OLD ENGLISH CUSTOMS

In searching for the best way to depict the English, Ray-Jones noted the populations' "fantastically tenacious hold on tradition" which expressed itself in a "preoccupation with the past, perhaps more than any other nation."³⁹³ He tended to see tradition initially through the rituals of the upper-classes, but his English project was shaped most prominently by a trip to Ireland in 1966 with his friend, Irish photographer Alen MacWeeney, and MacWeeney's fiancée, American anthropology student Artelia Court.³⁹⁴ Ray-Jones, a dedicated list-maker usually bursting with ideas, was struggling

³⁹¹ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 289.

³⁹² In an intriguing coda, *The Uses of Literacy* was published in Britain just before Hoggart returned from a year spent teaching at the University of Rochester in New York. Writing in his autobiography *A Sort of Clowning* in 1990, his reflections had mellowed with time, but he still finds space to deplore America's image as projected through television shows: "The truism that America is the worst-presented of any nation holds firm; and not only of America's presentation of herself abroad, especially through television. She does herself constant violence in the presentation of herself at home, especially when—as is often—she goes mawkish." Richard Hoggart, *A Sort of Clowning* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990), 165–166. Ultimately Hoggart, like Ray-Jones "learned... by reflection, even more about England" from his vantage point across the ocean, and both Hoggart and Ray-Jones' experiences helped temper their reactions to American culture as they had firsthand experience of a complex place often not presented as such in the mass media Ibid., 162.

³⁹³ *Spectrum: The Diversity of Photography: Four Photographers in Contrast* (Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1969), 2–3.

³⁹⁴ Ray-Jones met MacWeeney when working for Brodovitch on *Sky* and struck up a friendship. MacWeeney began photographing the Tinkers by chance when back home in Ireland working on a photo

with the idea of how to photograph Britain. Inspiration came from a chance encounter with *The Country Life Book of Old English Customs*. Court, a budding folklorist and writer, introduced Ray-Jones to the book after a conversation about Irish, English and American customs while MacWeeney and Court were photographing and recording the music and stories of travelling Irish Tinkers.³⁹⁵ In an interview with Richard Ehrlich, Court expressed how the encounter served as a catalyst for Ray-Jones: “the book riveted him... it was as if this conversation about the value of custom- what it is, how to recognize it, and its relation to national identity- gave Tony a framework in which to see into English life.”³⁹⁶ Traditions and customs would become centerpieces of Ray-Jones’ material, whether ancient and rural rituals, the seasonal customs of the English upper-classes or the pursuit of leisure at the seaside. Because of Ray-Jones’ constant focus on people, his work retains a distinct anthropological dimension, though he would never be a participant-observer like MacWeeney and Court, who lived with their subjects. MacWeeney’s photographs of the Tinkers have the more intimate quality of Walker Evans’ interior scenes and family portraits in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, an appropriate register that reflected how MacWeeney came to know his subjects and depicted this relationship through his images. Like Winogrand, Ray-Jones also came to learn from and draw conclusions about his subjects through the act of photographing

essay on W.B. Yeats. His formative experience came when he encountered an encampment near the Cherry Orchard hospital in Ballyfermot: “The Travellers in Cherry Orchard were to me a mirror image of the migrant farmers of the American depression. Like the farmers, the travellers were poor, white and dispossessed.” Alen MacWeeney, *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No More* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2007), 1–2.

³⁹⁵ Court describes she and MacWeeney’s encounter with the Tinkers thus: “Our engagement with them often seemed lonely and unique... we did not ally ourselves with any of the prevailing settled advocacies, we had no interest in applying to Tinkers any established scholarly or social methodology. That is not to say that Alen and I lacked occupational identities of our own. Photography was his life; I was a writer and a student of folklore and children. But we were guided by the hope of aesthetic probity and personal sensitivity... we met the Tinkers as amateurs, in friendship.” Artelia Court, *Puck of the Droms: The Lives and Literature of the Irish Tinkers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 56–57.

³⁹⁶ Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 12.

them, hovering around the edge of the scene with one eye on the next photograph he would shoot. With their distinctive costumes, displays and rituals, old customs were analogs for the subject matter that Ray-Jones had been photographing in the US: what set them apart was the vein of history and myth running through English parades and festivals as compared to their newer counterparts in the US. Ray-Jones was familiar with how to photograph parades in the US and could apply these techniques in an England which he felt had not received a serious photographic survey since Bill Brant's work in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Country Life Book of Old English Customs, the book Court gave Ray-Jones, is a whimsical trip through the villages and towns of England. Author Roy Christian conjures an image of an England where ancient pagan, medieval and renaissance rites were still practiced by the folk who kept them going every year. Like Ray-Jones, Christian describes himself as an erstwhile naïf, an outsider who chanced upon the ritualized distribution of a pension in a Norfolk church and became fascinated with the tenacity of such archaic rites. A key trope with many customs is the inscrutability of their origins: Christian's slightly paternalistic encounter with a Derby bell-ringer illustrates this well:

In Derbyshire, where several villages still preserve the custom, I asked a local bell-ringer why he continued to ring the curfew. He seemed surprised by the question and paused thoughtfully before replying. "Why?" he repeated at last. "Cos we've allus done it, I suppose."³⁹⁷

The strange and unfamiliar English customs, especially fertility rites, dances and plays, enact and reenact a mystical relationship of the folk to the land, and their practice becomes a means of maintaining the connection to an imagined England: customs whose

³⁹⁷ Roy Christian, *The Country Life Book of Old English Customs*. (London: Country Life, 1966), 16.

origins have become obscured are described by Christian as “as old as the hills,”³⁹⁸ a bond that that is being broken by modernity:

Sophisticated people may deplore the maintenance of such customs. In these days when England is trying to ‘modernize’ herself, to create a picture of a bustling, enterprising, industrialized country bursting with enthusiasm to export her teeming goods, the image that the British Travel Association puts out in its *New Yorker* advertisements of an Olde Worlde nation of Morris dancers and maypoles on village greens is bad publicity.³⁹⁹

Later in the introduction, Christian would concede that such publicity is no bad thing for tourism revenue if this will keep the customs going. Moreover, the continuation and reprise of old customs was an essential strand of national identity worth fighting for whatever the circumstances. Far from fixed in their form and function, these old customs had been constantly embattled by the forces of industrialization. Americanized mass culture was the latest in a long line of negative forces: damage had been done by the railway’s dissolution of time and space, the transformation of rural customs into rowdy, drunken revels by day-trippers and from over-zealous reformers such as the Puritans in the 1600s, Enlightenment rationalists in the 1700s and the prudish Victorians. Although he hints at the anarchic qualities of some customs, Christian was less interested in the radical, symbolic or transformative effect that such customs may have; how, for example, in a Bakhtinian sense, such festivals might be seen to invert class and power dynamics in carnivalesque play.⁴⁰⁰ As the book jacket states: “the inborn conservatism of the British nation is the best defender of its old customs.”⁴⁰¹ Ray-Jones’ work would also play an

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁰⁰ Bakhtin also sees the carnivalesque as having a function of collective social renewal, concomitant with the “renewal” of seasonal and fertility rites. More conservative-minded works such as Christian’s downplay the chaos, revelry and bawdiness that often accompany such events, as well as the radical leveling of the social order. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁴⁰¹ Christian, *The Country Life Book of Old English Customs*. Inside flap.

important role in this preservation, and he would tap into larger transatlantic cultural currents in the process.

REVIVALS AND THE TRANSATLANTIC CONCEPTION OF THE FOLK

If Christian's work provided the blueprint, the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) library at Cecil Sharp House and the British Travel Association (BTA) supplied the know-how. Ray-Jones used the library at Cecil Sharp House to research material for his customs, linking him symbolically with a figure and a movement with transatlantic roots that had similar aims to Ray-Jones.⁴⁰² An important cultural current that was emerging in England simultaneously with Ray-Jones' journeys was a revival of traditional English folk forms as a means of asserting the English musical tradition within and against Americanized pop sounds. As the threads of this influence reach deep into the paradoxes of Americanization in Britain, it is worth examining this phenomenon in depth.

The reaction to American culture by reasserting English identity through music and photography in the 1960s mirrored the antimodern reaction in the late Victorian/Gilded age against industrialism that sought to restore a lost sense of self and connection to the land that factories, time-management and wage-labor had negated.⁴⁰³ As T.J. Jackson Lears argues, the mechanization and industrialization of fin de siècle society in both the US and Great Britain, and the alienation that (it was feared) would result, prompted "yearnings for the authentic, the natural" that would counteract an existence divorced from one's roots.⁴⁰⁴ A key work in the understanding of the way that

⁴⁰² Ray-Jones, "Black Filofax," 94.

⁴⁰³ I use the term antimodern advisedly, as some of the figures I discuss would not have labeled themselves as such.

⁴⁰⁴ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1994), 305.

pastoral nostalgia has been employed as a cultural construct is Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973), published a year after Ray-Jones' death. Williams suggests that despite the deep and irreparable changes wrought by industrial society since the early 1800s, the myth of a dying rural culture that continues to struggle on, a mythological England ever "just over the hill" had persisted up to the present.⁴⁰⁵ For Williams this "escalator" of myth can be traced backwards through to the seventeenth century, and it has been employed in literature to serve different purposes at different times.⁴⁰⁶

An inescapable trait of Ray-Jones' photographs is nostalgia, a mode of thought that generally suggests conservatism rather than progressivism, a preference for stability and 'timeless' values and ordered meaning against the uncertainties of change. The classic text that brought into relief the ideological underpinnings of national traditions is the Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger-edited collection *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) that persuasively argues that certain customs and traditions (particularly those of the Monarchy and colonial administrations) are presented as having roots in antiquity by ruling classes to buttress national cohesion and identity; these traditions "seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically assumes continuity with the past."⁴⁰⁷ "Custom," "tradition," and "heritage" are notoriously slippery terms, however, and Hobsbawm sees "custom" as a pragmatic and malleable link to the past, whose adherents adapt to changing conditions. "Tradition," on the other hand is presented as 'timeless' and immutable. The meaning of customs is often in flux, and the performance of a custom is always in conversation with the present.

⁴⁰⁵ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 43, 291.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

⁴⁰⁷ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1.

Likewise, traditions and customs are rarely static: their symbolism is malleable and can be adapted for different purposes at different times

It is important to note that the promotion of a nostalgic view of the past is not simply the preserve of the upper-classes. As Robert Hewison asserts, there is a radical element to English nostalgia, one that encourages the presentation of a “prelapsarian agricultural simplicity,” community and class solidarity that was lost due to the privations and rationalized dehumanization of early industrial capitalism.⁴⁰⁸ This opposition to, or ambivalence towards industrialization constitutes what Martin J. Weiner famously asserted was the “Janus-faced” paradox of English culture, that the pioneers of industrialization were concurrent critics of the cities they produced.⁴⁰⁹ Wiener demonstrates how the myth of an eternal, rural England appealed across political lines in Victorian times: for conservatives with imperialist sympathies, the conjured image of an unchanging England was set against “rising social unrest and foreign threats.”⁴¹⁰ On the left, socialist radicals and romantic anti-modernists like William Morris saw in the surviving villages and folk cultures an argument against the industrial present: here, they argued, remained authentic, living arguments against rationalization, order, centralization, competition, and anonymity.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ This is a centerpiece of Marxist thought; see for example Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*: “The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors”, and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.”” Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” 1848,

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>. See also Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976).

⁴⁰⁹ Martin J Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), ix.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴¹¹ William Morris, *News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Morris’ work was intended in part as a response to Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, published in 1888. Morris derided *Looking Backward* for its “lack of interest in the past” and valediction of the professional middle-classes, contra the ordinary folk. See Rob Young, *Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain’s Visionary Music* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), 52.

In turning towards English folk customs as indicators of a quintessential Englishness, Ray-Jones followed in a long tradition of their resurrection, preservation and promotion, particularly those relating to folk song and dance. As Patrick Wright articulates, the processes of industrialization and modernization and, in Ray-Jones' estimation, Americanization, often provoke a revaluation and rearticulation of the past.⁴¹² In the uncertainty of "a world where values are in apparent disorder and where the social hierarchy has lost its settled nature... old forms of security become alluring."⁴¹³ The complex, dehumanizing forces of modernity in Britain were countermanded by a nostalgic evocation of a mythically simpler time; as the actual folk disappeared, the idea of the untouched folk became a metaphysical substitute. Like photography and, as will become clear later, ideas about arts funding, English folk song revivals were long construed within a transatlantic Anglo-American context which ebbed and flowed with each generation.

The Folk Revival movement's primogenitor was Francis James Child, a Harvard College English professor who dedicated his career to collecting English folklore. Child's monumental ten-volume *The English and Scottish Ballads* (the songs are commonly known as Child Ballads) was published between 1882 and 1898, the first compilation of its kind that was created by soliciting British institutions and organizations likely to have access to written copies of traditional music.⁴¹⁴ As learned middle and upper-class Americans were awakening to and defending the English tradition, so were their compatriots in the old country, albeit with different nationalistic freight. The English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), founded in 1911, for over a hundred years the premier

⁴¹² Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xii.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴¹⁴ Young, *Electric Eden*, 68–69.

organization concerned with the preservation of folk customs and traditions, had its roots in the Folk Song Society, founded in England in 1898 to collect and preserve folk songs as “a characteristic national art.” The society was founded in part as a rejoinder to a better-developed continental (German in particular) tradition of preserving folk customs and integrating them into a national music.⁴¹⁵

EFDSS’s primogenitor, Cecil Sharp, was the man most responsible for the revival and survival of folk customs in twentieth-century Britain, who recognized that folk songs needed to be saved from disappearing by collection, propagation and revitalization.⁴¹⁶ Sharp was a collector of the oral tradition and was more interested in ‘living’ folk music as opposed to Child’s collection of largely fifteenth and sixteenth-century music that was far removed from the oral tradition from whence it sprang. Sharp’s ideas about autochthonous folk music were confirmed with a 1916 trip to the southern US. He collected Child Ballads on his way through the mountains, joyfully acknowledging the survival of old English, Irish and Scots folk songs and constructing an image of the Appalachian mountain folk as simply better-preserved English peasants.⁴¹⁷ Maud Karpeles, his collaborator who accompanied him, quipped that he ‘had discovered the “England of his dreams in the United States of America.”’⁴¹⁸ His oneiric England over the sea required Sharp to elide the influence of African-American musical forms and the influence of Tin Pan Alley in the Appalachian singers and musicians repertoires he

⁴¹⁵ The idea of nation and of the ‘primitive’ cultural traditions of the peasantry played into ideas of national and racial superiority throughout imperialist Europe. Close to the land, the folk were often seen as a perfect and purer embodiment of national character, transcending class lines. See Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology, and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 26.

⁴¹⁶ Sharp proposed, for example, that children learn folk songs in school in order for “national school of English music” to be fostered by a generation who grew up with it as their own living culture. *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴¹⁷ In Young, *Electric Eden*, 65.

⁴¹⁸ Quoted in Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 23.

encountered were simply ignored.⁴¹⁹ Sharp's peregrinations reinscribed the popular notion that the true "folk" music of the US was derived from the British Isles.

By the 1940s, British and American folk traditions were becoming increasingly entangled, but this time it was an American emissary who was to revive the British scene. Escaping McCarthyist America in 1950, Alan Lomax arrived in London where he channeled his energy into recording songs, inspiring local revivalists A.L. Lloyd and Ewan McColl to carry the torch for British folk. With Lomax and later figures such as Pete Seeger, the folk scene became truly transatlantic, a network of exchange and influence that mutually strengthened both British and American folk traditions. Lloyd ("the closest thing Britain had to an Alan Lomax")⁴²⁰ and MacColl were already exploring the more radical, urban and industrial traditions of English and American folk music that Sharp and others had neglected, and this jibed well with Lomax's own radical left-wing views, steeped in New Deal reverence for the ordinary folk. As Rob Young succinctly puts it:

Just as it took America's surviving music to teach the British about the riches of their own indigenous music, so in the 1950s it was an American, a self-described 'Musical Columbus in reverse' who exerted a unifying and galvanizing effect on musical life in the United Kingdom.⁴²¹

One can find echoes of the same sentiment in Bill Jay using the example of American photography to push forward a reenergized British photography by bringing attention to forgotten pioneers, and in Tony Ray-Jones' zeal to revive the English photography scene, bringing the seeds of American revival in his wake.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Young, *Electric Eden*, 125.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 136.

THE CONVENTION CONNECTION

Ray-Jones' decision to photograph English customs occurred simultaneously with a musical exploration of England's ancient traditions, in particular in the Progressive ("Prog") Rock movement⁴²² and by Fairport Convention on their 1969 LP *Liege and Lief*, a landmark album in "electric folk" movement.⁴²³ *Liege and Lief's* artwork featured photographs of the Padstow 'Obby 'Oss, Morris Dancing and Cecil Sharp alongside line drawings of the Burry Man, Pace-Eggers and the Hunting of the Wren, an odd assemblage for a band with its roots in American blues.⁴²⁴ *Liege and Lief* was a landmark album that blended traditional arrangements, tunes, and melodies with amplified instruments and a more modern pop sound. The story of Fairport Convention's evolution into electric folk pioneers mirrors Tony Ray-Jones' work photographing English customs. Both displayed an early and lasting American influence in their early work and both subsequently responded to American cultural and artistic hegemony by aiming to produce quintessentially 'English' work that would use modern techniques to breathe life into neglected traditions. Both artistic responses sought to popularize folk traditions at a time when patchwork of experiments in alternative living and back-to-the land

⁴²² Progressive had its beginnings at the end of the 1960s was a turning away from blues-inspired pop to erstwhile neglected musical traditions, in Prog's case classical music. As Edward Macan notes, "Progressive rock as an idiom can be understood as a forum in which the musicians attempt to forge a dialectical relationship between the high culture of their parents and the popular culture they grew up in, dominated by African-American musical forms."; Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13. Lee Jackson, vocalist for prog pioneers The Nice stated in a 1968 interview for *International Times*: "The basic policy of the group is that we're a European group... So, we're improvising on European structures. Improvisation can be around any form of music, so we're taking European work. We're not American Negroes, so we can't really improvise and feel the way they can." in David Weigel, "Prog Spring," *Slate*, August 14, 2012, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/prog_spring/features/2012/prog_rock/history_of_prog_the_nice_emerson_lake_palmer_and_other_bands_of_the_1970s.html. Weigel also mentions a performance of The Nice's song "America" on the British TV show "How It Is" when Keith Emerson (latterly of Emerson, Lake and Palmer) set fire to an American flag in a gesture that both demonstrated the group's disgruntlement with American politics and signaled a departure from American musical forms.

⁴²³ For a full-length treatment of this genre, see Britta Sweers, *Electric Folk: The Changing Face of English Traditional Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴²⁴ *Liege and Lief*, LP (Los Angeles, CA: A & M Records, 1970).

movements were taking hold, and both used the tension between the well-known American tradition and rediscovered English folk to produce unique and complex fusions of past and present.

The driving force behind Fairport Convention's evolution as a band was Ashley Hutchings, bassist and founding member. Growing up in the comfortably middle-class Mock Tudor surroundings of Muswell Hill,⁴²⁵ North London, Hutchings' cultural antenna, like the majority of teenagers growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, was firmly tuned to American culture. An early music aficionado with a penchant for researching obscure blues and R&B acts, Hutchings' early bands followed skiffle and jug band templates, styles that were adopted the UK in the 1950s and early 1960s from American templates. Hutchings formed Fairport Convention in 1967 and soon thereafter they were picked up by Joe Boyd of Electra Records. Famously in charge the sound at Bob Dylan's notorious 1965 electric set at the Newport Folk Festival, Boyd was to become a crucial figure in the transatlantic folk music, eagerly encouraging links between US and UK-based artists and shaping the British folk scene along the lines of its US counterpart. Drawn to the way that Fairport did "American songs in an English way" Boyd gradually steered them away from their inclination towards cover versions of American blues and rock toward writing their own material from their native tradition.⁴²⁶ Boyd explained it thus: "As an American, my view was that Americans did these sort of songs in their sleep

⁴²⁵ Ray and Dave Davies, who would go on to form the Kinks also lived in Muswell Hill at the same time as Hutchings. Brian Hinton and Geoff Wall, *Ashley Hutchings: The Authorised Biography* (London: Helter Skelter, 2002), 23. The Kinks' later repertoire included albums like *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968) and *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* (1969) that playfully addressed aspects of English identity. The former is steeped in nostalgia for lost or declining rural idylls, while the latter is a concept album centered loosely on a character called Arthur Morgan, a suburbanite coming to terms with modern Britain and yearning for a simpler past. In keeping with the shift in subject matter, the band began to incorporate elements of the British Variety tradition into their work and began adopting a more British-accented vocal style in contrast to the still-prevalent imitation of American singers.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

better than any English band could hope to,” but their aptitude with folk songs was what made them original.⁴²⁷

The English tradition took center stage on *Liege and Lief*. Hutchings was by now fully ensconced in English folklore; in May 1969 the band had visited the Padstow ‘Obby ‘Oss Festival in Padstow, Cornwall,⁴²⁸ and was making ever more frequent forays to Cecil Sharp house. Fairport turned to producing their own versions of traditional songs, what Hutchings called an “English electric sound” that mirrored both the Band’s and the Byrds’ explorations of the roots of their own musical sound and an acknowledgement of a national (or in some cases) regional musical tradition divorced from the commercial baggage of modern pop.⁴²⁹ Hutchings states that despite his research he was aiming for “natural music... the way that Americans like Ry Cooder make natural rock records drawing on a loose knowledge of traditional forms.”⁴³⁰ The ensuing LP blended Scottish ballads (“Tam Lin”), Irish folk tunes (“Rakish Paddy”) and English songs (“Reynardine”, “Matty Groves”) that were re-worked into modern versions with most of the traditional musical structures retained, but with more panache and polish. Combined with the brooding band portraits on the cover of the LP and the grab-bag of images of pagan English customs, the overall impression given by *Liege and Lief* is of a band exploring the mystical and mystic, hearkening back to earlier times to assuage the fears of the present and seeking an authenticity that comes from being close to the land.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 92.

⁴²⁸The celebration was captured on film for the EFDSS in 1953. The sixteen minute documentary *Oss Oss Wee Oss*, was directed by Alan Lomax. British Film Institute, *Here’s a Health to the Barley Mow a Century of Folk Customs and Ancient Rural Games*, DVD (London: British Film Institute, 2011).

⁴²⁹ Fairport holed up in a house in Farley Chamberlayne, Hampshire, a rural village idyll close to Winchester to record the album, just as their idols the Band had sequestered themselves in Big Pink in West Saugerties, New York.

⁴³⁰ Hinton and Wall, *Ashley Hutchings*, 125.

It is possible, especially in the case of Ray-Jones' work, to yoke the threat of the modern in rural life with the nebulous but deeply-felt threat of Americanization in the twentieth century, particularly with regard to the survival of local customs and festivals seemingly under duress from the juggernaut of mass culture. Promoting the image of a traditional England through music or photography reinscribes the difference between this and American culture, preserving or even amplifying unique cultural characteristics and symbolically restoring the "true" England to prominence. Like Fairport, this revival was complicated by Ray-Jones' blend of aesthetic ideas and approaches from American photography which were then applied to establish a neo-traditional view of English customs. As will become clear, Ray-Jones' images look backwards to find Englishness in spaces of play and leisure, a blackly humorous arcadia that while acknowledging modernity presents a bowdlerized version of its cross-pollination with American culture. His image of England was, like Cecil Sharp's, formed in relation to looking across the ocean, and it is worthwhile examining how the projected image of England shaped his project too.

THE BTA AND THE TRANSATLANTIC PROJECTION OF ENGLAND

In addition to Ray-Jones' research at the EFDSS library, he also made use of tourist-oriented materials produced by the British Travel Association (BTA). Ray-Jones used information from the BTA to plan his journey, likely in tandem with Christian's book to map out his route,⁴³¹ and it is telling that he took the unusual step of using BTA literature to become a tourist in his own country. A government-funded agency, the BTA was established in 1950 as The British Travel and Holidays Association to promote

⁴³¹ A list "Seasonal Projects" combines the old customs with upper-class society events for the whole year. Ray-Jones, "Black Filofax," 74.

vacations to Britain in the difficult post-war years, and to capitalize on the relaxation of air travel restrictions and the increased competition between airlines that were making overseas holidays more attractive.⁴³² The BTA's portrait of rural England became a byword for sentimentality and idealized projections of the English people and landscape, projected mostly to commonwealth countries and especially the comparatively well-off US traveler. BTA literature, replete with "rabidly nostalgic"⁴³³ images, heavily promoted large-scale events in Britain as a year-round strategy to attract tourists, and these were flagged up in their magazine *Coming Events in Britain*, later shortened to the more evocative *In Britain*.⁴³⁴ Along with these magazines, booklets oriented to American, Canadian and Australian tourists were produced, including specialist guides for the more discerning visitor like *Tracing your Ancestors in Britain*⁴³⁵ and *Old Customs and Ceremonial in Britain*.⁴³⁶ The latter booklet promotes customs and ceremonial traditions as a way of enhancing a visitor's engagement with British culture during their visit, as the introduction suggests, "from time immemorial Britain has so cherished her old customs that the visitor who looks for and studies them will deepen his knowledge of the country

⁴³² Victor T. C. Middleton, *British Tourism: the Remarkable Story of Growth* (Oxford ; Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), xix–xx.

⁴³³ Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, 73.

⁴³⁴ Although heavily invested in promoting a gleaming image of Britain, *In Britain* was concerned with things modern too as ways to lure tourists. Another magazine, *This England*, first published in 1967, continues to focus on Britain's glorious past and is still in publication. Its subjects are delineated as "Our historic towns and picturesque villages, our lovely countryside, our colourful customs, curiosities and traditions, our history and our heritage... all are explored and enjoyed through spring, summer, autumn and winter." "About Us," *This England*, 2011, <http://www.thisengland.co.uk/single.htm?ipg=10685>.

⁴³⁵ British Travel Association, *Tracing Your Ancestors in Britain*. (New York: British Travel Association, 1967). The BTA was quick to capitalize on ceremonies and occasions that linked American ancestors to Britain. In 1960, the New York office of the BTA published a brochure on Robert E Lee's supposed ancestral home in Shropshire to coincide with the centennial Civil War celebrations. The owners of Lea Hall, a private residence, were less than impressed at the number of visitors arriving at their door as they had been unaware of the connection or of the booklet. Robert E. Lee Baker, "Britain Would Shift Dixie to Shropshire," *The Washington Post*, December 11, 1960, sec. Travel & Resorts, K7.

⁴³⁶ British Travel Association, *Old Customs and Ceremonial in Britain*. (London: British Travel Association, 1964).

and enrich his travels;” visitors were encouraged to ask “What old customs do you have here?” on their journeys.⁴³⁷ *Old Customs and Ceremonial in Britain* gives a chronological list of customs with brief descriptions of the ceremonies, accompanied by illustrative photographs similar to the ones in Christian’s book.

The BTA ran specific ad campaigns targeted to American visitors in major US publications such as *Time*, *National Geographic* and the *New Yorker* from the post-war period to the 1970s. The advertisements proclaimed that tourists should come to Britain “for scenery, for sports, for pageantry” and “for interests in the present and interests in the past.” In the post-war years, the association seemed most interested in presenting a polished version of Britain’s rural present that was seen in terms of an imagined past. In one 1948 advertisement, the BTA evoked the image of a demobilized GI returning to Britain to find a tranquil rural idyll the same way as he left it in 1944; with closely bunched thatched cottages, the scene could just as well be from the 1700s as the middle of the twentieth century. There is a clear message for ex-GIs to reconnect with Britain by seeing some more of the English countryside they had spent a few months or years in. Another advertisement featured a Suffolk farmer asking a Stanford professor what brought him to Britain. “Why man, look around you,” was his answer. “We came in search of old-world scenes like this one. Isn’t it reason enough?”⁴³⁸ The living history of Britain, preserved in “every lane and field and hillside,” was what the history professor had come to be immersed in, and he divulged that he was going to “take back lots of happy pictures of this country. From our cameras—and in our hearts.”

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁴³⁸ Noel Sickles. “British Travel Association - There's your answer in black and white...” *NDSCGA - Noel Sickles Collection, The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum*. 2007. <https://cartoonimages.osu.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.seeItemInSearchResults&ItemID=51d46346-565d-4664-8ef4-b422fced9e8a&CollectionID=02d5386b-a575-4bfa-8005-cf676fd41345&listOfKeyWords=cartoon%20illustration>

BTA campaigns in the 1950s dropped the direct appeals to returning servicemen but retained the focus on the rural scenery of chocolate-box villages such as Wendens Ambo, Essex and Castle Combe, Wiltshire, including images of May Queen parades, and extolled the pleasures of touring Britain by car. Obviously very selective in the landscapes they promoted, a cartoon published in *Punch* lampooned the mid-1950s image of rural idylls presented by the BTA [Figure 2]. In the first image, the villagers going about their daily business in characteristically haphazard way are alerted to the presence of a BTA photographer coming up the road. By the next scene, tranquility and tidy bucolic charm ensue as emblems of modernity such as tractors, television antennas and ice cream vendors are hidden from view. The ensuing scene is pleasantly free of people, save for an elderly couple in traditional dress, mirroring the image of the deserted streets of villages depicted in BTA adverts for the tourist to have all by themselves. The cartoon demonstrates that both the villagers and the BTA both had a vested interest in portraying a more picturesque side of the English countryside, while acknowledging the manipulation of such imagery for commercial gain.

The image of timeless Britain had become, by the late 1960s, twinned with modern Britain in BTA advertising. The increasing affluence of American consumers and a strengthening dollar relative to the pound meant that more visitors were coming from the US to the UK, and it became the favorite destination for US tourists outside North America by 1967.⁴³⁹ Cheaper airline tickets were also a major factor in boosting transatlantic travel, largely the result of competition and concerted campaigns in the US by British airlines to attract customers. Recognizing a new breed of tourist and capitalizing on the vogue for British cultural products and London's status, the BTA's

⁴³⁹ See "UK Can Reap Bumper US Tourist Crop," *The Times*, July 18, 1967, 18.



"Quick, chaps!..."



"Here comes the British Travel Association photographer."

Figure 2. "Quick chaps!...Here comes the British Travel Association photographer."
1956. © Punch Limited.

“Ancient and Mod” campaign referenced both poles of British life active in the American imagination. The advertisement’s tagline “Not Just for Longhairs” emphasizes the freedoms and new experiences visitors can expect in the old country, declaring that “all of Britain, in fact, seems like an Old Curiosity Shop with a New Curiosity Shop attached.” The retention of the old world image and alongside the new urban Britain, was thought to be a successful strategy in selling Britain’s image abroad. The ancient and modern trope cropped up in other places where an image of Britain was being sold. By the mid-1960s, as Lisa Tickner ably demonstrates, the “export drive” to bring British culture to the world included a focus on “Creative Britain,” designed to sell British design, fashion, art and music to both boost British exports and have the secondary soft power effects of capitalizing on a Britain that was seen as modern and attractive to other nations.⁴⁴⁰ This was achieved through magazines like *Ambassador*, *The British Export Magazine*, which pitched British cultural and manufacturing products abroad tandem with the British Council.⁴⁴¹ By the end of the 1960s, like the BTA campaigns, the British Council had moved to include more up-to-date images of young British art, music and design to counter the old-fashioned heritage image prevalent abroad, particularly among middle-aged and older American consumers. Promoters of modern Britain struggled to dispense with heritage Britain entirely as they found that many of their American clients (such as Neiman Marcus in Dallas) wanted to incorporate “Olde Worlde” features such as castles and heraldry alongside the more Mod when they promoted British products.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ Lisa Tickner, “‘Export Britain’: Pop Art, Mass Culture and the Export Drive,” *Art History* 35, no. 2 (2012): 385, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8365.2011.00892.x.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 401.

⁴⁴² A similar clash occurred over the building of motels in Britain to accommodate the habits of American tourists. Considered “a novelty at best and a threat to the country’s ‘ye olde’ pub and coaching inn tradition” hotel owners ‘grumbled [about] more Americanization.’ The pioneer of the motel business in Britain was Graham Lyons, owner of the popular Lyons Corner House coffee shop chain and had introduced the “Wimpy Bar” fast food concept in Britain after a fact-finding tour of the US. John Barr, “New Nudges ‘Olde’ England,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1963, sec. Resorts And Travel, 39,

The projected image of Britain and especially England at the time of Tony Ray-Jones' four year peregrination was stuck a little uncomfortably between the fusty but profitable Olde England and the boutiques and clubs of Chelsea and Soho. Ray-Jones would show the tension between the two, but ultimately chose to peel away the surface of English traditions while simultaneously recording them, warts and all, for posterity.

AN ENGLISH JOURNEY

Armed with a wide swath of research on the folk and the dimensions of American culture's impact on the ordinary folk, Ray-Jones set about the project that would come to define his work in England. *Old English Customs* and BTA literature in hand, from 1966 to 1970, Ray-Jones travelled itinerantly around Britain when he could find time off from freelance work, driving to festivals and celebrations up and down the nation in a camper van. In addition to a large portion of seaside resorts, the numerous traditional customs and festivals he photographed form the bulk of his photographs from this period. He could visit many of the festivals he photographed in the South East on a day trip from London, and in his negatives there is an understandingly disproportionate amount of images of festivals close to where he lived. Unlike his predecessors who would strive for completeness, "collecting" images of all the various customs to preserve their memory, Ray-Jones was, by necessity or fiat, guided by concerns of time, money, and his judgment about where he would find the best pictures. He visited famous customs such as the Lichfield Bower, the Olney Pancake Race,⁴⁴³ the Morris Dancers at Thaxted and the Helston Furry Dance, Swan-Upping and then lesser-known rituals like the bowling match

<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/hnpwashingtonpost/docview/116713800/abstract/13EFB8B479919AA8ADB/6?accountid=7118>.

⁴⁴³ This was also featured in *Time* in 1948, partially to illustrate normal life returning during Britain's war recovery: "Hot off the Griddle," *Time*, February 23, 1948, 35.

of the Knights of the Green in Southampton and the Weighing of the Mayor in High Wycombe. Each of these events had long, tangled histories, and for Ray-Jones they became venues where he provided complex and multilayered depictions of his ordinary subjects that dignified them by making them worthy of closer attention.

In a pithy introductory text that accompanied his “Photographs from America and England” in *Creative Camera* in October 1968, Ray-Jones’ outlined some of the philosophical underpinnings of his work:

For me, there is something very special and rather humorous about ‘the English way of life’ and I wish to record it from my particular point of view before it becomes more Americanised. We are at an important stage of our history, having in a sense just been reduced to an island and, as De Gaulle remarked, left naked.⁴⁴⁴

Ray-Jones’ dedication to his topic and affection for the vernacular displays of Englishness speaks to a quest to find “deep England;”⁴⁴⁵ there is an admiration for the ordinary, but he finds a more complex picture of the English lying therein. Ray-Jones’ years spent in the US meant that he was never quite an insider or an outsider; he described his vision as that of “a foreigner’s outlook as well of that of a native.”⁴⁴⁶ Like a good portion of English music, art and literature produced at the time, to do so involved addressing American influence either directly or indirectly. Related to this is an undercurrent throughout Ray-Jones’ English photos of a country coming to terms with “a disintegrating empire.”⁴⁴⁷ Ray-Jones, then, provides the link by turning his camera inward on the island nation buffeted by change; losing an empire on one hand and being

⁴⁴⁴ Ray-Jones, Tony and Charlton, Frank, “Tony Ray-Jones: Photographs from America and England,” 349.

⁴⁴⁵ Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, 81.

⁴⁴⁶ Ray-Jones, Tony and Charlton, Frank, “Tony Ray-Jones: Photographs from America and England,” 349.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

culturally colonized on the other, a portrait that would present a picture of uncertainty but also a celebration of difference and tradition. A final layer is added to this picture when considering the influence of Sir Benjamin Stone's work on Ray-Jones, a photographer he chanced upon who confirmed that he was, indeed, onto something with his English project.

RECORDING A NATION: SIR BENJAMIN STONE

As Bill Jay recounts, a chance find crystallized Ray-Jones' conception of his English project. When Ray-Jones was already engaged in photographing England, in 1968 Jay and Ray-Jones came across two 1906 volumes of photographs by Sir Benjamin Stone in a London junk shop. A wealthy industrialist and Conservative Member of Parliament, Stone took his camera on a countrywide quest to record the buildings and folk traditions of England that he thought were imperiled by an inexorable surge of modernism that would erase the cultures completely. These images provided a historical precedent for Ray-Jones' documentation of English customs, and placed the festivals and ceremonies of English life squarely at the centre of the national photographic tradition. The images appealed to Jay because they highlighted Stone's single-minded devotion to his project which paralleled his own desire to revive British photographic traditions:

I think what excited us the most was that somebody had devoted enormous amounts of time and money, even from a privileged position, recording things he thought were dying out in Britain and we thought it was a wonderful idea, the National Photographic Record Association.⁴⁴⁸

In British photography, the passion for documentary photography around the end of the nineteenth century produced straight photographic reactions such as Frederick Evans'

⁴⁴⁸ Jay, interview.

detailed studies of cathedrals, P.H. Emerson's naturalistic work in rural Norfolk and Benjamin Stone's contributions to the National Photographic Record Association (NPRA) which all stemmed from an ambivalence towards modern urban life and a drive to locate beauty and meaning in the rural. Comfortable financially and thus able to explore their passion as pastime, the photographers of the late nineteenth century frequently turned their cameras on subjects they considered endangered, and by preserving them for posterity, also froze them in time. Despite Emerson's insistence on blurring the edges around the primary subject, both he and Stone shared a commitment to recording life with the veracity of a realist image with the minimal amount of retouching. Like Emerson, Stone went out to capture real-life individuals in their environments in contrast to the posed reenactments of H.P. Robinson or Oscar Rejlander.

The introduction to *Sir Benjamin Stone's Pictures: Records of National Life and History: Festivals, Ceremonies, and Customs*, the book that Ray-Jones and Jay first encountered, outlines the potential utility of the record photographs in purple prose:

Such is the collection—vast, monumental, free from the trash that is born of vain attempts to exhaust the obvious, the wonder and admiration of all who know it—to be drawn upon and creamed for this work... those photographers who glory in the name of 'record men' will be delighted in the work of one whose name and achievements are so familiar to them; folk-lorists [*sic*] and lovers of old customs, ceremonies and festivals (in which of late years there has been a marked revival of popular interest) will find in it the most perfect pictures obtainable of such observances; people who live in the towns and villages where ancient customs and festivals survive will, by its "records" have their local patriotism stimulated, and their resolution strengthened still further to draw out those links with the past... picturesque remnants of Merrie England will be revealed as in a mirror, only with more fidelity.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁹ Benjamin Stone, *Sir Benjamin Stone's Pictures: Records of National Life and History Vol.1* (London: Cassell, 1906), vii–viii.

Stone's images would later be published by Jay in *Album 1* and received praise from Paul Strand who considered him "a great new discovery – at least for me. That makes me want to sit down and look at the 25,000 legacy he has left us."⁴⁵⁰

The revival of interest in preserving the legacy of an almost-forgotten Birmingham industrialist and Conservative Member of Parliament's all-consuming pastime matched the preservationist drive of the man himself. Sir Benjamin Stone set up the NPRA in 1897, whose aim was to harness the energies of local amateurs up and down the country "to record for the future the antiquities, ancient buildings, folk customs and other 'survivals' of historical interest."⁴⁵¹ Founded in the golden age of turn-of-the-century heritage associations such as The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (1877), a precursor to English Heritage, and The National Trust (1895),⁴⁵² the purpose of the National Photographic record was guided by the late Victorian urge to preserve the past, but was also deployed as a tool in crafting social values and national identity, especially as amateur photographers now abounded and were eager to contribute to such a cause.⁴⁵³

By the time Stone would come to found the NPRA, he was independently wealthy and pursued a slew of interests that included extensive worldwide travel, through which

⁴⁵⁰ Jay, "Magazine Memoirs: Creative Camera and Album, 1968-1972," 14.

⁴⁵¹ Elizabeth Edwards and Peter James, "Surveying Our Past: Photography, History & Sir Benjamin Stone, 1897-1910," in *A Record of England: Sir Benjamin Stone & the National Photographic Record Association, 1897-1910* (Stockport, UK: Dewi Lewis, 2006), 7.

⁴⁵² Simon Thurley gives a comprehensive and sympathetic account of how the preservationist impulse resulted in the creation of the Ancient Monuments Department of the Office of Public Works in 1913. Simon Thurley, *Men from the Ministry: How Britain Saved Its Heritage* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013). While it is important to analyze the ideological underpinnings of the movements to preserve folklore and built heritage, this should not obscure recognition of the public good that was done in service of these ideals.

⁴⁵³ Numerous examples of this drive in Victorian photography exist, especially with regard to imperial concerns. Edwards and James note that photography was put into service to map the racial identities of both the British Isles and the British Empire. *Ibid.*, 8. The scientific nature of photography was interpreted at the time to have a positivistic truth value that made it ideal for preserving the relics of the past.

he developed an ethnographic viewpoint he could apply to his English subjects.⁴⁵⁴ Stone photographed buildings for the NPRA as frequently as he did customs, but the unique qualities of the photographs of English customs remain the most intriguing, and his own photographs were by far the most widely reproduced images from the NPRA archives. When he turned his camera on human subjects, the effect is, as Elizabeth Edwards and Peter James proffer, “not of the moment snatched from living social practices but rather layers of theatre as participants self-consciously perform a sense of the past for the camera.”⁴⁵⁵ Stone took photographs of parliamentarians as well as the working-classes; unlike Ray-Jones, Stone’s subjects are displayed at the apex of their power rather than as an embattled ruling class coming to terms with the shifting sands of power in 1960s Britain.

Stone’s photographs represent an upper-class view of the customs, and indeed the drive to record customs was largely a middle-to-upper-class affair. Those who participated in surveys had both the leisure time to do so and the desire to be seen as serious amateurs rather than the fair-weather photographers who indulged only in holiday snaps. Selfless their motives may have been (a great deal of unpaid labor was expended by genuine enthusiasts who added a Victorian “moral dimension” to the enterprise),⁴⁵⁶ the ‘record of Britain’ produced was one from a point of view that that avoided industrial Britain and its working-classes to turn towards the purportedly vanishing rural working-class and their quaint traditions. The fact that the photographers were complicit in this

⁴⁵⁴ English customs and foreign scenes are yoked together in the description of his travels: “He has taken pictures of the eclipse of the sun in Brazil, a revolution in South America, the great earthquake in Japan, and of nearly every phase of life in a dozen countries—he has photographed a custom at dawn on a cold grey November morning and a kaleidoscopic, glittering pageant on which the sun has beat with a tropical intensity.” Stone, *Sir Benjamin Stone’s Pictures*, vi.

⁴⁵⁵ Edwards and James, “Surveying Our Past: Photography, History & Sir Benjamin Stone, 1897-1910,” 20.

⁴⁵⁶ John Taylor, *A Dream of England: Landscape, Photography, and the Tourist’s Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 50.

industrialization suggests that the surveys were a way of ameliorating a guilty conscience. As John Taylor notes “their power was in producing the surveys, not figuring in them.”⁴⁵⁷ As Val Williams suggests, Stone’s photographs “mined a rich seam of English folk culture” and focused on their subjects’ “laconic posing, straight faces, costumed rituals.” These figures “emerge[d] as some sort of outlandish past. The Fool and Robin Hood, taking part at the Horn Dance at Abbots Bromley, are clearly village people dressed up for the event. A little ill at ease and unaccustomed to the camera’s eye, they pose with trepidation.”⁴⁵⁸ Stone’s photograph of the May Day festivities in Knutsford, Cheshire confirms Williams’ assessment. Stone’s presence has stopped the pageantry as the queen and spectators pose for the picture with the camera placed squarely in the middle of the procession route.⁴⁵⁹ Stone’s subjects confront the camera unsmilingly on display as he interrupts the reverie to take the picture. The stiffness of the poses might largely be down to exposure time (the NPRA guidelines mandated using 10” x 8” glass plates) but, as Williams identifies, the subjects in the images look like they have been caught in the middle of a performance, the sharp focus of Stone’s camera revealing the flaws in their costumes and makeup. They face the camera, surveilled, returning its gaze and looking for all the world like ethnographic photographs of exotic others from a World’s Fair.

Stone’s photographs were soon put to service in showcasing Edwardian Britain’s culture, technology and talent. As Edwards and James note, William Jerome Harrison, one of the primogenitors of the NPRA, spoke at the 1893 Chicago world’s fair, proposing

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁵⁸ Val Williams, “Marks on the Flesh: Character, Costume and Performance in British Photography,” in *How We Are: Photographing Britain: From the 1840s to the Present*, ed. Val Williams and Susan Bright (London: Tate, 2007), 17.

⁴⁵⁹ Elizabeth Edwards and Peter James, eds. *A Record of England: Sir Benjamin Stone & the National Photographic Record Association, 1897-1910* (Stockport, UK: Dewi Lewis, 2006), 115.

the survey as a way of mapping the world, endorsing “a truly global encyclopedic, almost imperial ambition for photographic survey.”⁴⁶⁰ Stone took 300 of his photographs of British customs to the British pavilion of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the St. Louis International Exhibition in the same year.⁴⁶¹ They were not included as “Fine Arts” at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, but found their place in the more didactic Liberal Arts section where they were displayed alongside “photographs from nature, scientific photographs, history photographs, maps and apparatus for geography, cosmography and topography, with illustrations of exploration, instruments of precision for civil and military engineering.”⁴⁶² Thus, the images of British customs were set explicitly alongside the tools and techniques of empire. Photographs at the St. Louis Exhibition (where Stone was awarded a grand prize) were displayed in three categories: pictorial, scientific and history photographs. Stone’s images were the history photographs, “a unique and most important exhibit,” whose photographs were “not only very interesting in themselves but demonstrated in a most convincing manner the utility of photography as a recorder of contemporaneous history.”⁴⁶³ The inclusion of archaic customs in a space whose function signaled the vanguard of modernity matched the ironies of the survey project:⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶⁰ Edwards and James, “Surveying Our Past: Photography, History & Sir Benjamin Stone, 1897-1910,” 11.

⁴⁶¹ The Royal Commission, *Catalogue of British Exhibits: Classified under Group 16, Photography: History Photographs Taken and Exhibited by Sir J. Benjamin Stone, MP* (London: The Royal Commission, 1904).

⁴⁶² Mark Bennitt and Frank Parker Stockbridge, eds., *History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Saint Louis, MO: Universal Exposition Pub. Co., 1905), 269.

⁴⁶³ Spielmann, *St Louis International Exhibition 1904: The British Section*, 287.

⁴⁶⁴ The exposition catalogue notes “the conspicuous and important role” played by the camera. “It has been assigned the duty of preserving by photographs their most commanding features... the photographer selects and makes permanent the most wonderful things shown at Expositions for future generations.” Bennitt and Stockbridge, *History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition*, 779.

The camera itself, a key instrument and metaphor of modernity, was used to memorialize a past perceived as radically cleansed of, and made to endure against that very modernity, just as it was the railway, motor car and bike that enabled this application of the camera.⁴⁶⁵

When the past is deployed as a way to promote British interests by and technical ingenuity in the context of an exposition held in the world's rising power, this technique can be seen as an adjunct of the imperial drive to control, catalogue and classify: Stone's portraits represented, "the articulation of social order through place."⁴⁶⁶ As John Tagg has argued, the rise of new state institutions in the nineteenth century was simultaneous with and reliant upon the observation, record-keeping and evidentiary qualities that the photograph provided.⁴⁶⁷ Tagg traces the "frontal, symmetrical presentation of the subject" as a photographic practice as "a desire for an unmediated and unadorned record" but also as a technique of surveillance, and suggests that the drive for realism in photography (such as Benjamin Stone's) masks the discourses of power inherent in the images.⁴⁶⁸ Stone's slightly bewildered subjects, made "complicit with the dominant sociolects" by his camera, can be thought of reifying bourgeois social ideals and treating "the folk" as mere subjects in the continuing imperial pageant.⁴⁶⁹

Stone's images can be seen as fraught with class and imperial politics, but the major attraction for Jay and Ray-Jones' was their realist aesthetic, especially as both valued straight, unadorned photography over the tawdry pictorialist fiddling of the same period. Jay and Ray-Jones incorporated Stone's work into a straight, late modernist

⁴⁶⁵ Edwards and James, "Surveying Our Past: Photography, History & Sir Benjamin Stone, 1897-1910," 16.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁶⁷ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 5.

⁴⁶⁸ In keeping with the scientific positivism of the day, Stone believed that his photographs made a superior record because they would be "the same to every eye." Stone, *Sir Benjamin Stone's Pictures*, viii.

⁴⁶⁹ See also Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 200. and Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, 99.

agenda: here was a photographer utterly dedicated to his project of exploring English identity through the “honest” straight, realist portrait.⁴⁷⁰ Stone’s earnest amateurism held a fascination for Jay who championed photographers such as Jacques-Henri Lartigue and Eugene Atget for having an innate, untrained photographic vision and an attendant mania that compelled them to constantly photograph the world. As the introduction to Stone’s collection attests, photography “is not a hobby, it is a passion that has made him a national celebrity and altogether dwarfed the amount of work he has done in other directions.”⁴⁷¹ The pictures Stone took “did not come within the scope of commercial photography,” of course, because of his independent wealth, but as someone whose photographic work was free of the fetters of editorial control, Ray-Jones would admire Stone even if he may not have been politically aligned with him.⁴⁷²

AMERICAN AESTHETICS, ENGLISH STYLE

The images Ray-Jones took on his journeys around England were to form the basis of his 1969 *Spectrum* exhibition at the ICA under the title *The English Seen* and his posthumous book, *A Day Off: an English Journal* (1974). Ray-Jones brought to his English project an aesthetic forged on the streets of New York and in journeys across America. Following his predecessors like Frank, Ray-Jones saw his photographs as just as much a comment on his own proclivities as for what broader message they may convey. From both his notes and his photographs Ray-Jones sympathized more with the

⁴⁷⁰ Ray-Jones and Jay went looking soon after for Stone’s original photographs and found them via a chance encounter with Stone’s grandson while Jay was working at the *Sunday Telegraph*: “One day this guy came in... didn’t know who he was... I was raving about Sir Benjamin Stone trying to track down his work, with no luck. I put down the phone and he said ‘It’s nice to hear my father spoken of like that.’ It was his grandfather, and he worked at the Telegraph magazine in the advertising department. So he looked up his will and found that they’d all been donated to the Birmingham reference library.” Jay, interview.

⁴⁷¹ Stone, *Sir Benjamin Stone’s Pictures*, v.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

ordinary folk he pictures, but he did not romanticize them or attempt to dignify their existence by showing their aspirations or plight. He affectionately depicts them with their guard down, engaged in leisure practices or rites that, while under threat from US-led modernity, quietly assert their Englishness. In English customs and spaces of leisure he found an analog for the parades he had witnessed and viewed as the epitome of national display. His photographs of England were as much a coming to terms with, or indeed, rediscovering his Englishness as his photographs of America had been with his discovery of America. Importantly, he was to turn to the English with an Americanized eye that would liberate later generations of documentary photographers to develop their own personal documentary aesthetic.

An important stage on which Ray-Jones' photographic vision of England played out was the English seaside. His statement for his 1969 ICA exhibition "The English Seen" outlines his fondness for spaces of leisure where, he wrote, people could "gather, interact with each other and their environment, and thereby reveal something of themselves."⁴⁷³ The seaside represented "a world unto itself, with its own moral code and set of values." In language redolent of Orwell, one of his inspirations, Ray-Jones noted that "the seaside cult of piers, rock, winter gardens, music halls, bingo, beauty and talent contests, boarding houses, etc. is, in a sense, exclusive to Britain."⁴⁷⁴ Ray-Jones' seaside photographs are wistful and reflective: treading a well-worn path of commercial promenade photographers and *Picture Post* photojournalists like Kurt Hutton, there are snatches of pleasure on view in Ray-Jones' images but more prevalent are melancholy couples staring off into space, absorbed in ice creams, or beachside tableaux of children, dogs, and adults in organized chaos. Ray-Jones chose to record the seaside because of the

⁴⁷³ *Spectrum*, 2–3.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

large number of Britons who holidayed there, but he did not foresee that his photographs would capture much more of a “lost world” on the coast than in more rural locales. The popularity of the English seaside as a vacation destination was on the wane from the late 1960s as increasing numbers of Britons sought sunnier climes and concocted their own *Inglaterra en el mar* on the Spanish Riviera. Rather than the customs Ray-Jones photographed, most of which thrive in the 21st century, the seaside resorts are faring less well, and had become a relic by the time Martin Parr came to photograph Southport in 1986’s *The Last Resort*.⁴⁷⁵

Ray-Jones subtly commented on the creep of American mass culture particularly through his pictures of English seaside, where cheap native pleasures abutted the recent American imports. The incongruities of the English beauty contestants, for example, speak to the importing of American glamour (however tacky) and the co-opting of its exotic appeal by the owners of holiday spots. There is a sense of unease about Ray-Jones’ “Dreamland Go-Go Girls,” who look out of place both in the English scenery and when not on stage looking their best. An image of a man lost in his cup of tea next to a line of scantily-clad women is a scene whose odd juxtapositions also highlights the surreal imposition of Miss America-style standards of beauty against a backdrop of an English resort with cigarette butts, leering patrons and scolding signage.⁴⁷⁶ Americanized cultural objects can be both overpowering and benign: in Blackpool a shrinking woman cradling a baby stares into the middle distance, dwarfed by amusement machines; in Eastbourne a man with a plastic “Marshall” cowboy hat and a similarly-bedecked son doze on the shore.⁴⁷⁷ Ray-Jones’ photograph of a man selling Batman masks, taken shortly after his

⁴⁷⁵ Parr and Walker, *The Last Resort*.

⁴⁷⁶ “Beauty Contest-Southport, 1967-68” in Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 98.

⁴⁷⁷ “Eastbourne, 1968” in Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 2004, 67.

return to Britain in 1966, encapsulates his attraction to and wariness of American culture perfectly. Redolent of William Klein's abrasive, blurred shots of city people in motion, the street hawker is dressed in a suit and wearing one of his cheap knock-off masks [Figure 3]. Cigarette in hand and wares haphazardly displayed from a suitcase seemingly flung open, the image is a brief moment snatched from the streets that demonstrates that few English wear their American costumes well.

Ray-Jones' images of customs share many traits with his seaside images but also differ in subtle ways. Ray-Jones learnt from Weegee's work the power of the "reaction shot," where ordinary faces in the crowd, unposed and generally not expecting a photograph are all looking different directions.⁴⁷⁸ The tableau of faces and expressions, turned in multiple directions is repeated in his image of the Bacup Coconut Dancer's band, where an odd rhythm of sizes, shapes and faces in the crowd and the difference in height between the adults in the background and the children in the foreground create an almost musical effect [Figure 4].⁴⁷⁹ Similarly, the drama of the medieval Mystery Plays in York is etched on the face of one of the players, while others sing and the crowd largely ignores the scene happening in front of them, perhaps looking at the unnerving bear-like creature to the left of the frame [Figure 5].⁴⁸⁰ Ray-Jones' images carefully include one or two elements that puncture the effect: the customs are not presented as divorced from their context. In the case of the image of the York Mystery players, the intrusion of spectators in raincoats, a child's pram and a sign pointing to the park all pierce the veil. An unpublished image taken at a London horse show also shows Ray-Jones' careful mix of elements in this photograph where tradition collides with

⁴⁷⁸ Westerbeck, *Bystander*, 339.

⁴⁷⁹ Roberts, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 112.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.



Figure 3. London, 1966. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 4. Bacup Coconut Dancers' Band, 1968. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 5. Mystery Players, c.1967. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.

commercialized spectacle.⁴⁸¹ A vintage horse-and-cart carrying two bowler-hatted and besuited adults and a similarly-dressed young child trundle off to the right of the frame while at the center a middle-aged man carrying an ice cream cone walks past, seemingly oblivious to the spectacle. In the background, an ice cream van, ubiquitous at British festivals, speaks to the commercialism of the event, while a crowd gathers in the background. The man with the ice cream's white shirt is a distinct contrast to the jet black of the carriage. Like William Klein's images of New York crowds, everyone in the picture is looking in different directions. It is an image pregnant with a multiplicity of meanings, but it is one that speaks to the modernization of tradition by the incongruity of certain elements in the frame. The small boy, dressed almost comically smartly in a bowler hat and a tweed suit surveys the scene with an expression at once imperious, bored and insouciant. It is an ambiguous image that simultaneously records tradition but is intended to raise eyebrows about how traditions are enacted; it questions if, indeed, Britons are more interested in pageants for the ice cream as much as connecting with their past.

Ray-Jones' photographs often soften their subjects compared with his American predecessors and contemporaries. Whereas Weegee's images are more aggressive, laying the city bare with flash in the dark aftermath of crimes or accidents, Ray-Jones' subjects' gazes are more indolent and distracted; his is a "gentler," more affectionate take on the eccentricities of the English rather than the visceral city is what the images confer. Ray-Jones seems to have used flash on very few occasions, softening the scenes a little more in comparison to the jarring, surprised faces in other street photographers such as Bruce Gilden and Mark Cohen. Ray-Jones shared Sir Benjamin Stone's impulse to record

⁴⁸¹ Tony Ray-Jones, *London Horse Show*, August 1967, C17/59 1993-5016, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

Britain for posterity, but his approach differs in that he is able to show performers, customs and rituals in their contexts. They become living museums rather than strict documentary records where their subjects have put their best face on for the camera. Ray-Jones' photographs rarely seek to decisively illustrate, explain or clarify in the same mode as Roy Christian's photographs of old English customs or Benjamin Stone's; like Frank, Ray-Jones sought to encapsulate his personal experience of the event in the image and leave open-ended his purpose for doing so. Occasionally, he did portray jovial processions like the Helston Furry Dance where numerous dance teams parade through the town,⁴⁸² but even then he managed to focus equally on the preparations [Figure 6]. Like the origins of the customs he portrayed, the element of mystery is part of the appeal, and at times the mystery has to be unpacked by the reader. Often the modern world intrudes: his image of druids on Hampstead Heath gives little away that this is a pagan ceremony is transposed to a metropolitan London park except for the looming shadow of the Post Office tower in the background.⁴⁸³ A similar image of the Knights of the Green bowling club in Southampton shows bowlers in archaic costume going about their ancient rite as a new modern tower block is constructed in the background [Figure 7].

The specter of Americanization looms large over Ray-Jones's photographs in multiple ways. Ray-Jones almost certainly did not think that by emulating American photographic practice and domesticating it that he was contributing to this encroachment: photography was more advanced in the US, and Britain needed to catch up. Rather, as Hoggart and Sampson would have it, the subtle effects on English life wrought by the kitschy, hollow mass cultural products from America, and the lifestyle changes that

⁴⁸² Tony Ray-Jones, *Helston Furry Dance*, ca. 1966-1967, C17/59 1993-5016, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

⁴⁸³ Tony Ray-Jones, *Druids, Hampstead Heath*, ca. 1966-1967, C17/59 1993-5016, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.



Figure 6. Helston Furry Dance, 1968. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 7. Group of elderly men playing open-air curling match on the grass, 1969. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.

inevitably occurred from their absorption, were the example par excellence of the corrosive effect of the American way of life. As Frank Charlton noted in his 1968 introduction to Ray-Jones' images: "in an era of pop commerce, and out of the gimmick-ridden world of lucrative non-art, it is refreshing to discover a photographer who—bypassing the slick ploys of self-conscious fashion cults—has an eye for What Is."⁴⁸⁴ If his style was a hybrid, his viewpoint was not designed to be so: he photographed American national display just as he photographed the English enacting their own identities, and while there may have been stylistic similarities in the photographs the subject matter was deliberately chosen to highlight the "special" and "humorous" qualities of English life.

Festivals, despite being the repository of national tradition, were not immune from American influence either. Children in the 1968 Herne Bay carnival dress up like Native Americans and Playboy Bunnies much to the chagrin of other parents watching from afar [Figure 8]; and a person in a terrifying approximation of a Mickey Mouse costume stands in line, waiting to be judged for a contest [Figure 9]. In Whitstable, a cowboy standing on a street corner in front of a detached 1930s house chats idly with his Native American friend while his horse grazes on a lawn out-of-frame [Figure 10]. Surreal as these figures may be, they are more out-of-place, odd transplants from a mythical American culture, ersatz and adulterated by their contact with English soil. Aside from crowded scenes, Ray-Jones' English have a tendency towards showing, as Frank Clifford identified, "isolation of individuals within a supposed community."⁴⁸⁵ But his images are also wistful as with his pictures of solitary pairs of dancers in the grand

⁴⁸⁴ Ray-Jones, Tony and Charlton, Frank, "Tony Ray-Jones: Photographs from America and England," 348.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 349.



Figure 8. Gravesend May Queen, 1968. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 9. Eastbourne Carnival, East Sussex, c 1967. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 10. Woman (astride a horse) with a man both wearing fancy dress, 1968. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.

ballrooms of holiday resorts, their proud dances keeping the spaces and songs alive. A top-hatted man left alone in the royal enclosure at Ascot looks more disgruntled than lost [Figure 11]. More often than not, the isolation of individuals seems purposefully contemplative or eccentric, as if Ray-Jones seeks to capture a certain English resolve to make the best of a situation and grumble about it later or, more broadly, a resignation to their loss of empire and the cultural influence of the USA. Ray-Jones found in the quirks of the English folk an antidote to the dissonant kitsch of New York street parades. Whereas both the Americans and the English performed their identity, one gets a sense that Ray-Jones' sympathies lay with a culture he found to be older, more authentic and more curious; thus their performances seemed to him to come from a deeper reserve of self-knowledge and attachment to the land.

Both the pictures of the seaside and traditional customs contain moments of redemption: if the sense of decline is palpable in some of the images, many are also irreverent and imbued not only with humor but with genuine affection for his subjects. The photograph of the mayor astride a horse on a fairground ride at the Maidstone May Queen Fair [Figure 12], the mayor being weighed in High Wycombe [Figure 13] enact a symbolic inversion of order with a dose of English reserve. The prance of the Britannia coconut dancers led by a small hooded boy [Figure 14] lends a dynamism and wistfulness to an otherwise bleak landscape. Several of his photographs play directly off past examples by Sir Benjamin Stone: the casually distracted May Queen gathering in Sittingbourne [Figure 15] compares favorably with Stone's necessarily stiff portraits and his Yeoman Carrying Alms, head obscured by a cushion is matched by a figure carrying blooms home from the Chelsea Flower show. Here was his quest to bring England back in sight and it was, in a sense, a radical act to depict the ordinary, quotidian rituals of England in a manner that deserved that the viewer pays closer attention to the images. He



Figure 11. Ascot Horse Races, 1969. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 12. Riding the Merry-Go-Round at Maidstone May Queen Fair, 1968. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 13. The Weighing of the Mayor, 1969. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum /Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 14. Bacup Coconut Dancers, 1968. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum / Science & Society Picture Library.



Figure 15. Sittingbourne May Queen Festival, Kent, 1968. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum / Science & Society Picture Library.

took from Evans and Frank a need to democratize documentary by mixing critique and praise of social situations with the understanding that it was *his* view on this and that the photographs had more going on both inside and outside the frame. The celebration of English customs comes from a place of intrigue but also attraction: his photographs of the York Mystery Players, the Helston Furry Dance and Broadstairs' Dickens Festival in particular are celebratory as well as incisive, showing a more jovial side of festivities. Though the youth often look coerced into their costumes, they are also being inculcated in the spirit of their traditions, a position Cecil Sharp would surely support. A photo of a young Morris dancer astride a well and chatting to two older women encapsulates a more promising clash of the old and the new.⁴⁸⁶ Set against a rural backdrop straight from a British Travel Association advertisement, the boy appears to be educating his elders about their heritage. That a child is the incongruent party here can only be a positive sign.

Ray-Jones' picture of the English in *The English Seen* and *A Day Off* was modern in aesthetic as much as it was retrospective in subject matter. Avoiding the clichés of swinging London and turning to the sometimes odd, overlooked lives of ordinary Britons, Ray-Jones' photographs imagine Britain as an old country in transition, and a culture that is a foil to the newness and kitsch of American mass culture. While Ray-Jones is addressing the invisibility of custom and making visible the ancient annual rituals of villagers, touched by commercialism and on the precipice of decline might be conservative, it is also a way of avoiding the radical politics of the late sixties. While no one could accuse Ray-Jones' photographs as being sentimental, they do avoid political judgment. Following Arbus, Friedlander, et al.'s unwritten dictum of the personal viewpoint transcending the political in documentary, his images set him against

⁴⁸⁶ Ehrlich, *Tony Ray-Jones*, 115.

photographers whose images had an overt political message. Images of Morris dancers are not meant to advocate on behalf of the Morris, save pointing to the fact that these cultures exist and are in danger of being lost. There is no call to action: you have seen their faces but are not sure what to do next. The photographer provides a personal record and leaves, and the photographs appear in galleries, magazines, and other photographic contexts. The audience is encouraged to refer to “a Tony Ray-Jones” rather than the rural traditions under threat. These were new contexts for documentary photography that Ray-Jones was on the vanguard of, but he was not able to divest himself of the necessity of taking commercial commissions while working on his personal photographs either.

THE HAPPY ECCENTRICS

A later picture story on British eccentrics that Ray-Jones pitched successfully to *The Sunday Times* allowed him to incorporate commercial work with images commensurate with his English project. Ray-Jones seems to have taken inspiration from a March 1969 article in *Time* entitled “The Sad State of Eccentricity” by Madalyn Murray O’Hair which bemoaned the lack of eccentricity in the present-day US when compared to “the grand style and creative bursts—either of sane whimsy or crazy sanity—that marked the golden age of English eccentrics.”⁴⁸⁷ Buoyed by this, Ray-Jones set out to prove that eccentricity was alive and well. Attempting to define eccentricity to guide his project, Ray-Jones jotted down ideas in his Filofax: “hermits, cranks, crackpots, collectors, recluses, crazes, inventors,” people who “had odd habits,” “strange vocations” or “odd hobbies” with the overall theme of “individuality in today’s mass produced society;” a

⁴⁸⁷ Madalyn Murray O’Hair, “The Sad State of Eccentricity,” *Time*, May 14, 1969, 31. Ray-Jones’ jotted down the article in his Filofax. Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” 48.

guiding principle that echoed his exploration of folk customs.⁴⁸⁸ A selection of the subjects he did not pursue indicates the breadth of his approach: among the long list of entries were the West Berkshire Cowboys, the head of the Flat Earth society in Dover, a man who lived in a hut on Chesil Beach, and a service provocatively titled Rent-A-German.⁴⁸⁹ Many of the groups and individuals Ray-Jones contacted were fanatics about an aspect of American culture. He outlined a number of ideas for “Societies” that included various military-based societies as well as Marlow Wild West Club and the South Skirmishers, an American Civil War reenactment society. He took a number of photographs of the Confederate High Command, a reenactment society in London, but did not use these for the final article, which settled on an eccentric topiarist, owners of large numbers of animals, model railway enthusiasts, a colorful street sweeper and a vociferous road safety campaigner. The article was eventually published as “The Happy Extremists” in *The Sunday Times Magazine* on October 18, 1970.⁴⁹⁰

The couple who were the stars of the piece spoke directly to the influence of American culture in Britain. Ray-Jones’ archive contains a large number of black-and-white and color images of the Blackmores, an Eastbourne pair who lead “double lives” as Chief Hunkeshnee and Red Leaf Woman (Sioux), their self-proclaimed Native American alter-egos. In the image chosen for the article the Blackmores stand in full Native regalia in front of their teepee, pitched incongruously in the back garden of their Victorian terrace [Figure 16]. Edward Blackmore proudly holds up a peace pipe while his wife, Curly, breaks the illusion of solemnity by grinning at him. The Blackmores’ dedication

⁴⁸⁸ Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” 4. On the next page, Ray-Jones noted down an almost equally eclectic list of “people with leads” a list which included Ronnie Scott’s lawyer, the poet Adrian Henri, Terence Donovan, Gilbert and George, and Charles Gibbs-Smith of the V&A.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6–13.

⁴⁹⁰ Alison Lurie, “The Happy Extremists,” *The Sunday Times Magazine*, October 18, 1970, 69–80.



Figure 16. The Blackmores, 1970. © Tony Ray-Jones/National Media Museum / Science & Society Picture Library.

went beyond their costume as Edward was one of Britain's foremost experts on Native Americans and travelled around the country paying visits to schools and giving lectures on Indian culture.⁴⁹¹ The contact sheets reveal that aside from taking a large number of images, Ray-Jones was also interested in the Blackmores' transformation: he dedicated nearly two rolls of film to recording Edward's process of putting on his makeup: the prospect of getting underneath the mask of an Englishman "playing Indian" was impossible for Ray-Jones to resist.⁴⁹²

Another eccentric subject who did not make the final article was Bruce Lacey, an inventor and performance artist known for his bizarre animatronic creations and his cameo in the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*. Lacey was also the subject of a Fairport Convention song "Mr. Lacey" to which his robots contributed some memorable sound effects (Lacey lived a few doors down the road from Ashley Hutchings in Muswell Hill). Ray-Jones' set of domestic portraits of Lacey was extensive, again probably because he hoped that these might find a wider audience in syndication. Ray-Jones and Fairport crossed paths again in June 1970 when he photographed the Bath Festival of Blues and Progressive Music. Music festivals were familiar territory for him (the Newport Folk festival was one of his first photographic subjects in 1963) and aside from a few notable close-ups of Frank Zappa on stage, he again turned his camera on the festival-goers rather than the performers. American flags in particular caught his eye, as well as bikers and

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 77. In a postmodern twist, the archive of Edward Blackmore's artifacts and memorabilia are held in the Native American collections of Hastings Borough Council. Hastings Borough Council, "Edward Blackmore (1898-1983)," *Hastings Borough Council Collections*, 2013 2002, http://www.hmag.org.uk/collections/native_americans/blackmore/.

⁴⁹² Tony Ray-Jones, *Contact Sheet: Happy Extremists- The Blackmores and Kate Ward*, ca. 1970, C17/59 1993-5016 Box 22, Tony Ray-Jones Collection. As these images were also deposited with the John Hillelson agency it seems likely that Ray-Jones thought of each series of pictures he took for "The Happy Eccentrics" as photo-essays in their own right.

more hedonistic revelers.⁴⁹³ With the profusion of flags and fashions, choppers and US-based stars, the festival might as well have taken place in Schenectady as Somerset, something that Ray-Jones seemed eager to convey in his images.⁴⁹⁴ The photographs from Bath are only one of a handful of times that people approximating Ray-Jones' age group appear as the focus of his images. Aside from his undergraduate work at Yale and his personal work, the young people depicted in his photographs tend to be schoolchildren either in uniform, on their holidays, or dressed up. As an outsider with a roving eye, he was also skeptical of identifying too closely with one particular subculture, lest it turn out, in his own estimate, to be phony. Slightly older than most of the participants in the counter-culture and London scene (he was 28 in 1970) he occupied a liminal space in age as well as in straddling the two countries he was to live and work in.

LEAVING FOR AMERICA

Despite the seeds he had sown for the British photographic revival, Ray-Jones' time in Britain was drawing to a close by the early 1970s. Ahead of his time photographically and in his attitude to photographic institutions, Ray-Jones was finding it increasingly difficult to make a living in Britain, partially due his ostracization from the magazine publishing industry. In an April 1969 roundtable panel entitled "Photography-Commodity or Art?" which accompanied the *Spectrum* exhibition at the ICA, Ray-Jones excoriated magazine photographers for their lack of knowledge of good design and what he saw as their autocratic practices of choosing images. The panel included

⁴⁹³ Peter Bunnell's remarks about Frank's use of flags are pertinent here: "In every instance where Frank has used the American flag motif he is commenting on the literal fabric of American society." Peter C. Bunnell, *Degrees of Guidance: Essays on Twentieth-Century American Photography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 74. Ray-Jones' flags comment on the interwoven fabrics of British and American societies and their transatlantic youth cultures.

⁴⁹⁴ Tony Ray-Jones, *Color Slides: Bath Festival of Blues and Progressive Music*, c 1970, C17/59 1993-5016 Box 111, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

photographers David Hurn and Philip Jones-Griffiths, photographic professionals David Puttnam and Maureen Green, and the famously irascible *Sunday Telegraph* picture Editor John Anstey on the other.⁴⁹⁵ Bill Jay described the scene:

Tony Ray-Jones, very typically, had done some slides of previous stories and suddenly interrupted [the panel's] question and answer process, showed these pictures and had interviewed the photographers and shown how their work had been screwed up editorially because of advertising demands, because of offence to the general public, how they'd been murdered and manipulated by the picture editors on the stage. Tony just laid into them all with this devastating series of pictures. And this brought the house down as you can imagine.⁴⁹⁶

From there on in, Ray-Jones was to find magazine commissions harder to come by. Twice rejected for membership of Magnum although he was reaching a creative peak, his inability to sell his proposed book to publishers until 1972 also speaks of the difficulties he had breaking away from magazine assignments, even if there were some, such *The Happy Extremists* that combined his private passions with a paycheck.

Almost done with the old, by the early 1970s Ray-Jones was turning to the new. A commission for *Architectural Review* materialized in 1970; he photographed the Pepys Housing Estate in London for the Royal Institute for Architecture, and the images appeared as part of their influential MANPLAN series on the problems of urban design in Britain.⁴⁹⁷ MANPLAN Issue 8 tackled the inadequacy of public housing supply in Britain, casting this initially in national terms: “ironically Welfare State Britain seems powerless to prevent itself mirroring the inequalities of America—the affluence syndrome of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.”⁴⁹⁸ Ray-Jones’ photographs speak to the vitality of the community in the Pepys estate juxtaposed with

⁴⁹⁵ “Spectrum- Films, Lectures, Discussions.”

⁴⁹⁶ Jay, interview.

⁴⁹⁷ Tony Ray-Jones, “Manplan 8: Housing,” *Architectural Review* CXLVIII, no. 883 (September 1970).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

the cold, concrete modernist planning. Scenes of dances, children at play and community theatre are juxtaposed with images of towering blocks and small, anonymous figures lost within this landscape. The variety and vitality of many of these photographs belies their unfairly neglected in his canon. His commission for MANPLAN inspired other project ideas such as: “Britain of the 70s: New Towns and Estates.”⁴⁹⁹ This experience photographing people among modernist architecture stood in contrast to the rural and suburban townscapes where the English customs were enacted, but this project was stillborn as a call from elsewhere had come.

In 1970 Ray-Jones accepted a teaching position at San Francisco Art Institute that was offered to him by Jerry Burchard, chair of the photography department, when on a visit to the UK. He may well have had plans to return to the US without a secure offer of employment: a list “Return to US” lists his return date from October to November 1970, prospective contacts for housing and magazine work, and fellowships to apply for including the Churchill Scholarship and a British Council scholarship.⁵⁰⁰ Arriving in San Francisco to take up his job, Ray-Jones’ photography in the last eighteen months of his life was focused on “gross blatant Americana,” as described by Anna Ray-Jones.⁵⁰¹ In addition to teaching, which he hated because of the pretentious attitude of his students, he continued working for magazines such as *West*, the magazine of the *Los Angeles Times*, and published stories on Pocono Mountain Resorts, the Nashville country scene, and the Mormon church for the *Sunday Times*, also working as a photographer on TV shows such as *All in the Family* and feature movies like *Fat City*.⁵⁰² A blend of personal and

⁴⁹⁹ Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” 105.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁵⁰¹ Anna Ray-Jones to Ainslie Ellis, 1972, C17/59 2002-5035_10_2, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

⁵⁰² Images from his shoot on *Fat City* can be seen in Martin Kasindorf, “Instant Georgia,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1971, L24.

professional work included color photographs of Hot Rod shows, the Tournament of the Roses in Pasadena, a large series on Roller Derby and a small number of photographs of New Age Gurus that was to form a much larger project. In a postcard sent to Barry Lane in February 1972, Ray-Jones noted that he was “firmly embedded” in California, suggesting that it was “pretty nice really—not like the rest of the US.”⁵⁰³ His notes reveal he was considering a series of photographs of Native Americans, trading the phony Indians of Whitstable and Eastbourne for the real thing.⁵⁰⁴ His passion continued unabated, as confirmed by Jon Carroll of the *Los Angeles Times*:

He was unlike most photographers I’d run into over the years, indifferent to money but fascinated by almost everything else. The only time I ever saw him angry was when *Esquire* turned down a piece we were doing on the plight of the Black Mesa Indians because “we’re not doing Indians this year.” Tony couldn’t believe it. “That’s so *stupid*,” he kept saying, hissing his indignation.⁵⁰⁵

There is evidence that Ray-Jones was considering jettisoning photography and becoming a filmmaker. A note from November 15 1965 discusses his “final goal” of becoming a film director,⁵⁰⁶ through “several self-financed books” and “a financed documentary on a subject of my interest”, noting Stanley Kubrick’s transition from photography to filmmaking, something Anna Ray-Jones confirms he was interested in when in San Francisco. Some of the last photographs of Ray- Jones are of he and Anna below the Hollywood sign when he was working as a photographer on *Blacula*. Touristy they may be, but the photographs gain greater importance with the knowledge of Ray-Jones’ ambitions.

⁵⁰³ Tony Ray-Jones to Barry Lane, February 7, 1972, C17/59 Box 3, Tony Ray-Jones Collection.

⁵⁰⁴ Ray-Jones, “Black Filofax,” 46.

⁵⁰⁵ John Carroll, “About This Issue,” *West Magazine- Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 1972, sec. West, A4.

⁵⁰⁶ Ray-Jones, “American Notebook 1964-65.”

It is tempting to see Ray-Jones' ambivalent stance on America and Britain as a continuum through photographers he admired or shared aesthetics with. Brodovitch and Frank in particular never seemed to have settled in the US or the country of their origin, the former returning to France, the latter moving to Canada. Westerbeck provides an insight on this when he describes William Klein's position on nationality thus: "when he's in America, Klein claims to be French, but when he's in France, he acts like a rude American and gets himself in trouble for it."⁵⁰⁷ Similarly, Ray-Jones' distance from his subject matter was a cultivated stance; he recorded what he thought interesting or humorous about Americans and the English, and while he privately had reservations about the lifestyles of both, he generally kept explicit judgments out of his images. Klein and Frank ditched photography to become filmmakers and both, like Ray-Jones were "forever lighting out for the territories,"⁵⁰⁸ itinerants seeking to find where they could make their next statement and where they could fit in.⁵⁰⁹ Tragically, Ray-Jones' ambitions were not to be realized. He was diagnosed with Leukemia in 1972 when working on *Blacula* and was forced to return to London as he could not afford the treatment in the US. He died four days after he arrived back home.

CONCLUSION

Picturing England at a time when the country was sloughing off tired and embarrassing images of its past to embrace a modern present, Ray-Jones chose to photograph what he viewed as the vestiges of an old culture that was under threat from an ever-encroaching commercialized modernity. Ray-Jones' choice of subject matter and the

⁵⁰⁷ Westerbeck, *Bystander*, 350.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁵⁰⁹ Ray-Jones mentioned this in his *SLR Magazine* interview: "The one thing that's important to me is to always be doing something new, and never going back over something that you've already done. That's the quickest way to get into a rut." "Tony Ray-Jones: The Photographer Seen," 41.

photographs themselves display a grappling with the contradictions of English culture as it relates to the pervasive American influence in the country. Working within a tradition of folk revivals that existed in a transatlantic circuit of exchange, and using an image of a Britain caught halfway between the projected arcadia and modern Britain deployed by the British Tourist Association, Ray-Jones' complex and ambiguous images reveal as much about Ray-Jones' viewpoint as they were depictions of his subjects. Bringing a sharp documentary eye, honed on the New York Streets and inspired by Robert Frank, a European émigré himself, Ray-Jones' complex, ambivalent relation to America informed his vision of England. His photographs display a cross-section of the populace quietly wrestling with their own relation to a transatlantic modernity whose exciting and seductive culture was embraced at the expense of what made (or makes) England unique. Ray-Jones' example encouraged other photographers to record their own personal visions of the vernacular and, more broadly, demonstrated that England, and by extension, Britain, was as worthwhile a backdrop for personal, noncommercial photography as the streets of US cities. A man out of place, Ray-Jones' liminal identity allowed him to figuratively shuttle backwards and forwards between the US and Britain; he never seems to have settled in or been comfortable with either country. Fascinated by American mass cultural kitsch in the US as an expression of the nation, Ray-Jones, like Richard Hoggart and Anthony Sampson, was less forgiving of its appearance in England. As Benjamin Stone did, Ray-Jones would record a nation for posterity, in an attempt to provide a picture of traditions thought to be under threat from the inexorable spread of American mass culture. He strove to produce a multifaceted record of the English where eccentricity, tradition and other tenets of the national character were amplified, at the expense of recording modern, industrial Britain. When put into conversation with certain currents in the folk movement contemporaneous to Ray-Jones' time in the UK from

1965-1970, we can see Ray-Jones' aesthetics, like electric folk pioneers Fairport Convention's music, simultaneously paying homage to a familiar American tradition but also forging their own exploration of a dormant English tradition opened up to them by an encounter with the roots music based in African-American blues forms.

Frustrated by a British photographic scene which was slow to advance along US lines, his photographs of England can also be read with as much frustration about the English tradition (as he saw it) for slow, deliberate change as praise for its foibles. Although like Bill Jay he would leave for a country that was more sympathetic to photography and that was, to him relatively unexplored, his feisty, uncompromising example inspired a number of young photographers who were to carry the flag for British photography into the 1970s. Through Ray-Jones, they caught the wave of excitement in American photography, and he helped inspire photographers like Daniel Meadows and Martin Parr to turn their own lenses on England. In the years after his tragic death, a number of projects that explored British identity were toured successfully around Britain, many of which eventually became monographs like Homer Sykes' *Once a Year: Some Traditional British Calendar Customs* (1977), Patrick Ward's *Wish You Were Here: The English at Play* (1977) and Ian Berry's *The English* (1978). As the British photographic revival got underway, the social life of the country was also having its moment in the sun. The last three books were funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain, a fitting tribute to Ray-Jones as his *Spectrum* exhibition would inspire a young Arts Council officer, Barry Lane to take up the cause for photography and Britain and who, like Ray-Jones, went on to play a leading role in bringing the American photographic revolution to Britain.

Chapter 4: If it's Art, We Can Fund It: The Arts Council of Great Britain and American Photography, 1967-1981¹

Speaking in a recorded interview for the Oral History of British Photography in 1999, former Arts Council Photography Officer Barry Lane reminisced about an important trip he had taken to the US and Canada in 1972 to visit organizations promoting photography:

Those two months changed my life: there's no doubt about that. And it opened my eyes about photography. But it did something else: I know that I lived off the energy that I got off that trip for two or three years. I came back thinking, as most Americans think, 'I can be president.' I came back with a huge confidence. Anything was possible in America...²

Lane had received a £730 grant from Kodak in 1971 under their bursary scheme: it was the information gleaned from this trip, funded by the UK subsidiary of an American firm that would usher in sweeping changes to the way that photography was supported by the state in Great Britain. Energized by his experience in the US, like many who saw in the United States of the 1960s and 1970s a vision of the future, he worked hard towards making this vision a reality. Lane was instrumental in securing state funding for photography at the highest level of British government. As the most important arts funding body in the UK, the Arts Council of Great Britain's financial support of individual photographers, galleries, museums and educational institutions was crucial to the incubation and encouragement of photographic arts in Britain. From the late 1972 to 1980, the Photography Sub-Committee of the Council's Visual Arts Panel (referred to more commonly as the Photography Committee) gave the burgeoning photography scene

¹ This title is taken from a *Camerawork* article: Barry Lane, "If It's Art, We Can Support It!," *Camerawork*, no. 5 (February 1977): 1-3.

² Barry Lane, interview by Shirley Read, Cassette Tape, December 13, 1999, C459/113/01-04 C1, The Oral History of British Photography, The British Library.

in Britain an institutional anchor and helped to raise the profile of photography from near invisibility in 1967 to a position where by 1982 the Arts Council could confidently declare that: “photography is a medium with its masterpieces and important artists, and a heritage embracing our many personal, social and cultural histories. Moreover, it is a medium readily available to all.”³

For the first eight years of its existence, the Photography Sub-Committee was influenced by, responded to and shaped the development of photography in Britain and established itself as one of the main channels by which innovative North American methods of funding, promoting, and displaying photography reached a broader British public. Key early venues for photography such as the Photographers’ Gallery would almost certainly have foundered without Arts Council funding, and though Arts Council support did not guarantee the quality or longevity of a photographic venture or career, the imprimatur of Arts Council approval for individual photographers or institutions signified governmental recognition of the value of their work. Simply having a small part of the government dedicated to promoting and sustaining photography was a huge boost, not only to those who received support, but those who could point to the work of the Photographic Committee to legitimize their own endeavors.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the mutual exchange of arts funding methods between the US and Great Britain from the 1930s to the 1960s as a framework for understanding the context for the Arts Council’s embrace of US models of funding photography. This longstanding trade in ideas between Britain and America created favorable conditions for the state support of ‘new’ arts such as photography and was important in establishing a sympathetic climate for the acceptance of US methods and

³ Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Arts Council and Photography: Report of the Photography Working Party 1982*. (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1982), 1.

practices of arts funding despite transatlantic political, economic and ideological differences. As will be seen, the pendulum swung back and forth as each country adopted methods of arts funding pioneered in the other at different times during the twentieth century; New Deal programs were adapted in wartime Britain and the Kennedy administration in turn looked to the Arts Council of Great Britain for inspiration when setting up the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). I will then give a history of the Arts Council of Great Britain's promotion and support of photography during the 1960s and 1970s, culminating in a discussion of Barry Lane's seminal fact-finding mission in 1972 and other trips prior to this which set the precedence for such a journey. Subsequent sections will examine how policies from North American institutions were adapted for use in Britain throughout the 1970s, and how these contributed to the growth of the medium in Britain and helped to strengthen and enhance a national photographic renaissance.

Several book-length accounts of the Arts Council's activities exist, and aside from those commissioned by the Arts Council such as E.W. White's 1975 history,⁴ positive narratives about the Council are islands in a sea of criticism. Titles of more recent books and articles discussing its policies—*Vile Jelly*, *Managed to Death*, *Artist Unknown*—suggest that the esteem in which the body has been held.⁵ Putting aside the British talent for self-deprecation, after enjoying broad (if cautious) support until the late 1960s, the Arts Council increasingly became the whipping boy of an embattled welfare state, and not without some justification. In a celebrated critique of the Arts Council in 1979, Raymond Williams noted the problems that the Council encountered from both sides of

⁴ Eric Walter White, *The Arts Council of Great Britain* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975).

⁵ These are, respectively: John Pick, *Vile Jelly: The Birth, Life and Lingering Death of the Arts Council of Great Britain* (Denton: Brynmill, 2002); Richard Witts, *Artist Unknown: The Alternative History of the Arts Council* (London: Little Brown, 1998); Marc Sidwell, *The Arts Council - Managed to Death*. (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2009).

the political divide: “While the philistine press gives an impression of the Council as a wanton subsidizer of sub-artistic layabouts, the radical press continues to insist that it is the citadel of bureaucratic establishment art.”⁶ Questions about the function and form of government subsidy and the political implications of “official” art have been omnipresent in Britain and the US before both the Arts Council and the NEA’s existence and continue contemporaneously. I do not wish to dismiss these important questions, and I will address some of these later in the chapter, but for photography in the 1960s and 1970s as for other emerging forms of art, only the most radical of practitioners decried the extra revenue that was available. Damned as the Council may have been if they did or did not fund something, the subject of government patronage of photography in the US and Britain was much less fraught than in other areas of art, primarily because of the relative autonomy of photography bodies. As state support gave weight to their work and enabled photographers to establish careers as independent practitioners, gallerists, curators or other arts professionals, the value of a grant outstripped the cash value of the initial award; moreover, the psychological value of the Arts Council or NEA “seal of approval” was of much greater value than the comparatively small amounts of money given to individual artists.

FUNDING THE ARTS—US/UK RECIPROCITY IN NATIONAL BODIES

As Daniel T. Rogers’ exhaustive survey has shown, the interwar years 1918-1939 were some of the most fertile for a transatlantic cross-pollination of ideas surrounding social policy.⁷ European and American intellectuals, government officials and other

⁶ Raymond Williams, “The Arts Council,” in *Resources of Hope : Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London; New York: Verso, 1989), 41–42.

⁷See particularly the chapter “New Deal- The Intellectual Economy of Catastrophe” in Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 409–446.

interested parties were keenly engaged in the transatlantic traffic of ideas and interested in seeing how a successful model of town planning, architecture, or welfare policy in one country might be applied in their own. This was a period Rogers dubs “the Atlantic era” in which: “American politics was particularly open to foreign models and imported ideas, when the North Atlantic economy formed, for many strategically placed Americans, a world mart of useful and intensely interesting experiments.”⁸ The traffic in ideas surrounding the state subsidy of art (and ultimately for photography) began in earnest during the 1930s when the Great Depression and subsequently the Second World War provoked a multitude of conversations about how art and artists could be put to public service for the good of the nation. Governmental initiatives and employment schemes in the US and later in the UK amplified the social utility of the arts and laid the groundwork for socially-conscious art in the 1930s and beyond, and cemented the idea that the arts were a public good that deserved to be afforded state support.

Preceding direct government intervention in Great Britain was direct aid to arts organizations by wealthy patrons, and in the 1920s this became part of the remit of the largest philanthropic institution in the country. Although best known for its building of and improvements to libraries and village halls throughout Great Britain,⁹ the Carnegie Trust, established in 1913, paved the way for large-scale arts funding in Great Britain through its early support for church organs and music publishing, a policy inherited from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.¹⁰ The Carnegie Trust played a part in the

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Although building village halls could be seen as a quintessentially British (or, indeed, English) policy, other areas of intervention were inspired by US models. The National Playing Fields association (1926) took inspiration from the Playgrounds and Recreation Society of America (1906), especially as the latter had been funded by Carnegie. William Robertson, *Welfare in Trust: A History of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, 1913-1963* (Dunfermline: Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, 1964), 87.

¹⁰ Ibid., 36. One of the trust’s first forays into music was the publication of “long-lost” sixteenth-century music in 1917.

formation of the Arts Council of Great Britain, but it ultimately owed its existence to Edward Stephen Harkness, an American philanthropist who inherited the rewards of his father's close association with John D. Rockefeller. Following on from Carnegie's example, in 1930 Harkness gave £2 million to establish the Pilgrim Trust in Great Britain, a charitable foundation whose name was chosen to reflect the "many ties of affection to the land from which he draws his descent."¹¹ The money was given, like Carnegie's, with the sole condition that the funds be used for charitable purposes and came with the considerable prestige that the Trust's administrator, the former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, brought to it.¹² Greeted with gratitude and enthusiasm (one British observer calling it "the most dramatic aid for years to the cause of Anglo-American understanding"),¹³ the fund's money was initially spent on social welfare projects (particularly "the alleviation of poverty") but the trust also sought to distribute "funds which in normal times are available for preserving the many things in England that are so abundantly worth preserving."¹⁴ Preservation, in this case, meant repairing neglected churches and historic buildings but the trust later turned its attention to artistic means of preservation. The outbreak of the Second World War meant that manual work was abundant and concurred with an immediate need to record British buildings "of characteristic national interest" due to the threat of their destruction.¹⁵ In an employment

¹¹ Stanley Baldwin, "An American Gift To Britain Mr. Harkness And The Pilgrim Trust, A Token Of Admiration," *The Times*, September 29, 1930, p.13.

¹² The Harkness family had a history of philanthropic donations to Great Britain. Aside from numerous other donations, Harkness' mother, Anna M. Harkness, established the Commonwealth Fund in 1918 which provided funds for British students to attend US universities (a forerunner to the Fulbright and similar schemes) and sought to improve healthcare provision.

¹³ Thurston Macauley, "The Pilgrim Trust," *The North American Review* 231, no. 1 (January 1, 1931): 72–74, doi:10.2307/25113748.

¹⁴ The Pilgrim Trust, "The Pilgrim Trust Past and Present," *The Pilgrim Trust*, 2011, <http://www.thepilgrimtrust.org.uk/documents/ThePilgrimTrust-DetailedHistory.pdf>.

¹⁵ Pilgrim Trust (Great Britain) and Arnold Palmer, *Recording Britain*. ([London: Oxford University Press, 1946), v.

scheme similar to those of the New Deal, artists were commissioned to paint scenes of buildings and landscapes under threat from enemy action, the clumsily named Recording the Changing Face of Britain project, a move that opened up the Pilgrim Trust's funds to other artistic endeavors.¹⁶

THE COMMITTEE FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MUSIC AND THE ARTS (CEMA)

The work of the Carnegie and Pilgrim trusts came together in the first few months of 1939. The Carnegie Trust had been giving assistance to professional and amateur musicians during the financial slump in the 1930s, and by 1939 was in a position to provide aid for national musical bodies in financial distress such as the National Opera and Dramatic Association and the English Folk and Dance Song Society.¹⁷ A more immediate need was addressing the issue of displaced and unemployed artists and musicians while simultaneously boosting the morale of a population whose normal activities had been severely disrupted. In December 1939, the Pilgrim Trust agreed to a £25,000 grant to the government's Board of Education to maintain cultural activities through a funding body, a grant which the treasury matched and maintained throughout the war.¹⁸ Thus, the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), the proto-Arts Council came into existence in January 1940 through a marriage of private American funds and a royal charter.

¹⁶ The Pilgrim Trust, "The Pilgrim Trust Past and Present." A similar and better-known project, the National Buildings Record, was conducted simultaneously and is notable for its employment of Helmut Gernsheim as a photographer during the war years.

¹⁷ Robertson, *Welfare in Trust: A History of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, 1913-1963*, 146.

¹⁸ The Pilgrim Trust's funding ended in 1942 when the government took over responsibility for CEMA. For a more in-depth account, see H. C Baldry, *The Case for the Arts* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1981). The Carnegie Trustees were asked to contribute another £25,000 but declined after lengthy negotiations. See Robertson, *Welfare in Trust: A History of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, 1913-1963*, 146-148.

Although dedicated to “the preservation... of the highest standards in the arts of music, drama and painting,” CEMA’s initial programs were aimed at the person-in-the-street as opposed to the maintenance of the more elite art forms such as opera. The most successful of its enterprises (despite a haphazard start) were warmly received by the public: its art exhibitions attracted over half a million visitors and its musical and theatrical touring groups provided welcome relief for war-weary workers. Indeed, so successful were CEMA’s more populist offerings that they demonstrated to the government that the publically-funded arts could succeed and (it was believed) edify the public by creating an audience receptive to the fine arts.

CEMA also served an important diplomatic function. Discussions about plugging the shortfall in private arts patronage since the enervations of the First World War on the elite’s finances had been occurring in government since 1936, and it was painfully evident to the government that Britain was the only world power that had not taken a role in subsidizing the arts for the good of the nation. Studies of other world powers by the Board of Education in 1939 made it clear that Germany, the USSR and Italy were streets ahead of Britain in using the arts to promote and sustain a national culture, a fact not entirely unsurprising for autocratic regimes.¹⁹ Part of the way to remedy this situation was to turn to US models of funding for inspiration. Board member Mary Glasgow, who would later become the Arts Council’s first executive, pointed to the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (WPA) as a way of providing for unemployed artists and as a model for a centralized disbursement of funds.²⁰ CEMA’s initial objective differed from the WPA schemes as their remit was not to fund large-scale government arts schemes like

¹⁹ Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25–26.

those enacted by umbrella organizations like the Federal Theatre Project and the Federal Music Project.

The Committee initially funded smaller-scale projects that were already up and running, like the popular art touring program *Art for the People*, but a year after its inception CEMA began to directly provision schemes and began employing musicians, artists and performers, some of which drew inspiration from New Deal programs.²¹ As David Allan Sheridan has demonstrated, schemes such as the Music Travellers followed the WPA's desire to get artists working but served other broad purposes as well.²² Sir Walford Davies, Master of the King's Music²³ and an avid believer in education through music, formed the Music Travellers, a mostly female group who, as Sheridan states, "provided entertainment, musical education and, according to their own correspondence, fostered both community and national identity."²⁴ The travelers served as vanguard organizers, corralling local authorities and enthusiasts to the cause and finding local musicians proficient enough to put on concerts "of the highest standard."²⁵ Walton took his inspiration from Glasgow's report where she had mentioned a Federal Music Project scheme supporting travelling musical educators who taught music to African-Americans

²¹ Aside from musical examples, New Deal theatre programs were also imported. The Army Bureau of Current Affairs Unit (ABCA) adapted the theatrical technique of the Living Newspaper, developed by the Federal Theatre Project to dramatize contemporary issues and provide a forum where people could "talk about the values of the civilization for which they were fighting, argue about current affairs and hold discussions on moral and ethical questions." John Pick, *Managing the Arts?: The British Experience* (London: Rhinegold, 1986), 38.

²² David Allen Sheridan, "'Give Us More Music': Women, Musical Culture, and Work in Wartime Britain, 1939-1946" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southern California, 2007).

²³ "The only remaining post in the secular musical establishment of the British royal family; its duties are the occasional composition of music for royal or state occasions (the musical equivalent of the Poet Laureate)." Alison Latham, "Master of the King's [Queen's] Music," ed. Alison Latham, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, accessed January 18, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e4275>.

²⁴ Sheridan, "'Give Us More Music,'" 112. Sheridan's chapter on the Music Travellers vividly depicts the trials and tribulations the Travellers had to endure to carry out their mission, which, for all intents and purposes, they did with aplomb.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

in the South.²⁶ This highly popular scheme domesticated US policy and proved to be a more successful version of its predecessor.²⁷ Preceding the more trumpeted “cultural invasion” of Britain by American mass culture,²⁸ the example of the Music Travellers highlights the government’s adaptation of tenets of Federal Project One, and signals that US models of funding the arts were providing inspiration for British models and that frameworks established elsewhere could be put to good use to shore up Britain’s own national cultures.

The popular Music Travellers did not represent the direction that all CEMA executives wished to see the Committee go in. John Maynard Keynes, who would take over as chairman in 1942, saw the Committee’s (later the Council’s) purpose as maintaining and promoting a standard of excellence in the arts, a contrast to CEMA’s first chairman, T.J. Jones who wished to encourage both the amateur and fine arts.²⁹ Keynes had traveled frequently to the US both during the depression and wartime to observe the economic policies of the New Deal. Keynes was impressed by the ‘middle way’ that New Deal programs afforded “between Marxism and laissez-faire.”³⁰ The Arts Council of Great Britain was established along similar lines: centralized government funding with the recipients free to propose their own projects. These principles were to morph into the Arts Council’s purposefully vague policy intended at encouraging artistic

²⁶ Ibid., 202–203.

²⁷ See Kenneth J. Bindas, *All of This Music Belongs to the Nation: The WPA’s Federal Music Project and American Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 15–23.

²⁸ This ‘invasion’ was already well underway by 1941 as Victoria de Grazia has ably demonstrated in *Grazia, Irresistible Empire*.

²⁹ CEMA under Keynes had what John Pick describes as “a habit of pretending everything it did was pioneer work. . . if a play tour went well it was because there had hitherto only been darkness. . . people began to speak as if the British, for centuries theatregoers, music-makers, lovers of good stories, were experiencing plays and music for the very first time.” This narrative of benevolent uplift would continue into the Arts Council. Pick, *Managing the Arts?*, 40.

³⁰ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 411.

development without direct government sponsorship. Most of the Arts Council's signature revenue clients mirrored Keynes and his supporters' interest in the elite arts, and national ballet, opera, and theatre companies have always received the lion's share of funding.

CEMA was so successful that Keynes argued successfully for it to be permanently established after the war in 1946, in a move that can be seen as, according to Susan Galloway and Stewart Dunlop "a form of 'nationalization' of the cultural economy."³¹ Renamed as The Arts Council, the body agglomerated music, the visual arts and performing arts into a national body, that existed "to increase the accessibility of the arts in Great Britain," 'the arts' implicitly meaning that the masses would receive high art to counter popular amusements.³² In the eyes of Keynes, Britain now had an organization to preserve, promote and encourage the best of British art to its population, a complement to the British Council's (established in 1934) remit to promote the same internationally. Keynes announced on BBC radio that state patronage of the arts had "crept in. It has happened in a very English, informal, unostentatious way, half-baked, if you like."³³ The slow encroachment evinced by Keynes in this statement demonstrates how keen he and others were to avoid sounding like proponents of *art officiel*: the council saw itself as responding to artistic trends as opposed to initiating them.³⁴ Even in a political climate that produced the Beveridge report and the National Health Service, foundations of

³¹ Susan Galloway and Stewart Dunlop, "Deconstructing the Concept of 'Creative Industries,'" in *Cultural Industries: The British Experience in International Perspective* (Berlin: Humboldt University, 2006), 33, <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/conferences/culturalindustries/proc/culturalindustries.pdf>.

³² Nicholas Pearson, *The State and the Visual Arts: A Discussion of State Intervention in the Visual Arts in Britain, 1760-1981* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1982), 56.

³³ Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 111.

³⁴ As John Pick notes, the malleability of the term "arts" has been used to justify various political approaches to it since the Arts Council's inception, having been "fitted to the welfare economics of the Wilson administration, the pragmatic government of Edward Heath and now the monetarist economics of the dry right in Mrs. Thatcher's cabinet." Pick, *Managing the Arts?*, 10.

“cradle-to-grave” government welfare in Britain, it was prudent to give the arts support which came accompanied with a large slice of autonomy.

THE ARTS COUNCIL AND THE NEA

If CEMA took partial inspiration from the policies of the New Deal and institutionalized them in 1946, it would not be until the 1960s that the US would build on the arts funding legacy of the New Deal at a Federal level, instituting a national arts policy where previous attempts had failed.³⁵ If the 1930s had been a period of substantial support for the arts, suspicion of the “European Tradition” of protracted sponsorship wavered after the war, and the old model of letting the arts succeed without intervention returned.³⁶ Successful and enduring as many New Deal arts schemes were, the suspicion that they had been promoted radical, left-wing political ideas had consigned many of them to the scrapheap by Congress by 1948.³⁷ If Federal Project One had been cast by its detractors as the logical outcome of government-supported arts, the influence of HUAC, the Hollywood Blacklist and Joseph McCarthy’s witch hunts set the tone for nearly a decade of suspicion about art’s subversive potential. On a practical level, during the more conservative and affluent postwar period it was easier for the US government to slough off responsibility for the arts to the private sector. As with Great Britain, until the formation of the Arts Council, the vast majority of money for the arts in the US was

³⁵ For a discussion of the interwar years in the US, see Donna Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 14.

³⁶ In 1938, the Coffee-Pepper bill introduced to the house and senate with the purpose of making some WPA projects permanent failed to get enough support, and federal arts programs ceased by 1943. Stephen Benedict, *Public Money and the Muse: Essays on Government Funding for the Arts* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 31.

³⁷ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1998), 464–472.

provided by private patrons, supported by a sympathetic tax system that encouraged such patronage.³⁸ There were voices to the contrary, however. Robert Breen, founder of the American National Theater and Academy, used the structure of CEMA's funding to argue for a government-sponsored enterprise in the US entitled the United States Theater Foundation.³⁹ Breen advocated a decentralized national theater scheme with centralized distribution of loans and grants, composed of a board of trustees from prominent institutions.⁴⁰ Although unsuccessful, Breen's suggestion that what was needed was "substantial government funding without government control" acknowledged the shared suspicion of state-guided subsidy of the kind found in countries such as France and Austria. CEMA's model was seen by Breen as an acceptable halfway house that inherited the English tradition; a tradition that, as he noted, had been recently kick-started by American philanthropy.⁴¹

Throughout the 1950s, visiting British arts administrators were drafted in by American museums and organizations to speak about the Arts Council's model of funding.⁴² The celebrated critic Olin Downes of *The New York Times* praised the "democratic" nature of the British grant structure, especially the funding that was

³⁸ Gifts to arts organizations were treated as tax-deductible charity donations. The US government continued to support the arts through international cultural exchanges, the decoration of public buildings and government art collections such as those at the Smithsonian Institution, the latter being the result of a \$100,000 gift from James Smithson an aristocratic English chemist who had never visited the USA. Benedict, *Public Money and the Muse*, 41–44.

³⁹ Stephanie Strom, "Robert Breen, 80, Arts Executive And Theatrical Producer, Is Dead," *New York Times*, April 2, 1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/02/obituaries/robert-breen-80-arts-executive-and-theatrical-producer-is-dead.html>.

⁴⁰ Robert Breen and Robert Porterfield, "A Plan for United States Public Theatre Foundation," approx. 1946, Box 31, Folder 19, Item 1, The Robert Breen/ANTA Theater Collection, George Mason University, <http://hdl.handle.net/1920/4703>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See, for example: "Briton; and also Howard Taubman, "No Issue in Britain: Policy of Arts Subsidy Is Firmly Established," *New York Times*, March 15, 1953, sec. Art, X7.

directed to local musical performance from a central, metropolitan hub of excellence.⁴³ Such unofficial cultural diplomacy turned sympathetic American heads, but many in government remained tin-eared and staunchly opposed to public subsidy; those who were sympathetic were cowed by the backlash against the New Deal programs and had to wait for their goals to be realized.

If the immediate postwar period was to prove hostile to government arts funding in the US, in the late 1950s the murmurs for governmental support swelled to a chorus. Initiatives like the Nelson Rockefeller-supported international exchanges of artwork from MoMA during the 1940s and 1950s contributed to a more favorable climate for the rekindling of the federal government's role in the arts.⁴⁴ Private foundations also joined in: one example among many is The Ford Foundation's decision to start giving major grants to the arts following the Gaither Study Committee's report's recommendations that it broaden its philanthropic outreach.⁴⁵ The backdrop of the Cold War heightened the importance of both the arts and education as weapons to counteract soviet propaganda and to project an ideology of freedom and creativity, juxtaposed against Soviet control. As previously discussed, the promotion of American art, especially modernist painting, was already underway by the United States Information Service (USIS) by 1946; supporters of aggressive promotion of US arts domestically like Senator Jacob Javits saw this as a valuable weapon against isolationism and gave the US the opportunity to set a

⁴³ Olin Downes, "Subsidy for the Arts: British System Could Be Considered by the U. S.," *New York Times*, December 21, 1952, sec. Arts, X9, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/docview/112450027/abstract/139A424106648715F27/32?accountid=71118>.

⁴⁴ Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-1980*, 20.

⁴⁵ Ford Foundation, *Report of the Study for the Ford Foundation on Policy and Program* (Detroit, 1949).

high-cultural agenda as well as an economic one.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (the Fulbright-Hays Act) formalized educational exchange and cultural programs as key to “mutual understanding” between cultures.⁴⁷ Influential advisors to Kennedy such as Arthur Schlesinger, John Kenneth Galbraith also set the tone for a renewed interest in American intellectual life against a backdrop of consensus economic stability and prosperity; the arts were an area that could receive more concerted attention in the late 1950s-early 1960s as a domestic good and a potential cold war bulwark against Communism.⁴⁸

In 1962, John F. Kennedy appointed August Hecksher, a friend of Schlesinger’s from the Twentieth Century Fund think tank, as a Special Consultant for the Arts, whose 1963 report “The Arts and the National Government” set the agenda for the foundation of the NEA. Hecksher advocated the creation of an Advisory Council on the Arts and a National Arts Foundation that would administer grants and funding to states, agencies and individual artists. Aside from domestic concerns about the quality of US culture, the report, as Donna Binckewicz notes, also couched the importance of the arts in foreign policy terms, as indicated by its endorsement of “the evident desirability of sending the best examples of American artistic endeavors abroad.”⁴⁹ Hecksher noted the importance of displaying art in American embassies (not to be considered “interior decoration” but to serve a diplomatic purpose), stressing the importance of contemporary work.⁵⁰ Unlike

⁴⁶ Binckewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-1980*, 27.

⁴⁷ *Mutual Educational and Exchange Program, US Code 22 Section 33*, 1961, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/chapter-33>.

⁴⁸ A balanced account that considers the role individual artists played in this is: Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*.

⁴⁹ Binckewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-1980*, 55.

⁵⁰ Richard Nixon was a supporter of the Art in Embassies Program, especially in Eastern Europe and areas where the US was keen to assert influence. *Ibid.*, 157.

their UK equivalents who would belatedly display photography in British embassies worldwide, photographic projects were welcome additions to embassies as long as they were not “solely documentary or functional.”⁵¹ Hecksher singled out photography produced under the auspices of the Farm Security Administration that, he argued, transcended the documentary mode as examples of “artistic achievement of which the Nation is proud,” and argued for an increase in the “relatively small amount of money” allocated to circulating art exhibitions abroad because “the recognition that American artists receive through the exhibition of their works abroad is an important element in their development.”⁵²

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Culture Philip H. Coombs’ 1964 report for the Council on Foreign Relations fuelled the fire further by espousing education and the arts as the titular *Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy*. Coombs praised the work already being done by the International Council of MoMA (particularly *The Family of Man*) and the Art in US Embassies programs and through “its exchange of specialists, the [International] Council has done much which government alone cannot do to acquaint the rest of the world with the artistic accomplishments of the United States.”⁵³ Coombs’ work compared four major European powers’ experiences with cultural promotion (France, Britain, Germany and the USSR), with the British experience being “especially rich in possible lessons for the United States.”⁵⁴ As with US citizens, the

⁵¹ United States, *The Arts and the National Government; Report to the President*, 88th Cong., 1st Sess. Senate. Document no.28 (Washington: U. S. Govt. Print. Off, 1963), 5. Hecksher’s prescription against “functional” photography is probably a warning against showing photographs of industry, workers and manufacturing, etc. which, while not only dull, would probably have strayed close to the propagandistic.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵³ Philip H. Coombs, *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy: Educational and Cultural Affairs* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 69. Coombs also noted the Carnegie Corporation’s “distinguished history of international philanthropy, particularly in the British commonwealth nations and territories.” *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁴ Coombs, *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy: Educational and Cultural Affairs*, 81.

British were described as initially hostile to an official cultural program like the Arts Council, but discovered that “they rather liked it” in practice. Whereas France and Germany took cultural affairs “more seriously”, the British system scored points for being “relatively less nationalistic and more international and universal in their approach,”⁵⁵ an approach that the US could adapt with relative ease.

Lyndon Baines Johnson’s victory in the 1964 election and the promises of the Great Society to improve social (and, as an adjunct, cultural) life in America, the National Endowment for the Arts came about simultaneously with the National Endowment for the Humanities in the guise of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965. Senator Claiborne Pell, the main sponsor of the bill to found the NEA was an avowed fan of the Arts Council and modeled his legislation in part on its example.⁵⁶ The act recognized that while “primarily a matter for private and local initiative, are also appropriate matters of concern to the Federal Government,”⁵⁷ and rather like the Arts Council, the NEA had a dual function: to foster the best in art and to make this art more accessible. In its early years, the NEA hewed closely to modernism in the visual arts, providing fellowships to artists closely linked with abstract expressionism and minimalism and by and large ignoring trends in pop art, vernacular art, or emerging ethnic and feminist currents.

Inspired by British models at this point of the NEA’s existence, even in its infancy the range and diversity of its policies were soon to reverberate across the Atlantic. Approaches to arts funding in Britain and the US became closer than ever

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵⁶ Andrew Sinclair, *Arts and Cultures: The History of the 50 Years of the Arts Council of Great Britain* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), 235–236.

⁵⁷ “National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-209),” *National Endowment for the Humanities*, 2013, <http://www.neh.gov/about/history/national-foundation-arts-and-humanities-act-1965-pl-89-209>.

before after the founding of the NEA. The NEA took inspiration from the Arts Council and was in turn watched closely by British observers keen to employ any innovative scheme that they thought could be modified appropriately for the British system. If government arts administrations were structurally different, Great Britain and America did share a common antipathy to direct government sponsorship, and operated in a context where the public was generally wary of government sponsorship of the arts, although to differing degrees.

“If the limitless faith of a Chairman of the Arts Council should ever flag,” chimed Lord Goodman in the Arts Council’s 1969 annual report, “I recommend to him a simple remedy- travel to other places which do not have an Arts Council and see how much better we order things here.”⁵⁸ Goodman had taken a tour of various countries from “a friendly and progressive European neighbor” to “an opulent island replete with everything” and found that their governmental arts schemes and had left with a dim view of their efforts. He “found the greatest city of the world’s greatest republic mourning the absence of opera: musicians were claiming more than it could afford.”⁵⁹ The above quotation demonstrates how the Arts Council measured itself against its international counterparts and subtly used this domestically to foster the nation’s pride in its culture and, by proxy, the institution that was protecting it. Another strategy in the regard was ignoring, or eliding, the influence of international traffic ideas about art subsidy. In 1971, the Arts Council’s annual report proudly declared:

We can, as a country, claim that this method of encouragement of the arts is very much our own invention, though now it has its imitators in parts of the Commonwealth and, to an increasing extent, in the USA. In our changing society

⁵⁸ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Annual Report and Accounts, Year Ended 31 March 1969* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1969), 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

it has grown naturally and in conformity with our traditions, particularly in its reliance on voluntary service and committees.⁶⁰

It was not simply British arts that were forging a path across the world; the system that supported them was being looked at jealously from afar. On the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary, the secretary general laid out the essential features of “the British method” of funding the arts, the central tenets of which were thus:

- i) Continued acceptance of the principle that the Council itself, though a Government instrument is effectively independent;
- ii) The provision of a substantial, though by continental standards a small, amount of money from central Government to supplement what is provided by the paying customer, local authorities and private sources;
- iii) Promotion of the arts, particularly those involving performance, by autonomous and wholly independent enterprises working on a widely varying scale; the counterpart and the necessary complement to promotion by the mass media;
- iv) Encouragement of individual creative artists through a multiplicity of schemes;
- v) The continuance of direct provision in one major field, namely the promotion of art exhibitions, and in certain other areas.⁶¹

The report also contrasted the composition of the Arts Council panels to American arts boards, the former generally composed of cultural experts rather than members of the latter, and foundations that “tend[ed] to be wealthy men or women or to have contact with providers of money.”⁶² Naturally, Annual Reports are hardly spaces for transparent assessments of an organization’s successes or failures, but the centrality of comparison with other countries’ efforts again highlights the consciously international frameworks that the Arts Council measured itself against. Art in British embassies, books in British Council libraries, sponsored schemes for teaching English, the export of models for state support of the arts; these examples of promoting native genius were above all strings in

⁶⁰ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Annual Report and Accounts Year, Ended 31 March 1971* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971), 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.

Britain's bow to maintain strong cultural relations with its commonwealth and, in the case of the US, secure a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and nurture closer economic ties.

THE EXPANSION OF THE ARTS IN 1960S BRITAIN: THERE WAS SOMETHING ASTIR ⁶³

Originally a bastion of the fine arts with theatre and opera taking up as much as 2/3 of its budget, in the 1960s the Arts Council gradually began to shed its elite outlook. The capital improvements and funding increases to art schools and educational institutions enacted from 1944 onwards had, in part, created a climate whereby the public was hungrier for greater access to the fine arts.⁶⁴ The political climate surrounding the arts became more sympathetic to less traditional and more popular arts in response to cultural shifts, particularly during the Labour government of Harold Wilson (1964-1970). Wilson appointed the first Minister of the Arts, Jennie Lee, whose 1965 white paper *A Policy for the Arts – The First Steps* lit the blue touch paper for the shift in momentum. While still seeing the arts as tools for “civilization,” Lee recast Wilson’s emphasis on the ‘White Heat’ of technology as bringing progress and increased leisure time; developments that would in turn make more space for arts and would make the country “gayer and more cultivated.”⁶⁵ Although not a radically populist call for the recognition of mass culture as art (Lee actually saw her proposal as combating commercial American mass culture but it was received as an endorsement of American-inspired youth culture),

⁶³ This was Lord Goodman’s succinct description of late 1960s arts movements. He added that “enthusiastic groups of young people are working under totally unorthodox conditions in a fashion which they find deeply satisfying” Arts Council of Great Britain, *Annual Report and Accounts, Year Ended 31 March 1970* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1970), 4–5.

⁶⁴ Lawrence Black, “‘Making Britain a Gayer and More Cultivated Country’: Wilson, Lee and the Creative Industries in the 1960s,” *Contemporary British History* 20, no. 3 (2006): 326.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 324.

the paper signaled a willingness by the Labour government that was traditionally lukewarm to arts funding to increase subsidies in the service of improving public access to art. Importantly, Lee's paper suggested the arts were, as Lawrence Black points out, "conceived as a cohesive force, overcoming social divisions through a common national identity."⁶⁶ Lee's openness to a broader conception of the arts (she included local theatre and jazz as examples) signaled an opening for alternative and neglected forms of artistic expression to gain prestige, official endorsement and funding for their activities, if a case could be made by their proponents that their activities promoted a general good.

In 1967, the Arts Council received a new charter from the government that reframed the Council's purpose along the lines advocated by Lee. The description of the arts in the council's aims and objects was amended from the "fine arts" to simply "the arts."⁶⁷ Inspired by pioneering works such as Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964) and Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts* (1967) which challenged cultural hierarchies and the old terrain of compartmentalized, canonical arts, practitioners of arts not traditionally covered by the fine arts penumbra were emboldened to legitimize their enterprises through government funding. The popular cultural mood gradually percolated into the Arts Council, where in 1969 even the phlegmatic Lord Goodman could declare that the Council had "tried... to remain contemporary and 'with it.'" ⁶⁸ Further to this embrace of the novel, a New Activities Council was funded in 1969 to address new forms of artistic endeavor. Notable mainly for funding performance artist Bruce Lacey and many other radical but forgettable endeavors, the New Activities

⁶⁶ Ibid., 329.

⁶⁷ Robert Hutchison, *The Politics of the Arts Council* (London: Sinclair Browne, 1982), 82.

⁶⁸ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Annual Report and Accounts, Year Ended 31 March 1969*, 5. Goodman mentioned in 1970's annual report that he had been asked to defend funding for "a collection of weirdly attired, hirsute bohemians whose principle joy in life is to revile you and the Council." Arts Council of Great Britain, *Annual Reports and Accounts, Year Ended 31 March. 25th*, 4.

Council was beset by disagreements and a lack of direction, and was disbanded in 1973.⁶⁹ New Activities were on the Arts Council's radar, but this did not mean that older arts that were excluded from funding would necessarily find favor. Although championed by the influential Ralph Vaughn Williams, folk music was denied funding in 1977 because it was an amateur activity that was "by its nature a matter of regional, or local, rather than national interest."⁷⁰ Notably too, craft practitioners received little attention due to lingering suspicions of amateurism and the whiff of commerce surrounding their practice.

The more ambiguous "arts" appellation did, however, mean that the case for inclusion could be made, and marginal arts such as radical theatre and photography were making their voices heard. The rise in the public profile of photography coincided happily with what Richard Witts has named the "yes" years of the Arts Council where funding from central government was secure, increasing, and being used progressively, and the money that the Council was able to use to support photographers ensued a mutually beneficial relationship.⁷¹ Photography's status as an emerging and exciting contemporary art form, as well as one with a rich and underappreciated history, meant also that both past and present could be called upon to furnish evidence for its importance. The Arts Council was expanding its remit, and photography found itself arguing successfully for funding alongside such contemporary bedfellows as experimental theatre, performance art and jazz.

⁶⁹ For a lengthier discussion, see B. J Moore-Gilbert and John Seed, *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 63.

⁷⁰ Given that one of CEMA's first grants in 1940 was given to the English Folk Dance and Song society, this must have been all the more galling. See Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 44.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 344.

THE VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT IN THE SIXTIES

The Arts Council's experience with photography is rooted in the unique status of the visual arts within the system. Contrary to the departments who oversaw funding for theatre and music which generally sponsored existing bodies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Opera, the Arts Council became the most important organizers of touring and temporary art exhibitions in Britain (labeled 'direct provision' because the Arts Council commissioned and assembled shows) in the post-war period, and also an important collector of artwork, both areas in which photography became involved. By 1981, around half of the Visual Arts department's spending was on projects initiated by the Arts Council itself.⁷² As Witts has argued, the relative autonomy of the visual arts panel, the success of many of its exhibitions and the strength of its leadership meant that it was one of the more successful departments in the Arts Council. He mentions that "it was through the visual arts that the council would attempt to protect its 'national' remit and seduce the Macmillan government and high society."⁷³

During the 1960s and 1970s, mirroring trends in the NEA, the art department's direct sponsorship tilted in favor of late modernist sculptors and painters such as Anthony Caro, Francis Bacon and Carl Andre, and it used the purpose-built and Arts Council-owned Hayward Gallery (opened in 1968) to showcase these.⁷⁴ Regional galleries such as the Arnolfini in Bristol and Oxford's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA)⁷⁵ were also cropping up simultaneously and seeking to fund their activities through the Arts Council;

⁷² Pearson, *The State and the Visual Arts*.

⁷³ Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 287.

⁷⁴ The impetus behind the new gallery came, in part, from a desire to return London to the world stage vis-à-vis art. A 1959 report "Housing the Arts" stimulated the debate surrounding a new national gallery of art: "the committee has come to the conclusion that London is short of suitable exhibition space, particularly when its present accommodation is compared with other great cities abroad such as New York, Paris and Rome." In *Ibid.*, 288.

⁷⁵ Pronounced "Momma" to distinguish it from its New York inspiration.

support was generally forthcoming until the economic crises of the mid-1970s brought significant cuts in funding.⁷⁶ These smaller galleries were modeled, in part, on the successful independent galleries which had bloomed in the hip London scene in the mid-1960s such as Robert Fraser and Indica which drew inspiration from American avant-garde painting and performance art.⁷⁷ Photography would become an important part of the small regional galleries' programs during the 1970s, and the Arts Council funded both gallery-produced and Arts Council led exhibitions. As a fresh 'new' medium that was mainly representational and accessible, photography was popular with crowds but, as we shall see, the galleries were not always showing leading material. The Arts Council's own answer to the new regional galleries was set up in 1970 with the Serpentine Gallery in London's Hyde Park. This too would become an important venue for the promotion of photography in Britain, not least because in holding photography shows at the new gallery and also the more blockbuster-oriented Hayward, the council was seen to be signaling the revival and promotion of photography.⁷⁸

Accompanying the advance of photography was a cosmopolitanism drawn from an expanding international art market. Joanna Drew, Director of Exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s, Director of Art in 1975 and by 1978 the Arts Council's Art director and concurrent head of the Hayward Gallery, had developed a policy that leant towards internationalism during her tenure, an internationalism which was designed to stimulate

⁷⁶ Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 290.

⁷⁷ Miles, *London Calling*, 161.

⁷⁸ In a criticism similar to that which would be levied at the Photography Committee's choices, the Hayward's focus on shows of international artists was critiqued by some members of the council and outside observers who lamented the lack of British exhibitors. See Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 294.

British artistic production. As Witts puts it, she was a dominant and influential force⁷⁹, embodying:

A practice, fading now, that was guided by a discriminating devotion to an artistic inheritance defined earlier as “anti-Victorianism”, and to a concern that British artists work best when they’re inspired or at least informed through exposure to foreign creativity. Drew didn’t need policy, she just *did* it. And one valued thing she did was to make the horrible Hayward not national but international and worth the drudge of visiting.⁸⁰

It was in this spirit of openness to outside influence that got Barry Lane the blessing for a visit to the US and a sympathetic ear when he advocated change along American lines.

THE COMMITTEE FOR EXHIBITIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

As Bill Jay had done earlier with *Creative Camera* and *Album*, those involved in photography at the Arts Council were fighting to overcome the pervasive view of photography typified in 1966 by the London Press Exchange Intelligence Centre, which dubbed it “Britain’s leading hobby.”⁸¹ The widespread belief that because one could become a ‘photographer’ through the purchase of a camera, and that the making of an image required only technical and not aesthetic expertise, was rife at the Arts Council. Especially in the upper echelons of Britain’s fine art establishment, photography was, at best, in Pierre Bourdieu’s memorable assertion “a middlebrow art.”⁸² Nonetheless, by the late 1960s, the obvious cracks that were appearing in the monolith of the fine arts allowed photography a foothold.

⁷⁹ Her *Daily Telegraph* obituary noted: “She freely admitted that the patronage of the Arts Council had had a marked effect on British painting, and that there was an “Arts Council Style.” “Joanna Drew Obituary,” *Telegraph.co.uk*, April 22, 2003, sec. Obituaries, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1428078/Joanna-Drew.html>.

⁸⁰ Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 297.

⁸¹ Black, ““Making Britain a Gay and More Cultivated Country,”” 326.

⁸² Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography, a Middle-Brow Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

Preceding the main Arts Council Photography panel was the Committee for Exhibitions of Photography which met from 1969-1971 to address the growing interest in specialized exhibitions of photography at the Council. Prior to the formation of the Committee, photography had been famously given short shrift at the Arts Council. Its most visible contribution, barring the support of a small show in 1945, was the 1951 *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography*⁸³ show, formed from Helmut Gernsheim's collection, was until 1969 the high watermark for government-sponsored photographic exhibitions in Britain.⁸⁴ The Arts Council had flirted with the idea of sponsoring photographic exhibitions throughout the 1960s, but those who wrote to enquire about funding were rebuffed with excuses ranging from funds "barely being able to fulfill the requirements" of painting and sculpture⁸⁵ to a memorable postcard received by Colin Osman from then-director of art Gabriel White which stated bluntly: "The Arts Council is not interested in photography."⁸⁶ In 1967, however, two events altered the Art Panel's attitude.⁸⁷ First, the Arts Council chairman, Lord Goodman, had had such a good time as a guest-of-honor at the Institute of Incorporated Photographers' annual award ceremony that he pressed the Visual Arts Panel to look into sponsoring photography. Second, the impetus was also provided by the possibility of receiving MoMA's Bill Brandt exhibition after it had been shown in New York, an offer that proved very effective in changing

⁸³ This was funded by a special treasury grant and not through normal Arts Council channels. Director of Art to Alfred Osman, February 2, 1965, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain Records, Theatre and Performance Archives, Victoria and Albert Museum.

⁸⁴ The two other seminal exhibitions "Modfot One" held at the R.P.W.C. gallery in 1967 and "Spectrum" held at the ICA in 1969 were not state-aided despite their organizers' efforts. See Lewinski, J.S., "Modfot One: A Most Unusual Exhibition," *Amateur Photographer* 133, no. 4079 (May 3, 1967): 580-83. and *Spectrum*.

⁸⁵ Director of Art to Osman, February 2, 1965.

⁸⁶ Osman, interview. Osman commented that: "lots of people at the Arts Council would love to have that framed above their desks."

⁸⁷ "Art Panel- 11 October 1967" (Arts Council of Great Britain, October 11, 1967), ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

minds among council members. In 1967, White started scouting for potential members of a proposed committee for photography exhibitions, asking noted architectural photographer Eric de Maré for suggestion. In his response, de Maré mentioned stalwarts of the British scene such as Bill Brandt, Sir George Pollock and Raymond Moore and the up-and-coming Don McCullin as potential members, and welcomed the Arts Council's interest:

Photography in this country badly needs some Kudos. Mostly photographers here are not regarded as artists or even craftsmen but as tradesmen, though the situation is certainly improving. Well, anyone can look through a hole and press a knob.⁸⁸

White's reply to de Maré indicated that the Arts panel had agreed to "occasionally" sponsor exhibitions and added that as MoMA had offered to "come in with them on two shows" (Henri-Cartier Bresson and Bill Brandt), and in addition a small council should be appointed to support these and future exhibitions.⁸⁹ In a later letter, White signaled his unease about photography's status: "the tricky side to taking up photography is of course all the commercial and vested interests," and although these exhibitions were green-lighted, the council declined to extend its support to anything other than photographic exhibitions,⁹⁰ and only one or two of these a year.⁹¹ After two years of dithering and glacial progress, the Committee was formed in 1969. Rather than cheer the development, the composition of the Committee instantly drew fire from photography professionals. Aaron Scharf's objections were communicated thus by deputy director of art Robin Campbell:

⁸⁸ Eric de Mare to Gabriel White, May 9, 1967, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁸⁹ MoMA had offered three additional exhibitions to the Arts Council in 1969: "New American Photography"; "Dorothea Lange" and "The Photographer's Eye." Robin Campbell, "Exhibitions of Photography," May 6, 1969, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁹⁰ Director of Art to Carol Hogben, September 1, 1967, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁹¹ Director of Art to Trevor Fry, April 22, 1968, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Roy Strong is not an expert on photography; Cecil Beaton is not a serious photographer, Gibbs-Smith opposed the holding of the Cartier-Bresson exhibition; Tristram Powell has done only one BBC programme on photography; George Hughes is the editor of the 'wrong' photography magazine, Eric de Mare is OK, Julia Trevelyan Oman not mentioned.⁹²

In the three years between the Committee for Exhibitions of Photography and the Photography Committee's formation, it was clear that there was a clash of interests between the rather tired old guard and the new independent photography generation. As Barry Lane recalled "[the Committee] didn't really have much to do and not much in the way of ideas."⁹³

The Committee for Exhibitions of Photography met around four times a year to make recommendations to the Exhibitions Sub-Committee. The amounts granted during this period were comparatively small: in 1970 the panel recommended an award for £100 for an exhibition of Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs at Leighton House, and in 1971 the panel granted exhibition funds ranging from £30 to £150 to individuals and organizations putting on shows.⁹⁴ In 1970, the art panel recommended that the Arts Council should not form and tour its own exhibitions of photography but that photography exhibitions formed outside the Arts Council should be subsidized by grants, thus opening up the possibility of financial support for shows assembled by individuals

⁹² Robin Campbell to John Pope-Hennessy, February 27, 1969, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain. Tony Armstrong-Jones (Lord Snowdon) declined the invitation to chair the committee. Antony Armstrong-Jones to Lord Goodman, April 2, 1968, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁹³ Lane, interview. Lane was also critical of the fact that the one exhibition the committee had managed during its existence was "Masterpieces of Victorian Photography from the Royal Photographic Society Collection," noting ironically that in twenty years the council had "come full circle" since the 1951 exhibit from Gensheim's collection. This exhibition was, interestingly, selected by Aaron Scharf and toured England for a year.

⁹⁴ Barry Lane, "Subsidies for Photography" (Arts Council of Great Britain, February 8, 1971), ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

and organizations inside and outside Britain.⁹⁵ Significantly, the Arts Finance Committee recommended a grant of £2,000 to the Photographers' Gallery in its first year of existence, an institution vital to the support of British photography and one which would receive continued support from the Arts Council thereafter. The grant was given partially as a means of helping the gallery argue for support from other sources especially in the crucial first few years and also to decrease the amount of sponsorship needed which "might lead to a falling off of quality."⁹⁶

The list of exhibition ideas rejected by the Committee highlights the dominance of US-based exhibitions at the time: nearly half the shows proposed from 1969-1973 came from US institutions or were proposed by US photographers.⁹⁷ These included numerous proposals from Bill Jay at *Album* to bring touring shows from George Eastman House to the UK (rejected as "too expensive"); Van Deren Coke's offer to bring his "Coke Collection" show from the Museum of Albuquerque (declined) as was an exhibition of early English photography offered by the Philadelphia Museum of Art.⁹⁸ Limited in funds and co-operative spaces for exhibition, the Committee's rejection of proposals reflected more regret that they could not take the exhibitions than refusal on the grounds of taste. The list also demonstrates the ease with which the Committee could import exhibitions from the US after finding suitable venues for them or, indeed tour them under the aegis of the Arts Council: an attractive option in the nascent years of promoting photography.

⁹⁵ Barry Lane, "Extracts from My Minute of August 1971 to Robin Campbell, Norbert Lynton, Peter Bird and Joanna Drew," August 1971, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁹⁶ This money was to help with a shortfall of £5,844 in a £20,000 budget. "Art Finance Committee Minutes," September 14, 1971, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁹⁷ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Photography Committee: Exhibition Proposals 1969-1972," Undated, ACGB/31/93, Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

BARRY LANE AS PHOTOGRAPHY OFFICER

In an interview for the National Life Story Collection in 2002, Joanna Drew briefly recounted her time working as Barry Lane's superior: "he was very effective," she recalled, "he kind of made himself a separate photography business and got himself a committee and then worked like fury to get himself set up as a separate department no longer to be part of the Art department."⁹⁹ Drew also gave an insight into Lane's skillful approach to increasing photography's budget vis-à-vis other forms of visual art:

Barry Lane would put in budgets representing globally the areas he was responsible for: a 200% increase. And when he was told by the chairman of the Finance Committee (who usually hadn't had time to really go into it in any great depth) "sorry I don't really think we can manage this level of budget for photography in the coming year, Barry, I'm sorry to disappoint you but I think we'll have to say 100 instead of 200" or whatever it was, Barry Lane would look suitably disappointed, knowing I knew perfectly well that in fact he was incredibly pleased because he'd put in for 200% increase knowing that he wasn't going to get that, so he got a hundred percent increase when everybody else had got 4% and so he would look disappointed until he got outside.¹⁰⁰

This practice was, in Drew's estimation, "absolutely devilish," but the major beneficiaries of the council's largesse would hardly complain; Lane's shrewd if sometimes polarizing oversight of the Arts Council's Photography Committee gleaned an annual increase in funds each year from 1971 until 1980.¹⁰¹

After working in various galleries such as Oxford's MOMA, after graduation from Oxford University, Lane became a regional arts officer for Arts Council in the

⁹⁹ Joanna Drew and Lydia O'Ryan, *Interview: Joanna Drew*, MP3, vol. 45 & 46, 50 vols., National Life Story Collection, 2002, C466/139, National Life Story Collection: Artists' Lives.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Jay was interested in assembling a show of contemporary British photography at MoMA. A similar motion was made to the Visual Arts panel in 1971 but funding was declined.

¹⁰¹ Arts Council records verify Drew's claims. In the third year of the committee's existence, Lane asked for a budget allocation of £86,000 for 1975-76, three times the amount allocated for 1974-75. Barry Lane to Robin Campbell, January 9, 1975, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

South of England, a position that required him to organize and tour exhibitions and to engage in grant aid work, skills that would be crucial in his next endeavor. Although not trained as a photographer, Lane's interest in photography was piqued when he attended the *Spectrum* exhibition at the ICA in 1969 where he met Bill Jay, Tony Ray-Jones and David Hurn.¹⁰² Jay's enthusiasm was to have a lasting effect on Lane, and alerted him to the "emerging excitement" in British photography.¹⁰³ Sensing the Arts Council's creeping acceptance of photography, and seeing an opportunity to further this effort, Lane pushed for more Council money for and greater recognition of photography. A January 1971 memorandum from Lane to Robin Campbell outlined his goals. Moving away from a solely exhibition-focused strategy, Lane suggested that as the cost of mounting and framing photographs was relatively low, the Arts Council could help support photographers by purchasing their work for the Arts Council collection, commissioning work, subsidizing 'little magazines' and photographers' monographs and, most importantly, giving them money: "grants are needed to make it possible for photographers to take photographs."¹⁰⁴

The impetus for direct sponsorship of photographers also came from Larry Herman, an American photographer working in London and Glasgow. Herman, according to Lane "was the first photographer to come to me and say "I want some work."¹⁰⁵ Herman was awarded £174 in 1972 to take a seven week trip to finish a project

¹⁰² Lane, interview. See also "The Arts Council Has a New Interest," *Kodak Professional News*, no. 10 (Spring 1975): 12.: "If Barry Lane had not become friendly with Bill Jay, editor of the magazine *Creative Camera* and with photographer Tony Ray-Jones, the Arts Council might not today have a Photography Officer."

¹⁰³ "The Arts Council Has a New Interest," 12. Lane and Jay stayed in contact throughout Lane's career at the Arts Council and exchanged photographic books for the Arizona State and Arts Council libraries. Bill Jay to Barry Lane, 1979, ACGB/32/197, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁰⁴ Barry Lane to Peter Bird, January 26, 1971, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain. Original emphasis.

¹⁰⁵ The figure was £9180 from 1971-1972/3. Lane, interview.

he had already started, photographing fishermen on the Lofoten Islands of Norway. Herman also received grants from the *Sunday Times* and *Life* who published the photos and the Photographers' Gallery had agreed to showing Herman's photographs when the project was complete. Although the Committee had been successful in subsidizing Herman's work, members of the art panel were confused as to why the Arts Council should fund an American photographer to photograph in Norway when he could have chosen a project in Britain.¹⁰⁶ That Herman was committed to showing his work at the Photographers' Gallery, an institution in receipt of the majority of the Visual Arts panel's grants from 1971-1972,¹⁰⁷ helped his cause, but the blurring of lines between commercial documentary work for magazines with a nominally artistic project was perceived as likely to cause consternation to a Visual Arts Panel steeped in the fine arts and skeptical of contemporary excursions into the redefinition of this.

Another example that illustrates this transition is a discretionary award given in 1971 to Homer Sykes (recently back from a trip to the US) to cover the miscellaneous costs of a photography project to be shown at the Photographers' Gallery in February 1972. As Ilford were supplying the photographic materials, Sykes applied for financial support to cover petrol money and "subsistence for 16 days."¹⁰⁸ In recommending Sykes' award, Lane noted that these types of request were going to become more common and that unlike painters or sculptors whose material costs were high (photographers could get paper and chemicals donated), the main financial burden for photography was transportation and living costs as, Lane suggested, "a photographer must travel to take his photographs."¹⁰⁹ Herman's and Sykes' examples proved to Lane that it was possible to

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Lane, "Subsidies for Photography."

¹⁰⁸ Barry Lane to Peter Bird, January 26, 1971, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

argue for individual support of photographers but that he would have to continue to build a case both for photography as a separate art that bestrode both the documentary and the creative realms. Rounding out this trio, Sylvester Jacobs, an American photographer teaching in the South of England was awarded £50 to cover the cost of printing and mounting his photographs for an exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery.¹¹⁰

Unsatisfied by the “piecemeal and erratic” processes of the Committee for Exhibitions of Photography and its ageing, often absent members (Cecil Beaton only ever attended one meeting), Lane proposed a series of changes to the Committee in September 1971, notably that its name be changed to the “Photography Committee”; that the Committee come under the direct aegis of the Art Panel and that the Photography Committee be responsible for making grant recommendations directly to the Art Panel with a budget specifically for this.¹¹¹ These were the first steps toward eking out an autonomous space for photography, and for Lane to simultaneously make his mark in the Arts Council, a process that was ultimately legitimized by and invigorated by a transatlantic journey in 1972s.¹¹²

LANE’S TRIP TO AMERICA: THE BEGINNINGS

Given that funding in the arts in the US had historically been the result of private patronage, and that the NEA had been modeled partially on the Arts Council, at first blush it might appear odd that Lane would choose the US as the place to go for examining governmental schemes for arts funding. The trip was, however, conducted

¹¹⁰ “Art Finance Committee Minutes,” May 31, 1972, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹¹¹ Lane, “Extracts from My Minute of August 1971 to Robin Campbell, Norbert Lynton, Peter Bird and Joanna Drew.”

¹¹² Lane described his job as: “Regional Art Officer with special responsibilities for grant applications and touring exhibitions.” Barry Lane to R.F. Tredwen, November 3, 1971, ACGB/32/207, Arts Council of Great Britain.

during a flowering of state and federal grants for arts in the US and creative ways of applying these. Inspired by Bill Jay's recounting of the American scene, Lane successfully applied for a Kodak Award (received in October 1971) to "visit various organizations in America and Canada that are concerned with the promotion of contemporary creative photography; to investigate the range of their policies and the cost of their programs."¹¹³

The award continued the significant role Kodak had played promoting and funding British photography.¹¹⁴ Although long associated with quintessentially "American" values such as ingenuity, technical innovation and a democratic approach to photography-for-all, Kodak did not seem particularly foreign to most Britons, enmeshed as it had been in the British photographic scene since the company's first overseas expansion in 1891.¹¹⁵ Like Pentax, Geveart (later Agfa-Geveart), Olympus and Ilford, Kodak was an important commercial champion of professional photography in Britain before the explosion of interest in independent photography in the 1970s. Until the independent gallery movement in the 1950s and 1960s, the offices and galleries of camera and photographic materials manufacturers were the only places to see photographic exhibitions outside of salons, club shows and art schools. The Kodak Gallery at 184 Regent Street, London, and later the gallery at Kodak House in Holborn were important venues for the display and discussion of photography up until the 1960s, and the company had maintained a collection of camera equipment since 1927 (later

¹¹³ R.F. Tredwen to Barry Lane, October 25, 1971, ACGB/32/207, Arts Council of Great Britain. In 1970, Kodak announced that they would give £1000 each year for five years to the National Portrait Gallery toward future exhibitions. "Products-Reviews-News," *Creative Camera*, no. 67 (January 1970): 32.

¹¹⁴ For a comprehensive overview of Kodak's early years in Britain, see Colin Harding, "A Transatlantic Emanation: The Kodak Comes to Britain," in *American Photographs in Europe*, ed. David E. Nye and M. Gidley, European Contributions to American Studies 29 (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 109–29.

¹¹⁵ Gerry Badger and Martin Parr, "We Are All Photographers Now: Popular Photographic Modes in Great Britain," in *How We Are: Photographing Britain: From the 1840s to the Present*, ed. Val Williams and Susan Bright (London: Tate, 2007), 202.

accompanied by a research library) at its factory in Harrow that was to later form the basis of the Photographic Technology collection at The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television.¹¹⁶ From 1959 to 1965, Kodak UK ran the Kodak Scholarships scheme which six took promising young British photographic professionals each year to either London for an advanced technical photography course or to Rochester, NY for a twelve week course in color photography.¹¹⁷ Additionally, Kodak awarded numerous small grants to photographers, educational organizations and charities through their Kodak Grants Scheme, which was awarded quarterly.¹¹⁸ The scheme was later revised in 1973 as the Kodak Bursaries for Photographic Studies of Social Importance, in the hope that “desirable causes and successful applicants will benefit from the award of a bursary.”¹¹⁹ Welcome as these schemes were, few of these awards were granted explicitly for *creative* photography: this is where the Arts Council stepped in. The Kodak Awards Scheme was not, as the previous scholarship scheme had been, tied to travel to the US, but Lane’s application must have appealed to the Committee given his Arts Council provenance and expressed desire to, amongst other things, visit George Eastman House.

¹¹⁶ “The New Kodak Museum,” *The British Journal of Photography*, September 26, 1980, 946–949.

“The New Kodak Museum,” *The British Journal of Photography*, September 26, 1980. This was later renamed The National Media Museum.

¹¹⁷ Ainslie Ellis, “1964 Kodak Scholarship Exhibition,” *The British Journal of Photography* 111, no. 5445 (November 27, 1964): 966–970. Also: Peggy Delius, “On the Crest of a Wave: The 1965 Kodak Scholarship Exhibition,” *The British Journal of Photography* 112, no. 5496 (November 26, 1965): 1035–1039.

¹¹⁸ R.F. Tredwen to Barry Lane, November 1, 1972, ACGB/32/207, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹¹⁹ Kodak Limited, “Kodak Bursaries for Photographic Studies of Social Importance- Prospectus,” 1973, ACGB/32/207, Arts Council of Great Britain. Lane was later to serve on the panel of three outside adjudicators (Lord John Hunt, leader of the 1953 Everest Expedition and R.E. Boote, director of the Nature Conservancy) who decided on the recipients of the awards from 1973-1977. R. Freeman-Wright to Barry Lane, February 7, 1973, ACGB/32/207, Arts Council of Great Britain. Three awards were given in 1973, totaling £9,500: one for a young photographer and two open awards. In 1974 the awards were amended to limit them to British citizens for projects to be undertaken in the UK. Lane also later served as an assessor for the 1977 Bicentennial fellowships awarded by the British Council. Keith Jeffery to Barry Lane, February 11, 1977, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Although the Kodak Awards Scheme would continue into the 1970s, it was no longer the sole provider of grants: Lane's trip was a symbolic torch-passing from a generation of private patronage to a system of government support that derived its inspiration from what Lane had seen in the US and Canada.

Transatlantic "grand tours" by photographic professionals were increasingly common during the 1960s and 1970s: many young photographers visited the US purely to take photographs, but the more industry-minded went to study the technical advancements being made there. *The British Journal of Photography* offered an "American Photographic Study Tour" in 1966,¹²⁰ where a "group of delegates" mainly interested in the technical side of photography toured manufacturing plants in Boston and Philadelphia, visited George Eastman House, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other sites in the Eastern US. Four years later, the magazine published an account by Alan Horder, who was awarded a fellowship from the Churchill Trust to report on developments in photographic technology and photographic education in the US,¹²¹ and Michael Hallett, who reported back from his year studying and teaching at the Rochester Institute of Technology.¹²²

¹²⁰ "British Journal of Photography American Study Tour May 1966," *The British Journal of Photography* 131, no. 5508 (February 11, 1966): 111.

¹²¹ Speaking to a UK meeting of the SPE, Horder concluded that "there was a tremendous variety of courses offered and an awful lot of photography taught to non-photographers, which... was an excellent thing." "Nottingham-Derby Meeting," *Spectrum: Journal of the Society for Photographic Education*, Spring 1971, 13. See also Alan Horder, "A 12 Week Study Tour in the USA, Part 1," *The British Journal of Photography* 117, no. 5720 (March 6, 1970): 239–242. A similar grant was offered by the Churchill Trust in 1981 for a research trip on the theme of "Photography as Art." "Churchill Fellowships," *Creative Camera* no. 201 (September 1981): 209. Paul Graham won one of the awards to "go to the USA to study the organization and uses of photographic surveys." "Churchill Fellowships 1982," *The British Journal of Photography* 129, no. 6344 (March 5, 1982): 237. Aside from the Kodak and Churchill Fellowships, David Hurn won a United Kingdom-United States Biennial Fellowship to Arizona in 1979. Ainslie Ellis and David Hurn, "Illuminating Ideas: The Photography of David Hurn," *The British Journal of Photography* 129, no. 6339 (January 12, 1982): 112–116.

¹²² Michael Hallett, "Rochester Institute of Technology- An Interview with the Director of the School of Photography," *The British Journal of Photography* 117, no. 5179 (February 27, 1970): 210–212.

Lane's funding fact-finding mission had a previous precedent in Bill Gaskins' 1970 Kodak-funded tour of the US, undertaken "to find out what was happening in Photographic Education and Photography on the other side of the Atlantic."¹²³ Gaskins was a pioneer of creative photographic education in Britain, and during his tenure at Derby School of Art had succeeded in carving out a niche for artistic photography that only a handful of colleges (including the influential Guildford School of Art) were pursuing.¹²⁴ Charting a journey that Lane was to follow two years later, Gaskins visited university art departments, art institutes and museums in New York, San Francisco, New Mexico, Chicago, and Indiana, and then travelled back to the East Coast with stops in Boston, Rochester and Pennsylvania. Reporting back to the British chapter of the Society for Photographic education in 1971,¹²⁵ Gaskins' recollections mixed prosaic observations ("the whole country is very extrovert and very, very big") with astute comparisons between Britain and the US.¹²⁶ Photography, he reported, was well-integrated into

¹²³ Bill Gaskins, "The American Scene," *Spectrum: Journal of the Society for Photographic Education* (Spring 1971): 11. Barry Lane mentions Gaskins' trip in his interview for the Oral History of British Photography. Lane encouraged Gaskins to become a member of the Photography Committee as he was "at that point... transforming the teaching of photography at Nottingham what was to become Trent Polytechnic which was a result of a trip that he had made the year before me courtesy of Kodak, around American universities, and he saw the opportunity for change in what, up to that time had been very much trade-oriented higher education. He tried to create the first art degree." Lane, interview.

¹²⁴ Like Bill Jay, Gaskins was a passionate advocate for creative photography and did not shy away from criticizing the entrenched attitudes of the British educational profession. Profiling Derby College of Art in *The British Journal of Photography*, Gaskins lamented the state of photographic education in Britain and decried the "cross-section of teachers who are not only out of touch but have no desire, or make any attempt, to be anything but so," adding that "if a lecturer is genuinely dedicated to photographic education, and the profession, then he will not only work long hours, but will 'eat, sleep and dream' photography." William Gaskins, "The Derby School of Creative Photography," *The British Journal of Photography* CXXXII, no. 5589 (September 1, 1967): 751.

¹²⁵ The same issue of *Spectrum* reported on the July 1970 Nottingham-Derby meeting of the SPE where Van Deren Coke had spoken about the US photographic education system. The magazine breathlessly reported on the comparatively lavish resources and supportive atmosphere in the US. Coke was asked "Do you think this [system of education] will catch on in England" to which he replied: "Yes, it's happening. Several people are doing it but they have an aura because they aren't calling themselves photographers." "Nottingham-Derby Meeting," 7.

¹²⁶ Gaskins, "The American Scene," 11.

American college curricula, was largely taught in BFA and MFA courses, and, importantly, offered students more than a rigid vocational training.¹²⁷ “It was gratifying,” he noted, “to find that photography was a socially acceptable subject everywhere... a photographer in the USA is generally thought of as an artist by the public.”¹²⁸ Some drawbacks to the American system existed; US teachers did not spend as much time teaching as their British counterparts and switched jobs often, for example, but Gaskins left with an overwhelmingly positive view of the US and a determination to change the system in Britain as evident in his report:

Comparing teachers of photography in the States with teachers in Britain is, for me, a very sad thing to have to do. Having seen the situation in America I can only condemn the apathy which exists with many teachers in this country, although I must hastily add that, in part, this is forced upon by the education authorities. I refer of course to the lack of interest by teachers in “Photography”; by this I mean Photography as a communicative medium, as a tool for social comment, expression and even research... if we are to learn from the “American Dream” then lesson one should be that we need not only to aim for higher standards but to reappraise the whole approach to photographic education in this country.¹²⁹

In particular, Gaskins would later argue for a more integrated approach to teaching photography in Britain, not only advocating the teaching of photography as fine art but also “as a vehicle for education” where courses could include humanities offerings alongside a history of the field and technical training.¹³⁰ Lane would return to Britain with a similar reforming zeal and Gaskins later became an important and vocal advocate for photography on the Arts Council.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ “The Arts Council Has a New Interest,” 13.

US PHOTOGRAPHY IN 1972: EVERYTHING WAS HAPPENING

Everything appeared to be coming from America: the galleries, the sales, the university courses, the teaching: everything was happening, the museums, everything was really, really exciting in America. I spent two months travelling around America and Canada from east to west and north to south meeting John Szarkowski and Bob Heinecken and everyone you can imagine and Van Deren Coke up in Rochester.¹³¹

Lane visited the US and Canada from March to May 1972, a period that showed a remarkable growth of and interest in photography. The US was experiencing a golden age in arts funding, and like the Arts Council in the early 1970s, most government agencies promoting the arts enjoyed bipartisan support. The salad days of the Arts Council in Great Britain occurred simultaneously with those of the NEA: spending on the arts rose from \$9 million in 1970 to \$99.9 million in 1977;¹³² in the UK the equivalent figures are £8.2 million (\$22 million) in 1970-71 and £41.73 million (\$95 million) in 1977-78.¹³³ Comparable as these sums may be, British arts had to rely more heavily on the Arts Council than their American counterparts because private patronage of the arts in Britain was in decline and corporate sponsorship insignificant in comparison to the US.¹³⁴ By 1977, US state legislative appropriations were contributing \$55.7 million to the arts on top of the nearly \$100 million the federal government were providing.

The burgeoning system of local and state funding authorities in the US mirrored the system of the Regional Arts organizations in Great Britain that had been directly funded by the Arts Council since 1966. US states and cities had long benefited from

¹³¹ Lane, interview.

¹³² Mark Bauerlein and Ellen Grantham, eds., *National Endowment for the Arts : A History, 1965-2008* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2009), 39.

¹³³ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Annual Report and Accounts Year, Ended 31 March 1971*.; Arts Council of Great Britain, *A Year of Achievement: Thirty-Third Annual Report and Accounts 1977-78* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978).

¹³⁴ Indeed, patronage by the NEA was vital to securing private funds in the US in many cases as it provided a critical stamp of approval Bauerlein and Grantham, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 40.

museums and foundations set up by wealthy benefactors, but from 1971-1975 the NEA abetted this by financing 55 new state arts agencies (all 50 states and five territories) and giving them basic grants. It is important to note that the amount of funding for photography through regional, state, and city grants in the US vastly outstripped the amount available in Britain. By 1964, for example, there were 90 Regional Arts Councils operating in the US compared to 12 Regional Arts Associations in Britain in 1971.¹³⁵ Funding bodies in the US were quicker to accept photography as an art or, indeed, did not think to distinguish otherwise. Money for “arts” therefore was often more available at the state level, and American photographers had an easier time convincing these various bodies that their work was worth funding.

Innovative approaches occurred at the state level, in particular the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), which August Hecksher deemed “the most significant experiment at the state level in encouraging and fostering the arts,” and served as a template for other states’ own Arts Councils.¹³⁶ Predating federal support of the arts, the state councils became a vital part of the photography landscape. The NYSCA also made good use of local talent: in its first year of operation in 1960, the Council toured the show *Masterpieces of Photography*, organized by Nathan Lyons under the auspices of the American Federation of Arts, to twelve cities across the state, and Beaumont Newhall also served on NYSCA’s Visual Arts advisory panel from 1961-1963.¹³⁷ As a minority art with fewer steady outlets for funding, photography and photographers largely welcomed government grants in contrast to the suspicion with which they were treated

¹³⁵ These were East Midlands, Eastern, Greater London, Lincolnshire and Humberside, Merseyside, North West, Northern, South East, South West, Southern, West Midlands, Yorkshire. Scotland and Wales had their own separate Arts Councils, although these were subordinate to the Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹³⁶ *New York State Council on the Arts: 1960-1964* (New York, NY: New York State Council on the Arts, 1964), 4.

¹³⁷ *New York State Council on the Arts Annual Report* (New York, NY: New York State Council on the Arts, 1961), 23.

elsewhere. In his introduction to the New York State Council on the Arts' 1962 annual report, William Schulman attested that "the artist is learning that the bugaboo of "government interference" is just that: a bugaboo," although such sentiment perhaps overstates the degree to which artists had previously refused the little support they were offered on moral grounds.¹³⁸

By 1970, the NYSCA was funding 42 programs under the penumbra of "Film, Photography and Audio Visual Programs and Services" at a total cost of \$1,138,804.¹³⁹ Among those organizations receiving money for photography were the Archives of American Art ("for continuing documentation of N.Y State printmakers, craftsmen, photographers and the general New York art scene"),¹⁴⁰ the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse (for the photo documentary "Life in Syracuse"),¹⁴¹ George Eastman House, the Visual Studies Workshop, the James Vanderzee Institute, the Educational Alliance (for photo workshops for children),¹⁴² dozens of photographic workshops for teens, and finally, the Floating Foundation of Photography (for their "Up the Hudson" photography workshops).¹⁴³ The variety and scope of these organizations demonstrates the vitality of photographic enterprises that were beginning in the US and were, importantly, beginning to receive funding from official sources.

State arts foundations tended to give money to existing or proposed projects that where a number of people would be involved and where there was a discernible benefit to the broader population. Funding exhibitions was one method of increasing public access

¹³⁸ *New York State Council on the Arts Annual Report* (New York, NY: New York State Council on the Arts, 1962), 5.

¹³⁹ Eric Larrabee, "New York State Council on the Arts Aid to Cultural Organizations' Funding 1970-71" (*Associated Councils of the Arts*, March 1971), 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 27.

to the arts, but some of the initiatives that were funded combined education, broader social concerns and an opportunity for artistic discourse. The Floating Foundation of Photography, for example, taught photography to psychiatric patients from Bellevue Hospital Center and prisoners at Sing Sing prison from 1970-71 as a method of self-expression for persons who lacked other outlets.¹⁴⁴ A series of exhibit portfolios of photographic prints was funded by NYSCA on behalf of the New York Museums Collaborative of the Cultural Council Foundation, with the intention of providing the basis of a low-cost exhibition to interested museums and community spaces. The most enduring of the seven produced is probably Arthur Tress' *Open Space in the Inner City* (1971) which examined places (or the lack thereof) for children to play in New York City.¹⁴⁵ These socially-conscious, community-based came mostly from the bottom-up, i.e. the impetus came from those already working with photography rather than a government scheme administered from above. As A.D. Coleman notes, the Floating Foundation of Photography typified the New York photo scene in the early 1970s "before serious money became part of the equation."¹⁴⁶ It was a scene that "ran mostly on the dedication of people who loved photography and found ways, frequently unorthodox ones, to move it forward, to expand its audiences and impact."¹⁴⁷ Venues such as the Floating Foundation of Photography served as spaces for the exchange of ideas about photography and their novel approaches to confronting social problems were the result of

¹⁴⁴ Beth E. Wilson, "Captain Maggie and the Boat: A Brief History of the Floating Foundation of Photography," *The Floating Foundation of Photography*, 2010, http://www.floatingfoundationofphotography.com/#!__maggie-sherwood.

¹⁴⁵ The other titles in the series were *The Eerie Canal*, *Farm Life Today*, *Main Street*, *Neighbors on the Block*, *Growing Up Black* and *The Lower East Side*, listed in Arthur Tress, *Open Space in the Inner City; Ecology and the Urban Environment*. (New York: New York State Council on the Arts, 1971).

¹⁴⁶ A. D. Coleman, "Moored and Adrift: Maggie Sherwood and the Floating Foundation of Photography," *The Photo Review* 29, no. 1 (2010): 3-4.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

providing physical spaces (as opposed to the virtual spaces of magazines) where discourse could be established. Grants helped fund photographers but they were also instrumental in fostering community.¹⁴⁸

Aside from well-established photography programs at George Eastman House, MoMA and the Art Institute of Chicago, some of the most innovative and energetic ventures were emerging. Two of the most important examples of these were Nathan Lyons' experimental work/study program at the Visual Studies Workshop (VSW) in Rochester, which was "organized to establish, maintain and operate a Learning Center for special programs in research, teaching, and projects involving studies in modes of visual communications"¹⁴⁹ and the Light Impressions Co., a gallery space and mail-order business, also in Rochester which, according to its founders, "was formed on a great idea, blind faith, and a gasoline card."¹⁵⁰ Alongside the MA program at the University of New Mexico, the Visual Studies Workshop would become one of the most important training grounds for photography professionals in the world, and was increasingly oriented toward what would become the field of Visual Studies. Lyons, previously curator at George Eastman House, had set up "an ambitious program of exhibitions and publications"¹⁵¹ during his tenure there and by 1967 had set up the Museum Training Program and Advanced Study Workshop, both dedicated to training individuals to develop and

¹⁴⁸ Coleman acknowledges the nostalgia with which his recollections are tinged, but also gives an insight into what was gained and lost when photography moved from the margins into the mainstream as a result of small-scale community efforts: "Some of us, Maggie [Sherwood] and Steve [Schoen] among them, thought globally while acting locally. Now, as a result, we have an international image environment, diverse and complex beyond our wildest dreams. But in the process we have lost our connection to the beauty and potential of the eccentric, low-budget, self-sustaining venture. Tellingly, few today refer to, or even understand, the concept of 'labor of love.'" *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁹ Nathan Lyons, "Visual Studies Workshop Membership Program" (Visual Studies Workshop, 1971), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁵⁰ Kenda North et al., "A Christmas Message to All Our Friends" (Light Impressions, 1974), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁵¹ McDonald, *Nathan Lyons*, 3.

propagate their professional curatorial and educational skills.¹⁵² Lyons ploughed this energy into setting up in 1969 what was to become the Visual Studies Workshop (VSW) by 1972, an experimental venture that matched Lyons' dedication to the new and contemporary in photography and increasingly blurred the lines between photography and the visual arts.¹⁵³ When Lane visited in 1972, the workshop had seventy master's degree students, a dedicated darkroom space, a burgeoning research library, a collection of nineteenth and twentieth-century prints, and a media center.¹⁵⁴ It was Bill Jay's Photographic Study Centre on steroids. Lane returned frequently, and although no notes exist from his visits, it is clear that the experiences had a lasting impression on Lane. In 1980, he began work on "The Nathan Lyons Project" to organize a tour for Lyons around UK photographic venues around the UK in 1981.¹⁵⁵ Lane detailed his rationale in a letter: "As you know, I have always admired your Workshop and the many initiatives it has taken, and always returned to England full of ideas after each of my visits. I am sure the administrators and others in photography organizations in Britain would similarly benefit from visiting you."¹⁵⁶ Lyons was open to the invitation, but the plan was abandoned after a 20% Arts Council budget cut also sank the Photography Committee. Beyond the VSW and Light Impressions, the US also led the way in embryonic commercial ventures for independent photography. The Witkin Gallery had been founded exclusively for photography in 1969, and established galleries such as Robert Schoelkopf in New York were pioneering the collecting of photographs. Sometimes ad-hoc but often sophisticated, the excitement in US photography was beginning to manifest itself in concrete ways;

¹⁵² Ibid., 14.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 20.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁵⁵ Barry Lane, "Notes: Nathan Lyons Project," 1980, ACGB/32/197, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁵⁶ Barry Lane to Nathan Lyons, November 3, 1980, ACGB/32/197, Arts Council of Great Britain.

although things were happening in the UK too, the early 1970s in the US were particularly fruitful. Although many of these ventures were almost brand new when Lane visited, it is easy to see how the impression that many observers made that Britain was “ten years behind” the US was conveyed. Still in their early stages of development, and surviving on a wing and a prayer, these ventures were imbued with a palpable sense of possibility and excitement that was just beginning to take root in Britain.

THE CREATIVE ARTISTS SERVICE PROGRAM, THE NEA AND THE MUSEUMS

The places Barry Lane visited are listed below with the people he met with (where known) and can be read as a good, though not exhaustive, roadmap of American photographic institutions in the early 1970s:

National Endowment of the Arts, Washington, D.C.
Museum of Modern Art, New York—John Szarkowski, Peter Bunnell
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York—Karl Katz
The Art Institute of Chicago—Marie Czach
The Oakland Museum of Art
The Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY—Nathan Lyons
The Canada Council
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Museum of Albuquerque
New York State Council on the Arts, New York
George Eastman House, Rochester, NY—Bill Jenkins
Ontario Council for the Arts
National Film Board of Canada
Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, New York
Library of Congress
Pasadena Museum of Californian Art, Pasadena, CA

It is worth recounting what Lane gleaned from this visit more generally as well as looking at two case studies that highlight elements of two programs which directly influenced Arts Council policy.

The NYSCA gave a major grant to the Creative Artists Public Service Program (CAPS) as a pilot scheme in 1970-71, a scheme designed to “commission professional artists to complete works in progress or to create new works as well as pay the artist for direct services to the public,”¹⁵⁷ with one-fifth of the funds provided going to support community service activities such as public exhibitions, talks or workshops surrounding the work produced under the grant. CAPS program director Isabell Fernandez touted the program as “the first... to offer professional payment for artistic work and community services.”¹⁵⁸ The longtime purpose of these grants was to “incorporate the artist into the economic mainstream” and integrate the artist into the community by providing the means for him or her to become self-sufficient.¹⁵⁹ The awards, averaging around \$2700 apiece by 1972, were chosen by a panel of fellow artists (to ensure high artistic standards and avoid potential criticism of institutional interference in judgment), and were to be used by the photographer for any expense except travel and printing costs.¹⁶⁰ Of the six photographers chosen for awards in the 1971-2 scheme, four projects related directly to documenting urban areas in New York State and two (Alice Wells’ and Dave Freund’s) were related to continuing a collection of nineteenth-century glass plates and to “continue dealing photographically with special ambiguity and inanimate objects.”¹⁶¹ A key component of the program was that artists were to produce prints for the NYSCA as a condition of the grant; this was, as Lane put it, “pay-back to the public,” and also so that the work could be published, an idea that became a keystone of Lane’s policy at the Arts

¹⁵⁷ Creative Artists Public Service Program, “CAPS—Creative Artists Public Service Program 1971” (Creative Artists Public Service Program, 1971), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁵⁸ Creative Artists Public Service Program, “CAPS Aids 89 N.Y.S. Artists” (Cultural Council Foundation, 1971), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Barry Lane, “CAPS,” 1972, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁶¹ Creative Artists Public Service Program, “1971-1972 Artists Funded by CAPS and Panel” (Creative Artists Public Service Program, 1972), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Council.¹⁶² This was taken one step further when CAPS issued their first annual portfolio in 1972, a limited edition issue of original prints from sixteen CAPS photographic fellows.¹⁶³ The collector's market for portfolios was more advanced in the US than the UK, and this model would not have been a practical one for Lane to pursue; in the end his choice to publish catalogues and monographs was more prescient as these fostered the photography publishing market, an area where Britain also lagged behind the US.

Lane's visit to the two biggest art museums in New York reveal the effect the trip was having on him. Lane visited MoMA on the eve of Peter Bunnell's departure to found the first PhD program in the history of photography at Princeton. Bunnell and Lane discussed the relative merits of each country's approach to photographic education (Bunnell was of the opinion that most technical photography courses were junk and that the best courses were of the "non-darkroom" variety where students learn about the nature of the medium outside the studio).¹⁶⁴ Lane's notes reveal a growing interest in and insight into the genealogy of American photography; noting that "Friedlander and Arbus bend the main line of tradition;" "best writing on photography often in history of film books by Krackauer, Agee and Stanley Cavell: *The World Viewed*."¹⁶⁵ Lane took detailed notes on the history of photography at the Metropolitan Museum of Art which

¹⁶² Mellor, *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87: From the British Council and the Arts Council Collection*, 34.

¹⁶³ Creative Artists Public Service Program, "Announcing the First Annual Portfolio" (Creative Artists Public Service Program, 1972), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁶⁴ Barry Lane, "MoMA- Peter Bunnell," 1972, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Original emphasis. MoMA's exhibitions often set the photographic agenda (through Newhall, Steichen and especially exhibitions curated by Szarkowski) but another way that MoMA's collection became important was through the issue of a set of 100 slides of contemporary American Photographers available to universities, museums and schools. MoMA, "A Slide Set of Contemporary American Photographers" (MoMA, February 1970), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

demonstrated just how early major museums in the US had started to collect and exhibit photography.¹⁶⁶

In addition to learning about institutional attitudes to photography, Lane was also using his American trip to become more educated about the field. A final note also reveals Lane's intentions: "Write to J Sz [*sic*] for future plans and possibilities of some coming to England or even some of existing national shows," and subsequently "can we have any internal USA shows by special arrangement?"¹⁶⁷ He also noted the possibility of bringing the 1972 Edward Weston show over from the Met and exchanging exhibition catalogues, and that Sue Davies at the Photographers' Gallery was keen to take MoMA's *New Photography USA*. Lane was also compiling information on British photographers that were collected by American Museums, noting the crossovers between collections in the UK and US: George Washington Wilson photographs were held at George Eastman House and the Chicago Art Institute, the latter of which had and significant holdings of Julia Margaret Cameron's work as well as Raymond Moore, William Henry Fox-Talbot, Francis Frith and Francis Bedford prints acquired from Bill Jay, (Lane noted that Tony Ray-Jones was "not collected").¹⁶⁸ The Art Institute of Chicago's active acquisition of contemporary photographs (1,000 a year were added by 1972) was of real interest as this was another instance of the type of contemporary institutional collections that Lane wished to foster. At George Eastman House, Lane took extensive notes about their travelling exhibitions program and the storage, mounting and shipping of photographs for exhibition.¹⁶⁹ Of interest to him because of his experiences as a regional touring director,

¹⁶⁶ Barry Lane, "Metropolitan Museum," 1972, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁶⁷ Lane, "MoMA- Peter Bunnell."

¹⁶⁸ Barry Lane, "Chicago Art Institute," 1972, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁶⁹ Barry Lane, "George Eastman House- Bill Jenkins," 1972, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

this information also proved useful when Lane issued guidelines for handling prints for the Arts Council Collection in October 1972; George Eastman House were world experts in the conservation of photographs and provided useful information for Lane to take back to the Arts Council who were soon to add photographs to their collection.¹⁷⁰

As the US equivalent to the Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts was a highly important stop on the tour. Under the chairmanship of Nancy Hanks during the late 1960s, the NEA expanded its definition of the arts (jazz, orchestra and photography were added to the NEA's ambit) and expanded local and state programs in an "art-for-all-Americans" approach.¹⁷¹ Similarly to the Arts Council, photography's relative 'newness,' also worked in its favor, especially with a young avant-garde artist such as O'Doherty who was keen to steer the NEA in a progressive direction.¹⁷² The NEA's photography fellowships were set up in 1971 as a sub-committee of the Visual Arts Program, the same year that the Nixon Administration doubled the NEA's funding. The endowment's peer-panel review system was similar to that which was set up at the Arts Council: a selection of experts who communicated the needs of their particular field to the NEA. The photography panel was set up by then-Director of Visual arts Brian O'Doherty, an Irish émigré sculptor who responded to the growing interest in photography in museums and galleries (as abstract expressionism and minimalism's stars diminished concurrently) by piloting a program of direct grants to individuals chosen by the new panel from submissions by photographers.¹⁷³ Like the Arts Council too, the NEA

¹⁷⁰ Barry Lane, "Handling of Original Photographic Prints," October 26, 1972, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁷¹ Bauerlein and Grantham, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 36.

¹⁷² For a brief comparison between FSA-sponsored and NEA-sponsored photographic survey projects, see Merry A. Foresta, *Exposed and Developed: Photography Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts* (Washington, D.C: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 9.

¹⁷³ Laura Salmon, *A Chronology of Changes: The History of NEA Photography Fellowships* (Chicago: Columbia College, 1988), 5. The people who served on the committee would become a veritable "who's

had approached the process of granting awards to photographers in small increments. The National Arts Council had awarded Bruce Davidson a grant in 1968 to complete his *East 100th Street* book, on the grounds that it had a powerful social message.¹⁷⁴ Initially, NEA grants were awarded by nomination, but by 1971 the process had changed to a formal application. In 1971 the Visual Arts department awarded \$47,000 in funds for photography (400 applicants applied and 23 fellowships were awarded); by 1980 this figure had grown to \$630,000 where 2233 people applied and 98 grants were awarded. The primary goal of the photography fellowships was “to allow photographers of exceptional talent to set aside time to work, to aid them in purchasing needed materials and for other purposes that would enable them to advance their careers.” These would be given to mid-career photographers (students were ineligible),¹⁷⁵ and were “generally” only open to US citizens (although the ambiguity of the language left open the possibility that resident non-US could potentially be successful).¹⁷⁶ With the exception of the expectation that citizens of the UK would mainly be eligible for awards, these ideas would be translated almost verbatim into the Arts Council’s bursary scheme. In 1974, the photography panel split awards into two categories: “Major,” awarded for established photographers and smaller “Emerging” fellowships: a practice the Arts Council would simultaneously instigate. The NEA fellowships were initially awarded biennially, but due to increasing demand were awarded yearly by 1975.¹⁷⁷ At the time Lane visited in 1972,

who” of photography in the US. Panelists could serve on the committee multiple times until 1979 when panelists only served on the committee once.

¹⁷⁴ Marguerite Welch, “The Best Years of Our Lives: Photography and the NEA,” *Afterimage* 12, no. 7 (February 1985): 21. Davidson’s book would become a seminal work for young British documentary photographers.

¹⁷⁵ National Endowment for the Arts, “Visual Arts Program Guidelines” (National Endowment for the Arts, 1972).

¹⁷⁶ Funding for supporting international shows of artists’ work was discussed but ultimately rejected. See Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-1980*, 115.

¹⁷⁷ Salmon, *A Chronology of Changes*, 9.

the NEA photography schemes were relatively ad hoc, but the Visual Arts program had developed a significant array of activities they funded, such as the Artist, Critics and Photographers in Residence program that funded teaching positions in universities to persons “of national reputation”¹⁷⁸ The NEA guidelines suggested that “modest assistance may be offered in support of photographic surveys and for re-publication of classics in photography,”¹⁷⁹ the body sponsored an Exhibition Aid scheme “to bring photography exhibitions of contemporary and/or historical importance to the public in a variety of situations,” and special funding was also considered “to fund catalogues of lasting importance to the field.”¹⁸⁰

Aside from the obvious financial and practical boost to artists (“time and intensity” in Merry Foresta’s formulation), the NEA grants confirmed photography as a legitimate artistic practice; moreover, as Bill Jay found when arriving in 1972, increasing institutional recognition of photography meant that practitioners could create work more freely, unhindered by the need to continually argue for the viability of their enterprise.¹⁸¹ This is not to suggest, however, that the NEA funded wildly avant-garde projects. Foresta asserts that as the photography awards at the NEA were granted for specific projects as outlined in the application, this predisposed many applicants to shape a project to perceived notions of what the panel would find attractive. Although by no means the sole genre represented, social documentary’s appeal as an examination of national/humanistic

¹⁷⁸ National Endowment for the Arts, “Visual Arts Program Guidelines.”

¹⁷⁹ National Endowment for the Arts, “Visual Arts Program” (National Endowment for the Arts, 1972).

¹⁸⁰ National Endowment for the Arts, “Visual Arts Program Guidelines.” In 1982, the photography awards were folded into the visual arts awards as a result of budget cuts and proactive panelist suggestions. Laura Salmon notes interestingly that “even before the budget cut, panels had begun to question the necessity of this “remedial “or privileged attention given to photography as a separate entity. It became a sub-category and applicants simply specify their specialty when applying to the Visual Arts division.” This was, in part, due to a threat of a 50% cut in NEA funding by the Reagan administration. Salmon, *A Chronology of Changes*, 10.

¹⁸¹ Foresta, *Exposed and Developed*, 8.

themes was thought of by many photographers as a way to encourage the government body to divest funds, and this style of photography predominated throughout the early years of the grants; many photographers concerned themselves with rural communities, “the pursuit of the American landscape and aesthetic” as recipient Burk Uzzle commented, and documenting life on the road à la Robert Frank’s peripatetic work.¹⁸² Although concerned with regional America, the NEA grants thus by and large confirmed their ‘national’ focus in their subject matter, a topic that would be a hot potato in the early years of the Arts Council grants.¹⁸³

When Lane visited in 1972, the previous Committee in 1971 had consisted of John Szarkowski (who would serve on the Committee until 1976), Van Deren Coke and Alan Fern, Chief of the Division of Prints and Photographs at the Library of Congress, names that Lane was familiar with from *Album*.¹⁸⁴ Coke and Szarkowski’s modernist bent fit well with the dominant visual aesthetic of the National Council on the Arts which was oriented heavily toward Modernist painters and sculptors. The Committee would later expand their aesthetic choices as its rotating membership brought a diversity of ideas to the forefront, but in its early years black-and-white straight photography dominated mirroring the aesthetic preferences of Szarkowski, Coke and the majority of those in powerful positions in photography at the time.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Ibid., 10.

¹⁸³ The restructuring of the NEA’s grants in 1981 is an interesting parallel to the demise of the Photography Committee at the Arts Council. In 1981 the documentary survey project program was cancelled and photographic exhibition and publication programs and the photography fellowships were absorbed by and continued under the Visual Arts Program.

¹⁸⁴ Salmon, *A Chronology of Changes*, 15. Susan Sontag was also originally asked to be on the Council when it first formed. She was someone, as Binkiewicz notes, that would have increased female representation on the council and would have bridged the gap between modernists and postmodernists. Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-1980*, 104.

¹⁸⁵ Szarkowski visited the UK in 1977 to select photographs for the Midland Open 1978 with R. B. Kitaj. Lane arranged for him to give a public lecture in London that was sponsored in part by Arts Council. Deputy Secretary-General and Barry Lane, August 9, 1977, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

In recounting his encounter with the NEA nearly thirty years later, the sense of possibility is apparent from Lane's recollections. Although the NEA did foster the growth of and interest in photography in the US, it did so alongside an increasingly sophisticated network of subsidiary funding authorities, museums and colleges. For Lane and the Arts Council, it was a slightly different matter as Britain's photographic networks and institutions were, in an often repeated phrase, thought to be years behind the Americans. The crucial acceptance of 'photography as art' in the US abetted the process: this was less the case in Britain where Lane and others had to tread a fine line by simultaneously arguing for photography's inclusion in the arts and its special nature as a unique enterprise.

An innovative scheme that, on first blush, was an unlikely influence on the Arts Council Photography Committee's work was the NEA's Art in Public Places Program, founded in 1966. One of the most visible and also controversial programs, its aim was, simply, to sponsor works of art that were to be placed in public places, with the idea that "public art exists to improve public, primarily urban space,"¹⁸⁶ and "to give the public access to the best art outside of museums."¹⁸⁷ The program achieved notable successes with popular public sculptures such as Alexander Calder's *La Grande Vitesse* installed in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1969, but the scheme drew sharp criticism for its imposition of Modernist sculpture on an unwitting public by a cultural elite in the service of public improvement.¹⁸⁸ Monumental works notwithstanding, in its original conception the NEA defined art as a term that "can include sculpture, painting, photography, prints, etc."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Erika Lee Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 43.

¹⁸⁷ National Endowment for the Arts, "Works of Art in Public Places" (National Endowment for the Arts, 1972).

¹⁸⁸ For an extended discussion of these themes, see Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs*.

¹⁸⁹ National Endowment for the Arts, "Works of Art in Public Places."

Programs such as Works of Art in Public places gave Lane working models of how artistic practice was being used to public ends; schemes like this could not only provide work for photographers they could simultaneously raise photography's profile. Lane saw this as a matter of equity between art forms, and was amazed by the seemingly democratic, bottom-up agitation for and acceptance of photography:

I'd seen places like the NEA in America... they had seen what was happening in photography and the pressure on them, the demand was growing so much... The kind of equality with which photography was treated in that environment just staggered me. There was no class or cultural distinction being made it was completely "yes of course, it's as important as painting or sculpture". They were closing down sculpture departments and turning them into vast darkrooms because that's what the students wanted to do, and so that notion that even institutions like the NEA and the Arts Council could change. They should do the fair thing.¹⁹⁰

In most cases, the programs and places Lane visited were still in their embryonic stages of development. The infectious excitement that Lane felt was due, in part, to the experimental nature of the enterprises he encountered: arts funding in the US was in the laboratory state, fuelled by a growing number of art schools and art school graduates and the increasing popularity of art photography. As he recounted:

There was a kind of radical end of my experience in that trip: America was very much the kind of art world, the museums, and the galleries and then there was this fantastically exciting teach it to the communities, get political change, a whole range of different galleries and community publishing projects.¹⁹¹

Emboldened by the sense of possibility, Lane went back to Britain determined to effect change. He was to usher in a period where Photography Committee member Peter Turner

¹⁹⁰ Lane, interview.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

would be confident enough to suggest that “the more ferociousness photographers can summon up, the more the Arts Council can achieve.”¹⁹²

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME: FORMING THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

I came back and I was unstoppable. In that sense, I could tackle the problem and get head in there, so finding the cracks in the Arts Council was part of the game from that moment on, trying to say “OK, I’ll make some change here.”¹⁹³

Upon his return to Britain, Lane set about translating the energy gleaned from his trip into action.¹⁹⁴ A letter sent to Bill Jenkins in January 1974 reveals the impact the trip made on Lane; indeed, he had briefly flirted with the idea of jumping ship and attending the Visual Studies Workshop for a year but as “things were going so well... touch wood” in Britain he decided against such a notion.¹⁹⁵ He asked Jenkins to keep him informed of any shows that would be worthwhile for a British audience and asked if George Eastman House “would like a 200 print show of Francis Frith or a 100 print show of 10 British photographers under 35 years old?”¹⁹⁶

Crucially, both the NEA and NYSCA had independent photography panels, and these demonstrated to Lane that he could shape Arts Council policy along similar lines. It was not only the respect accorded photography in the US that impressed Lane, it was also the democratic attitude to funding the arts. Most US arts institutions had panels on Visual Art, Photography, Film, Television, Music, etc. that reported directly to the council. Lane

¹⁹² Peter Turner in “The Arts Council Has a New Interest,” 17.

¹⁹³ Lane, interview.

¹⁹⁴ Lane would visit New York again in 1975 and 1979 and came back newly inspired and with a slew of pamphlets, books and flyers for inspiration for future projects. Barry Lane to Joanna Drew, June 3, 1975, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁹⁵ Barry Lane to Bill Jenkins, January 1, 1974, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

recognized that the constant subordination of new media and art forms (photography, for example did not get a separate panel, rather was an offshoot of a panel) to existing categories was outmoded and meant that newer arts were always caught up a hierarchy, having to plead their case to an authority that was wary of their presence to begin with.¹⁹⁷ Lane would continually make this point throughout the 1970s, using examples of institutions in the US as examples of places where less hierarchy meant fewer “tightly drawn boundaries” which resulted in “refuse[ing] responsibility for many new developments.”¹⁹⁸ Lane also saw that interdepartmental programs in the US and Canada were more effective than single-arts programs: the Visual Arts, Photography and Literature departments of the Arts Council all had separate programs placing artists in schools and it made sense to Lane to have an Arts Council scheme that would unite these.¹⁹⁹

Imbued with “a new authority”²⁰⁰ as a result of the expertise gained on his trip, in January 1973 Lane submitted the findings of his visit to the Visual Arts Panel, a document which became the basis for the Pilot Program in Photography in 1973-74. Lane set out the case for raising photography’s status at the Arts Council and the need for increased resources to deal with the “impressive growth in recent years in creative photography” as a movement distinct from hobbyist photography and clubs.²⁰¹ He stressed that the type of art photography that was being produced needed subsidy because

¹⁹⁷ In 1975, Lane used the examples of The NEA, the NYSCA and the Canada Council to argue that Film and Photography should form a separate panel at the Arts Council rather than be subordinate to the Visual Arts panel. Lane kept in touch with institutions such as the NYSCA for inspiration and to use them as contemporary examples of how other places were funding the arts. Barry Lane, “Comments on Council Paper 566,” June 16, 1975, ACGB/32/109, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁹⁸ Barry Lane to Secretary General, November 24, 1975, ACGB/32/109, Arts Council of Great Britain.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ “The Arts Council Has a New Interest,” 12.

²⁰¹ Barry Lane, “Photography: Confidential Paper for Panel 1st Draft,” November 27, 1972, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

there was not a market for creative photographic prints in Britain and “there is no gallery even in America that survives on the profits of such [print] sales.”²⁰² Photography, Lane argued, was a field which required discrete consideration by the Arts Council: in contradistinction to art, it had its own distinct “techniques; disciplines; history; social and aesthetic concerns... periodicals and publications, [and] writers and critics.”²⁰³ Lane proposed that a new Photography Sub-Committee to the Visual Art Panel be created, and that its responsibilities should include “exclusive control of an annual allocation for photographic grants” (both discretionary awards and project grants to individuals “to complete or undertake projects”), grants for photographic exhibitions organized by other galleries and groups (especially touring groups) and publications/publication subsidies as “an extremely important and appropriate way of making photographs permanently available to the public,” (artists would provide at least one print for the Arts Council collection from each £25 of the grant).²⁰⁴ Lane specified that the Committee’s work should initially be funded from the Arts Council’s “New Developments” acquisition.²⁰⁵ In a draft proposal Lane noted the importance of making photographs permanently available to the public “cf. Works of Art for Public Buildings,” demonstrating the importance, in Lane’s eyes, of arguing for photography as a public good as much as it was to benefit the individual photographers involved.²⁰⁶ The Visual Arts panel agreed to

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Barry Lane, “Photography: Confidential Paper for Panel 2nd Draft,” December 29, 1972, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁰⁴ Barry Lane, “Establishment of Independent Status of Photography Committee. Paper for Art Panel January 1973.” March 7, 1973, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁰⁵ Barry Lane, “Arts Council Funding of Photography: Proposals,” August 9, 1972, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁰⁶ Barry Lane, “Arts Council Funding of Photography: Proposals-Draft,” August 9, 1972, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

the proposal and the Photography Sub-Committee was created from the Sub-Committee for Exhibitions of photography in March 1973.

FUNCTIONS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

In the following sub-sections, organized by the functions of the Photography Committee, I will discuss the methods of Arts Council funding, paying particular attention to the ways that the Photography Committee absorbed and recast US models and practices, and evaluating their successes and failures. As will be evident, American photographers, photographs and professionals were vital to the early stages of the Committee's operation. In the later years of its existence, the Committee was becoming established and was responding to a British photography scene that had blossomed in the middle and end of the 1970s.

Arts Council Awards and Bursaries

Probably the most visible aspect of the Arts Council's direct aid and the most lasting in terms of impact to individual photographers was the Award Scheme. It is worth examining the first allocation of awards in detail as they are demonstrative of American photography's influence in the early 1970s. In the first year of the Photography Committee's program, grants to individual photographers made up 50% of its budget of £19,330 and included seventeen small awards to photographers (80 applications were received and 24 of these funded).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Barry Lane, "Report on Grants Recommended by the Photography Committee 1973/74," April 1974, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

The Photography Committee's minor awards were laudably international from the first round. As the first round of awards demonstrated, photographers needed only to have a strong connection to Britain (or their project needed to) for them to be successful. This was addressed explicitly in the grant application which asked "how long have you lived and worked in this country?" but did not stipulate British citizenship as a criterion.²⁰⁸ Czech photographer Josef Koudelka was awarded £650 to photograph gypsies in Britain, as was Clare Schwob, a Swiss photographer working in London who was awarded a grant for a project on women and work, and Sylvester Jacobs was given money for "a number of photographic projects."²⁰⁹ More established photographers awarded small grants were Patrick Ward and George Rodger, and young photographers who were to become key practitioners in the British scene like Chris Killip, Ron McCormick and Paul Carter received their first awards during the course of the Award Scheme. The smaller photographic awards were formalized into the "Minor Awards" category for the 1977-78 grant years; up to £2,500 would be awarded for a photographer or group of photographers needing time off to work on a project and smaller awards of up to £500 were available for the continuation of a photographer's own work.²¹⁰

One of the first successful applicants was Roslyn Banish, an American photographer teaching at Harrow who proposed a study of English families in Pimlico, London. Banish had studied under Aaron Siskind at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and had come to Britain in 1969 after exhibiting in George Eastman House's seminal

²⁰⁸ Sylvester Jacobs, "Photography Awards 1973/74 Application Form," May 1973, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁰⁹ Barry Lane, "Photographers Grants Agreed 1973/74," November 14, 1973, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²¹⁰ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Photography Fellowships 1977/78 Minor Awards" (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977), ACGB/31/94, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Vision and Expression show.²¹¹ “After living in Britain for 3 ½ years,” her Greater London Art Authority grant application stated, “I have come to the conclusion that this country is made up of ordinary families living inside their homes in a very quiet way. It is the predominance of this ordinariness that I find fascinating and quite extraordinary.”²¹² She noted that branches of the Universities of Illinois, Florida and California had expressed interest in a show of the work she would produce. Banish, along with fellow Americans Larry Herman and Sylvester Jacobs were more used to dealing with grant applications than Britons, and thus were some of the first to take advantage of the new climate of funding. Moreover, having mainly come out of Art departments in US universities, they were also ahead of many their British counterparts as they had received a more holistic photographic education.

Another early funding venture was Daniel Meadows’ Free Photographic Omnibus that drove around the country as a picaresque mobile photography studio. Inspired by Robert Frank’s discovery of America by car, Meadows pitched his unusual venture as a journey to the heart of Britain, albeit one that sought to take a portrait studio to the people of Britain as much as it was an exercise in disinterested, self-expressive documentary. Meadow’s novel journey was an important early funding project for Lane and the Photography Committee because Meadows asked the regional arts associations for sponsorship of his journey in addition to the Arts Council of Great Britain, which allowed Lane to suggest to regional arts associations that they should consider funding his and similar projects. Lane lent Meadows a copy of the New York State Council on the Arts’

²¹¹ Arts Council of Great Britain, *British Image 1* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975), 94.

²¹² Roslyn Banish, “GLAA Grant Application,” March 17, 1973, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain. Another American photographer resident in Britain at the time, Nancy Hellebrand, was working in a similar vein to Banish. She applied for a grant but was rejected. Lane, “Photographers Grants Agreed 1973/74.” Her book “Londoners” was published in 1974. Nancy Hellebrand, *Londoners* (London: Lund Humphries, 1974).

annual report to persuade regional arts councils the potential of funding photography; Lane also promised to speak to his contacts in America about the prospect of funding for an American show.²¹³ Meadow's trip (nearly derailed early on when he was gazumped on a bus he had wanted to buy by a man interested in selling it to a client in Washington D.C.)²¹⁴ has proven one of the most popular ventures funded by the Arts Council, largely because of his two books *Living Like This: Around Britain in the Seventies* (1975) and its follow-up *The Bus: The Free Photographic Omnibus, 1973-2001* (2001) which revisited his journey 25 years later, demonstrations of the successes of the Arts Council scheme.

The total budget for the Photography Committee by 1974/75 had risen to £29,145.²¹⁵ A larger bursary was instigated for 1974-75, on the basis that mature photographers needed to be given time to complete a serious personal project. In part, this was a recognition of the fact that "there are not large numbers of good photographers in this country," and the awards were intended to encourage the development of native talent.²¹⁶ Lane described its genesis thus:

Part of our model was the university environment where the idea of sabbaticals at that time was fairly common- certainly common in America and certainly the idea of that scale of subsidy was what they were doing in America and Canada with their major grants. They were looking to support people at midpoints and highpoints in their careers to commit themselves to doing a serious amount of work, so I didn't think it was outrageous at all, I thought if you want someone

²¹³ Barry Lane to Daniel Meadows, July 12, 1972, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²¹⁴ Daniel Meadows to Barry Lane, March 1973, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²¹⁵ Barry Lane, "Report on Grants Recommended by the Photography Committee 1974/75," November 1975, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²¹⁶ Barry Lane, "Paper for Art Panel: Photography Fellowships," October 1973, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain. Such fretting about the quality of mid-career British photographers puzzlingly pervaded the early arts council meetings. A recommendation for sponsoring a contemporary art photography show at the Hayward in 1974, for example, was quashed on the grounds of the committee's weariness about the "lack of first-class British material" for the show. Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 14th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," November 8, 1973, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

good and you want to give them time to do good work then you would do it...I think psychologically it was very important to photographers.²¹⁷

Following the NEA's practice, the major awards were designed for more established photographers, while other less well-established photographers were encouraged to apply for the smaller awards. Also following the NEA and Guggenheim fellowships, the photographer was expected to use his or her time as a fellow to work almost exclusively on their own photographic project for a year; priority was given to new projects that would be presented to the public. At the end of twelve months, the recipient was required to submit a report and 120 15" x 12" exhibition prints to the Arts Council.²¹⁸ The photography panel hoped that this would "attract the very best British photographers" and that the award "should be aimed at British photographers, not foreigners."²¹⁹ £3,500 was adjudged to be the figure that would attract mature photographers,²²⁰ a rather large sum according to Lane: "I think I was probably earning two thousand in my job. It was a lot of money and it raised some eyebrows in the hierarchy of the Arts Council."²²¹ Magnum photographer Ian Berry was awarded the first bursary in June 1974 for his documentary project "the Changing Face of the English." "At one level," intoned the press release announcing the award, "his work will document an era but on another Ian Berry will provide a unique visual comment that derives from his own particular approach to subjects."²²²

²¹⁷ Lane, interview.

²¹⁸ "Photographers Awards Grants 1973/74," 1974, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²¹⁹ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 12th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," July 9, 1973, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²²⁰ Although the panel preferred the term 'fellowships,' the Art Panel suggested the more English-sounding 'bursaries.' "Art Panel 18 October 1973," October 18, 1973, ACGB/31/94, Arts Council of Great Britain. This was increased to £4,500 for 1975-76.

²²¹ Lane, interview.

²²² Arts Council of Great Britain, "Photography Bursary 1974/5," 1974, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Announced with great fanfare and high expectations, the bursary initially failed to live up to its billing. As a working photographer, Berry could ill-afford to take time off with the grant, which had been one of the main conditions of its award. By his own and others' admission, Berry's work was not his best during this period either, as his Arts Council project had to be balanced with his commercial photography. In assessing the bursary for 1975-76, the committee decided that none of the 115 applications was good enough.²²³ In the 1976-77 funding year, two bursaries were awarded: one for £4,500 to Josef Koudelka and one for £3,500 to Thomas Joshua Cooper. In the same year, £2,500 was awarded to Martin Parr, Patrick Ward and John Blakemore to continue their work documenting the landscape and people of Britain.²²⁴ Structurally, the way bursaries were awarded was a little unorthodox. Arts Council officers prepared the background material for the finalists which were then submitted to the committees and panels along with the applications themselves.²²⁵ Lane would often pre-screen applicants for photography schemes before applications were passed on to the Committee and then the Committee's recommendations for awards were passed to the Visual Arts Panel. Although the extent to which this colored which applications/applicants were passed through to the Committee is unknown, it does suggest that Lane was inadvertently a more active participant in the selection process than might be expected from a committee system

By the time the scheme had run its course in 1981, the Arts Council had funded 156 individual photographers and disbursed £186,175 in funds.²²⁶ The majority of

²²³ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 23rd Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," April 18, 1975, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²²⁴ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 32nd Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," April 2, 1976, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²²⁵ Freeman-Wright to Lane, February 7, 1973.

²²⁶ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Grants to Individuals 1973-81" (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981), ACGB/31/94, Arts Council of Great Britain.

projects were documentary in nature, covering all aspects of rural and urban life in Britain, although there was a distinct vein of more personal artistic work with awards going to John Blakemore, Fay Godwin and Raymond Moore to continue their landscape work and small awards like the grant given to Richard Greenhill “to produce an intimate, in-depth picture of his way of life.”²²⁷ The vast majority of recipients photographed in the British Isles, with a few exceptions: George Rodger was given a bursary to return to Africa to “complete” a record of vanishing wildlife and indigenous tribes, Penny Tweedie was awarded funds to photograph Aboriginal life in Australia and Valerie Wilmer received two awards to photograph women in rural communities in Mississippi.²²⁸

Although funding allocations differed from year to year and the smaller awards were phased out in 1979/80, the Awards and Bursary scheme had a marked impact on British photography. The grants may have been small, and of the bursary recipients it is arguable that only Thomas Joshua Cooper, Larry Herman and Chris Killip used these to produce work that was of an enduring standard, but the scheme was incredibly important to young photographers working in Britain. This is demonstrated by the list of recipients that includes almost all of the photographers who would become influential in the 1980s: Nick Hedges, John Davies, Fay Godwin, Angela Kelly, Penny Tweedie, Graham Smith, Simon Marsden, Martin Parr, Dennis Morris, and Valerie Wilmer, amongst others. Whether these photographers succeeded in part because of their talent, the Council’s seal of approval or received grants because of their ambition and connections (or a combination of all three) is a moot point as the Arts Council largely succeeded in funding photographers whose later work would endure. Crucially, the scheme also supported

²²⁷ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Photography Bursaries: List of Awards 1973-1980,” 1980, ACGB/31/93, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²²⁸ Ibid.

young Americans working in Britain in particular. In addition to Cooper, Jacobs, Banish and Herman, American photographers John Benton-Harris, Jonathan Bayer, Linda Benedict-Jones and Brian Alterio all received awards. American photographers were well-integrated into the British scene by the mid-1970s and it is a laudable achievement of the Committee that they sought to fund international artists making a contribution to photography in the UK.

A lecture that Lane gave at Cardiff University in 1977 illustrates some of the ways he used the American example of funding to advocate for the possibilities for British funding. The lecture compared the work of American photographers done under the auspices of Guggenheim grants and government sponsorship (Edward Weston, Walker Evans, Aaron Siskind and Robert Frank) to work sponsored by the Arts Council (Ian Berry and John Blakemore).²²⁹ This announced state support for photography as a general good and as the American examples illustrated, it was clear that state funding could cultivate creativity rather than stifle it. What was also evident from his presentation was that by 1977, Britain was catching up, thanks in no small part to the Arts Council. Moreover, the country was producing photographers who were, Lane implicitly claimed, near to matching the prowess of some of the American masters.

Exhibitions and Exhibition Subsidies

In keeping with the Visual Art department's direct provision of funding, the Photography Committee produced exhibitions for the Hayward and Serpentine Galleries, sponsored travelling exhibitions that were mainly sent to regional Arts-Council funded

²²⁹ Barry Lane to Steve Benbow, September 5, 1977, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

galleries,²³⁰ and aided other institutions who did not exclusively show photography financially for individual shows.²³¹ Arts Council-sponsored shows were more often than not produced as touring shows, with the exception of shows such as *Serpentine Photographers 73* held specifically at Arts Council-owned galleries.²³² The Committee was critical of gallery practices they thought detrimental to the advancement of photography: the Serpentine Gallery in particular came under fire for its lack of representation of photography professionals on its board of directors.²³³ The ICA was criticized in 1976 for giving low priority to photographic exhibits and for not supplying basic equipment (e.g. frames) for photographers to show their work.²³⁴

In the first years of the Photography Committee's existence, there was a strong preference for importing American shows. In late 1972, the overall goals of the new Committee were discussed, and exhibitions were deemed a priority, not least because that was the Committee's original aegis in 1967. David Hurn and Ian Dunlop advocated a program of exhibitions based on the American model, noting "the incredible impact and successes that photographic exhibitions had had in the United States, particularly those held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York."²³⁵ It was agreed that the Tate should be

²³⁰ Arts Council shows were not toured internationally as those tours were conducted by the British Council.

²³¹ The Committee awarded twenty six grants to individual exhibitions from 1971 to 1982, totaling £33,926. Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Arts Council and Photography*.

²³² This was the first all-photographic exhibit at the Serpentine Gallery. Norbert Lynton, Director of Exhibitions at the Arts Council, contributed the following note that with hindsight should read as a *mea culpa*: "Despite the recent growth of interest in historical photography and the great modern masters, and marvellous work by Sue Davies at the Photographers' Gallery, there have been remarkably few opportunities to see work by younger members of this relatively young profession. Considering its power as a means of image making, it is odd that photography has been largely ignored as a medium of personal expression." in Peter Turner, ed., *Serpentine Photography 73: Work by 43 Young Photographers* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 1973).

²³³ Barry Lane to Robin Campbell, July 8, 1976, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²³⁴ Barry Lane to Robin Campbell, July 13, 1976, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²³⁵ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 8th Meeting of the Art Panel Committee for Exhibitions of Photography," December 6, 1972, 5, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

approached for such an endeavor, and Tristram Powell contacted Sir Norman Reid, the Tate's director about a possible change in their exhibition and collecting policy. "As you know," Powell wrote in a letter "the Museum of Modern Art in New York had a flourishing department of photography for a long time and most American museums of contemporary art acknowledge that photography has been one of the most influential visual forms in 20th century art."²³⁶ As with many early interactions with the Tate, the plea fell on deaf ears.²³⁷

As Lane was often the first line of contact between American museums and galleries and the UK, he was able to promote their exhibitions to UK galleries. Ever keen to get "the best" photography to Britain (and to secure travelling US shows of British photographers), Lane tried hard to find venues for exhibitions. Some galleries and museums were more sympathetic than others; the National Portrait Gallery and the V&A were approached for the Paul Strand show in 1976 and later for two George Eastman House exhibitions in 1977.²³⁸ MoMA, the Art Institute of Chicago and George Eastman House all had active touring schedules from their own collections;²³⁹ the only British museums that held any significant collections of photographs were the V&A and the National Portrait Gallery, both of which had often been reticent to accept that

²³⁶ Tristram Powell, "Draft Letter to Norman Reid," July 25, 1973, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²³⁷ Reid replied: "So far I think we have managed, at least to our own satisfaction, to draw a rather uneasy distinction between photographs as archive material and photographs presented as part of a work of art, although I am conscious that this judgment is only maintained by gazing resolutely into the middle distance." Norman Reid to Tristram Powell, July 31, 1973, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²³⁸ Barry Lane to Colin Ford, April 25, 1977, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain. Mark Haworth-Booth declined the GEH exhibitions regretfully: "Needless to say, the Coburn show would have been marvellous but our photography programme has to compete with shows from many other fields and the exhibition programme has itself been drastically cut." Mark Haworth-Booth to Barry Lane, May 17, 1977, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²³⁹ In 1971, MoMA funded thirteen nationally and five internationally touring shows. MoMA's focus shifted from touring large art shows to Europe in the 1970s to touring these to Latin America, Africa and Australasia but the prints and photographs division filled the gap in Europe. Lane, "MoMA—Peter Bunnell."

photography was anything other than an adjunct to painting, but by the mid-1970s were providing a venue for touring exhibitions and began to organize their own.

Importing successful and polished American shows seemed in many ways an obvious choice: here were ready-made, professionally produced exhibitions that could be unpacked and hung with relative ease. Yet US photography was not simply displayed because it was a convenience, it was also hoped that seeing the best work by photographers working in America would inspire and stimulate local talent. In at least one instance, American photography crowded the aspirant British out. One of the first proposals submitted to the newly-formed Photography Committee was written by David Hurn who suggested a show of around twenty contemporary British photographers showing new work for the Hayward gallery; a proposal which would eventually turn into the successful show and accompanying book by David Mellor and Ian Jeffrey entitled *The Real Thing: an Anthology of British Photographs, 1840-1950*, one of the first texts to rejuvenate and redefine British photographic history.²⁴⁰

The Committee decided to temporarily shelve plans for Hurn's show when the landmark Diane Arbus show was offered to the Arts Council straight after it had been shown in New York. Barry Lane had met with Marvin Israel and Doon Arbus, the trustees of the Arbus estate, and had secured their cooperation.²⁴¹ Lane defended the decision to run the controversial show at the high-profile Hayward Gallery because it was

²⁴⁰ Barry Lane to Norbert Lynton, March 8, 1973, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain. Hurn was ultimately not able to get sustained support from photographers due to the rather nebulous theme of the show.

²⁴¹ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 12th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee." Another committee member, Marina Vaizey, suggested "an anthology show along the lines of the very successful Family of Man exhibition." The idea was enthusiastically received but would prove, it was decided, too difficult without a full-time organizer. Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 13th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," September 11, 1973, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

a rare opportunity to both obtain the exhibition and raise the profile of photography.²⁴² The show also had implicit links to the UK as Arbus had been a regular visitor to London on assignment as one of the regulars who would hole up in David Hurn's flat; her work was also featured in MoMA's *New Photography USA* shown at the Photographers' Gallery in 1972.²⁴³ The show's impact was summed up by, David Mellor who attests that it "helped define [a] new kind of distanced, formalized and frontal portrait manner" and that the "social weirdness" of her subjects began to be seen in some of the work being produced.²⁴⁴ Lane asserted that shows like Arbus' disrupted what the British public thought of as photography and challenged the traditional notions of photojournalism that were still entrenched in Britain.²⁴⁵ A Paul Strand exhibition offered by the Philadelphia Museum of Art was discussed again in 1973 (it had been declined in 1972) was universally recommended for either the Serpentine Gallery or the Whitechapel Gallery.²⁴⁶ Hurn later recommended that the Serpentine show "an exhibition of highly influential American photographers such as Siskind, Callahan, Caponigro, Vehlsman, Friedlander,

²⁴² "The Arts Council Has a New Interest," 14.

²⁴³ Mellor, *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87: From the British Council and the Arts Council Collection*, 34. Lane made a point of sending the book to Hilton Kramer, the art critic of the New York Times to review as he had reviewed a number of Arts Council books. Barry Lane, "Notes—'Send HK Real Thing to Review,'" 1975, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain. See also Hilton Kramer, "Photography: A Changing Scene: Photography," *New York Times*, December 7, 1975, sec. The New York Times Book Review, 337.

²⁴⁴ Mellor, *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87: From the British Council and the Arts Council Collection*, 33.

²⁴⁵ "The Arts Council Has a New Interest," 14.

²⁴⁶ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 13th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee." The show eventually came to the National Portrait Gallery in 1976 as it was deemed one of the only exhibition spaces of sufficient quality for it to be shown. In a letter to Barry Lane outlining the plan, the NPG's director summed up the gallery's stance: "Since the exhibition is only very peripherally concerned with eminent British people they [the Trustees] only felt they could do this in view of the fact that no other suitable exhibition space was available... I should be really delighted if it were possible to show the exhibition in London, since I am very deeply impressed by the photographs; and I think it would be a considerable public attraction." It also helped that the Philadelphia Museum of Art paid for the travel and transportation costs of the exhibition. John Hayes and Barry Lane, January 1975, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Lyon, Davidson, etc. to give encouragement and set an example to British photographers.”²⁴⁷ At the same meeting Aaron Scharf suggested that it was “crucial to introduce some top quality American work... one or two potent exhibitions, one historical, one contemporary,” Barry Lane raised the possibility of getting the Walker Evans show from the International Council of MoMA, and noted approvingly of the Welsh Arts Council’s strong desire to organize a large American show for the Bicentenary.²⁴⁸

Paralleling the NEA’s photographic surveys and inspired by photographic employment schemes Lane had seen in the US such as CAPS, the only large project commissioned by the Arts Council was *Two Views*, a scheme which commissioned sixteen photographers and sent two each with contrasting styles to eight towns across Britain in 1972²⁴⁹ to “reveal to the people of each place themselves and their town and their environments as seen by two outsiders,”²⁵⁰ in the hope that this might “encourage a more sympathetic view of photography.”²⁵¹ The genealogy of this tradition of photographs can be traced through Bill Brandt and Mass Observation’s photographs of northern English towns in the 1930s, but was nevertheless also informed by the earlier photographic survey projects in the US and stylistically by the outsider’s eye of Robert Frank.²⁵² The project also sought to provide a venue for documentary photography and

²⁴⁷ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Minutes of the 14th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee.”

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ The eight towns were Oldham, Derby, Huddersfield, Poole, Kendal, Bury St. Edmunds, Brighton and Southend. George Hughes, “Two Views,” *Amateur Photographer* 147, no. 5 (January 31, 1973): 6–11.

²⁵⁰ Ron McCormick and Kevin Keegan, *Oldham: Two Views* (Oldham: Oldham Public Libraries Art Gallery and Museums, 1973), 2.

²⁵¹ “The Arts Council Has a New Interest,” 15.

²⁵² Lane sought to bring the National Film Board of Canada’s 1980 exhibit of Frank’s work to Britain in 1981. Marie-Claude Heupel to Barry Lane, July 2, 1980, ACGB/32/197, Arts Council of Great Britain.

photojournalism which was still suffering from a lack of outlets for publication after the demise of the picture magazines, as Lane attests:

The active photography and the interesting work at that time was in the documentary and journalistic traditions. People wanting an outlet for work which was politically too difficult in a world that was getting more and more consumerist and what were seen as real human values were being pushed aside, so picture stories weren't being funded properly, they weren't being published in full.²⁵³

The photographs were shown in eight separate exhibitions in galleries in the towns where they were taken so that, in Lane's words, "people could see themselves, their town, the way it was growing or being destroyed;"²⁵⁴ it was also a scheme where Lane could use his expertise in Regional Arts planning to make a good case for funding. Despite Lane's assertion that "the content of these pictures is more important than art", the juxtaposition of contrasting approaches to photography suggested otherwise. Kevin Keegan's stark, depopulated, geometric photographs of the street furniture and signage of Oldham, for example, contrasted strongly with Ron McCormick's sensitive and often humorous portraits of the working-class inhabitants of the town. Such representations tended to baffle residents, not least in Bolton where the pictures "caused the most enormous riot... because they didn't like the image we had created, and we were accused of [being] 'us Southerners,' these intellectuals, seeing this city as, you know, not the way they saw it."²⁵⁵ McCormick's view of Oldham was more successful. As a photographer who lived and worked in working-class areas of Liverpool and London and who was keenly attuned to the potential of photography for sympathetically revealing those communities, McCormick's choice to portray ordinary people rather than the urban

²⁵³ Lane, interview.

²⁵⁴ Hughes, "Two Views," 6.

²⁵⁵ Lane, interview.

renewal projects residents felt were blighting the town were warmly received.²⁵⁶ *Two Views* would be one of the only times that the Photography Officer or Committee directly commissioned work; later projects would use work that the photographer had produced under the auspices of a project grant or the Committee would sponsor individual shows of the organizers applied for a grant.²⁵⁷

The schedule for 1975-76 showed a shift towards Arts Council-produced British one-person and group shows: Bill Brandt,²⁵⁸ Thurston Hopkins, Alvin Langdon Coburn and Edwin Smith were joined by preexisting shows by Walker Evans, Paul Strand and Edward Weston, the latter to coincide with the US bicentennial. Three group shows were proposed: *Other Eyes* (international photographers' take on Britain, organized by Peter Turner),²⁵⁹ *Did You See?* (photojournalism) and *The Camera Goes to War*.²⁶⁰ In 1975, a

²⁵⁶ As Lane recalled: "We arrived in the evening to do this talk and tension was high, the press were there, and they'd already opened up one other little gallery in the gallery to put up their view of the place from the local newspaper archives saying "This is what we are, and you come and show us this!" John Benton-Harris [actually Ron McCormick] had photographed all of these guys in their old cloth caps and their traditional cultures of the place. And we started the evening off trying to say why we had done what we'd done and we very quickly realized that we didn't have to justify anything that we had done because there were people in the audience who lived there who said 'I'm proud of my cloth cap! All this new architecture you city council have put in here is all rubbish.'" Ibid.

²⁵⁷ The Exit Group's *Survival Programmes in Britain's Inner Cities* published in 1982 with Arts Council support also mirrored the NEA survey projects (and NSYCA-sponsored projects such as Arthur Tress' *Open Space in the Inner City*) but was a specific critique of social policy's effects on a city rather than an individual reflection on an urban space.

²⁵⁸ The Brandt work proved popular and provoked an enquiry from The International Exhibitions Foundation in Washington D.C. about the possibility of the show travelling to the US after the bicentennial. Mrs. John A. Pope to Barry Lane, November 25, 1975, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain. The R.P.S. show "Pictorial Photography in Britain 1900-1920" was sent to the US in 1978 after being shown at the Hayward Gallery. Joanna Drew to Mrs. John A. Pope, March 16, 1978, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁵⁹ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 46th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," September 14, 1977, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain. Lane arranged for funding for Turner to visit the US in 1977 to ostensibly gain permission from photographers and to do research for the exhibition but Turner suggested that the visit was engineered so that Lane could give him a chance to see what was happening in the US: "The first time I went to America, I went at the suggestion of Barry Lane... I did exhibitions for the Arts Council, I wrote stuff for them and I got this money to go... Barry, he just literally said to me one day I really think it's very important that you see what's going on in the States. And some concoction was made about why I needed to go, and the next thing they handed me the money and I'm getting on a plane." Peter Turner, interview by Val Williams, Cassette Tape, February 8, 1991, C459/10/1-9, The Oral History of British Photography, The British Library. In 1977, Peter Turner proposed a

series of cased exhibitions of individual British photographers were produced that coincided with the publication of the monographs and also included an earlier exhibition of Sir Benjamin Stone's work and the posthumous exhibition of Tony Ray-Jones' photographs *The English Seen*. Shows organized by the Visual Arts panel—Bernd and Hilla Becher and *The Photography of Paul Nash*—were also available for national touring.²⁶¹ These travelled to smaller regional galleries and venues across the country in the hope that more people could encounter good photography, and by the end of the 1970s they were attracting interest from abroad as well.²⁶²

These activities were set against the Victoria and Albert museum's highly successful and influential 1975 show *The Land* that showcased many American "master" landscape photographers as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Paul Strand, Paul Caponigro and Minor White.²⁶³ Selected by Bill Brandt, this was one of the first major shows of that blended contemporary work with that of established photographers organized by one of the major galleries in Britain. The Committee welcomed the show and the publicity that came along with it (Ansel Adams' first visit to Britain for the show drew a good deal of attention),²⁶⁴ and proposed that English photographer Raymond Moore select landscape

retrospective of American Photography in the 50s. This eventually turned into the exhibition *American Photography 1945-80*, held at the Barbican in 1985.

²⁶⁰ Barry Lane to Robin Campbell, February 3, 1975, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Turner's research trip was included in the projected cost of *Other Eyes*. Lane to Drew, June 3, 1975.

²⁶¹ "Arts Council Photography Programme," *Studio International* no. 976 (August 1975): iv.

²⁶² Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 19th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," September 10, 1974, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain. Although these shows were toured by the British Council, independent enquiries also filtered through such as one from Out of London Press, based in Turin who expressed interest in the George Rodger and Thurston Hopkins exhibitions. Barry Lane to Brunetta Carena, October 10, 1978, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁶³ Bill Brandt, *The Land: Twentieth Century Landscape Photographs*, ed. Mark Haworth-Booth (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976).

²⁶⁴ Hughes, George, "Ansel Adams at the V & A," *Amateur Photographer* 154, no. 6 (August 11, 1976): 96–101.

photography from Britain to complement the show.²⁶⁵ Although the Arts Council-sponsored shows of the 1970s started off being one-man affairs²⁶⁶ the council arranged and sponsored a number of innovative thematic surveys. In addition to *The Real Thing*, these included *Other Eyes* (1977) and *Three Perspectives on Photography* (1979). Because photography's traditions were being rebuilt and rediscovered, and because photographers rarely saw themselves as part of schools or groups in the same way as artists did (the Linked Ring excepted), chronological and thematic exhibitions made sense. As Barry Lane recalls: "it wasn't the artist's name that was the top billing it was the show."²⁶⁷ Thematic shows also proved popular with the public who were generally very receptive to seeing photographs in a museum or gallery context; *The Family of Man* doubtless helped the Arts Council in this regard but, as Lane suggests, there was a more general receptivity to photography by the British public, so much so that at times it superseded that of the traditional visual arts: "when the serpentine put on the Man Ray exhibition it outstripped all attendances it ever had, same with the photography shows at the Hayward. It was embarrassing the extent to which they outnumbered the other exhibitions."²⁶⁸

In 1976 Valerie Lloyd, then working at the National Portrait Gallery (she would become graduate of the photography program at the University of New Mexico in 1978), proposed that an exhibition of Lewis Hine's photography commissioned by the National

²⁶⁵ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 19th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee." Shows of Adams' work and one curated by White from British submissions were discussed enthusiastically by the Photography Committee after their visits to the UK for the show. Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 28th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," December 3, 1975, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the gender-specific pronoun is accurate. While not completely absent from the Arts Council shows, no female photographer (aside from Diane Arbus) received a solo show during the Photography Sub-Committee's existence.

²⁶⁷ Lane, interview.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

Child Labor Committee from a private collection be sponsored by the Arts Council.²⁶⁹ The suggestion was met with enthusiasm, and the show eventually found a home at the Side Gallery in Newcastle as one of the signature shows in its opening year. Side and Half Moon were mooted as venues for a 1979 touring exhibition of photographs from the Photo League as their “socially committed policies find stimulating parallels in the activities of the Photo League.”²⁷⁰ Side Gallery became one of the most progressive and politically active small galleries in Britain and its innovative exhibition program made good use of American exhibitions from the beginning: in its first three years shows by Berenice Abbott, Walker Evans, Mike Disfarmer, E.J. Bellocq and Weegee were mixed with emerging British documentarians. Shows like *From Shore to Shining Shore: Photographs of the United States from the FSA 1935-1943* held at Impressions Gallery in 1978 were key events in opening up socially-conscious British photography to the work of the FSA photographers. Shows like the above, and those put on at Side Gallery, had the effect that British photographers in the 1970s and 1980s drew inspiration from American documentary photographers as well as from the British tradition.

The exhibition program thrived, and by 1978 on the back of the success and controversy of the Hayward Biennial, a show of contemporary British art,²⁷¹ the Photography Committee proposed an ambitious biennial show of contemporary photography. The proposed show can be seen as a high watermark of the Photography Committee’s gradual consolidation and continued quest to establish a firm place for photography at the arts council, and the eventual 1979 show *Three Perspectives on*

²⁶⁹ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Minutes of the 30th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee,” February 13, 1976, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁷⁰ Barry Lane, “Exhibition Proposals from the Photography Committee” (Arts Council of Great Britain, June 1, 1978), ACGB/32/109, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁷¹ Lucy Lippard’s critique of the first Hayward Biennial was circulated among Visual Art Panel members. Lucy R. Lippard, “Exhibition Subcommittee 7/6/78: Anatomy of an Exhibition,” June 7, 1978, ACGB/32/109, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Photography, and the accompanying catalogue, are seminal documents of British photography. Consisting of the work of fifteen photographers selected by Paul Hill, Angela Kelly and John Tagg, the resulting sections illuminated the proclivities of the three individuals making the selection (“Photographic Truth, Metaphor and Individual Expression”, “Feminism and Photography,” and “A Socialist Perspective on Photographic Practice”).²⁷² The exhibition’s framework consolidated the themes and questions that would dominate British photography for the next decade. As Lane recounts, the show at the Hayward also coincided with postmodernist and conceptual art’s exploration of ideas through photography:

The gallery-orientated American tradition coming in with people like John Blakemore and Tom Cooper at Trent began to open up a whole different way of working, and I feel that we were just beginning to get all of these things established and then postmodernism hit the universities and the art schools and it undermined in a huge way what was going on in photography. It undermined it in the sense that the art institutions saw that as their way of dealing with photography...²⁷³

Along with the Arts Council-sponsored publication *About 70 Photographs*, published in 1980, *Three Perspectives on Photography* demonstrated that vital new practices were emerging in British photography, ones abetted by American examples in the early years of the Photography Committee but now emerging from the shadows of their predecessors.

Photographers in Residence Scheme and Research Grants

The Photographers-in-Residence scheme, whose precedent can be seen in the NEA schemes from the early 1970s, was initiated in 1976. The Gulbenkian Foundation

²⁷² Paul Hill, Angela Kelly, and John Tagg, eds., *Three Perspectives on Photography: Recent British Photography* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979).

²⁷³ Lane, interview.

was brought on board as a cross-Arts Council initiative to “seek to establish artists in community situations... communities composed of ordinary people... but not in an ‘enclosed situation’ (a university, for example), nor an ivory tower.”²⁷⁴ The foundation left the word ‘artist’ intentionally ambiguous, and noted that the scheme was most likely to be successful where the community was on board. Photographers made excellent candidates in this latter sense; as documentarians and educators they were able to fulfill social functions relatively easily. The Arts Council had received enquiries about photographers in residence before the scheme was mooted, notably from the University of Sussex.²⁷⁵ Contrary to the Gulbenkian’s stipulation, most photographers ended up at universities, spending time at Trent Polytechnic, the University of Sussex and the University of Central London and by 1978 two more posts were funded at the Blackfriars settlement in London and at the University of Southampton.²⁷⁶ In 1978 this scheme was modified to establish permanent darkrooms for use by ‘photographers in residence’ or the public: groups in Welwyn, Liverpool, London, Birmingham and Manchester all received funds.²⁷⁷ Although little-known and small in scale, this program proved universally popular; it employed photographers meaningfully and it gave arts and community institutions a welcome photographic presence that enhanced their activities by providing workshops, tutorials and documenting the organization itself. Another great bonus of the scheme was that the recipient got the photographer free of charge.

Among the ideas for the 1976-77 funding year were Research Grants, a Photographers in Schools Scheme and the possibility of funding photography studios and

²⁷⁴ Gulbenkian Foundation, “Artists in Residence,” January 16, 1976, ACGB/31/94, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁷⁵ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Minutes of the 30th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee.”

²⁷⁶ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Value for Money: Thirty Second Annual Report and Accounts 1976-77* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977), 32.

²⁷⁷ Arts Council of Great Britain, *A Year of Achievement*, 21.

workshops.²⁷⁸ Lane intended a program entitled “Fellowships in Photographic Studies” to redress the lack of postgraduate courses offered in photographic history and the lack of funding for such enterprises. A laudable venture aimed at redressing the lack of British photographic history in comparison to the more advanced American model, Lane suggested that students might visit American colleges and museums like he, Bill Gaskins, and Peter Turner had done. The fellowship scheme was designed to fund students in institutions (typically museums and universities) where there was no funding for them to pursue a discrete research topic. In doing this, they would gain knowledge as an individual, “develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts” (thereby fulfilling general Arts Council goals), and pass this on to the public through Arts Council publications or exhibitions.²⁷⁹ For 1976-77 the institutions that were to be the recipients of research fellows were the R.P.S., Fox Talbot Museum and the University of New Mexico.²⁸⁰ Perhaps due to competition from other funding sources, especially universities and other organizations offering bursaries such as the Churchill Trust, the scheme never really got off the ground and fizzled out when the Committee was dissolved.

²⁷⁸ Barry Lane, “Photography Estimates for 1976/77,” May 29, 1975, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁷⁹ “Fellowships in Photographic Studies,” September 1975, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁸⁰ Barry Lane, “Photography Estimates 1977/78,” August 18, 1976, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain. The Arts Council was wary of sponsoring a photography residence in New Mexico but only prohibited advertising that the award was directly for a position in New Mexico. If an individual were to “choose to spend the grant at the University of New Mexico” this was, however, perfectly acceptable. Barry Lane to Robin Campbell, April 21, 1977, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain. The New Mexico connection was strengthened by maintaining strong links with Britons who had gone to study on the M.A. course in the History of Photography. Students and former students like Valerie Lloyd, Ken Baird and Ialeen Gibson Cowan were called upon frequently for their expertise and assistance in organizing travelling exhibitions from the US; Ialeen Gibson Cowan’s proposal to turn her research at UNM on photographic cartoons into an exhibition is one example. Lane, “Exhibition Proposals from the Photography Committee.”

Photography Purchasing

The precedent for purchasing works of art went back a long way at the Arts Council, who began touring exhibitions of paintings in the 1940s when it was able to borrow paintings from private collectors. So successful were these wartime tours that Arts Council began collecting in 1942 when the Pilgrim Trust earmarked funds for the purpose of establishing a public collection of art with a strong emphasis on British artists.²⁸¹ The different purchasers' motivations have ranged from, as Richard Witts notes: "representing the range of a period, supplementing the Tate, serving the immediate needs of touring and investment in future talent;" as a result, the collection is very much a reflection of the proclivities of the collectors as opposed to a comprehensive survey of British art. The pieces are not sold for profit or put back on the market, although there have been exceptions: an Andy Warhol screen print was sold for revenue as it was an unusual addition to a mainly British collection, and, as Witts suggests, the sale of an American painting was less likely to raise questions about national treasures being sold abroad to collectors.²⁸²

The Arts Council Collection shares some similarities with the Government Art Collection, a program initiated in the late Victorian period and formalized in the 1930s to provide works of art for government buildings. In the aftermath of The Second World War, the Ministry of Works expanded their rather haphazard acquisition program and began to purchase contemporary works for display as opposed to historical masterworks which had been the main focus of previous purchases, a scheme accelerated by Jennie Lee's 1965 white paper. As many works found their way into overseas embassies of newly-independent countries, the program in the post-war years emphasized the

²⁸¹ Witts, *Artist Unknown*, 281. The emphasis on British artists became exclusive by the 1990s.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 284.

promotional role British art could have in international relations. Speaking about the British Embassy in Australia in 1952, the Marquis of Salisbury, Secretary of State for Commonwealth relations put the matter this way:

If we can have a few really good specimens of British painting, this will yield real dividends in countering the school of thought that is inclined to look increasingly to America and to write Britain off as a spent force. While we naturally don't want to enter into a decorative race with America, we happen to have an opportunity in Canberra to make an effective contrast since the large new US embassy there is, we are told by our people, filled with bad modern American stuff...²⁸³

Art could in this sense also be deployed to counter American influence as much as the Photography Committee was doing to encourage it. While the Arts Council Collection was designed to be a body of art that represented Britain it was also amassed to form the basis for Arts Council touring shows and shore up other national collections such as that of the Tate galleries. Even if it did not tour internationally, the existence of a publically-owned national art collection was certainly a point of for a Council that made a point of comparing itself with its overseas equivalents.

At the beginning of the Photography Committee's tenure, very few galleries or museums in Britain were collecting photographs, especially contemporary work. A burgeoning art collecting scene in New York in particular, and increased activity in the early 1970s from Sotheby's and Christie's in London, was starting to illustrate that there could be a market for both contemporary and historical prints. In addition to buying photographs directly, the Photography Committee supported purchases of photography by museums, galleries and other institutions who wanted to produce and tour exhibitions. These photographs, now owned by the galleries, could then form the basis of their own

²⁸³ Penny Johnson et al., "Silent Witness: A Brief History of the Government Arts Collection," in *Art, Power, Diplomacy: The Untold Story of the Government Art Collection* (Scala Publishers Ltd, 2011), 61.

touring exhibitions. Having photographers who had received Arts Council funding return a set of professional prints was a key tenet of the Committee's dedication to public service and the photographs have subsequently found their way into many different Arts Council exhibitions. For his or her contribution, the photographer received recognition and a few impressive lines on their CV; this mutually beneficial relationship continued with Arts Council acquisitions after the Photography Sub-Committee had been dissolved.²⁸⁴

Though it had been nearly ten years since Helmut Gernsheim's collection had been shipped to Texas, the state of collections in Britain and the level of expertise surrounding them was still subpar, even in the most venerable institutions. In 1974 the Photography Committee suggested that Royal Photographic Society invite Van Deren Coke over from Albuquerque to "prepare a report on the needs of and potentials of the society's collection in relation to other national collections and possible sources of financial support."²⁸⁵ Upon Coke's suggestion, Valerie Lloyd, a graduate of the University of New Mexico photography program, was employed for three years to catalogue the R.P.S. collection, her salary paid partially by the Arts Council as the Photography Committee recognized this as a worthwhile investment. Always keen to encourage and collaborate with the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) even if they could not support it, the Committee maintained a close relationship with Mark Haworth-Booth who became the museum's Keeper of Photographs. Haworth-Booth was drafted onto the Photography Committee in 1978 and under his supervision and paralleled by Colin Ford at the National Portrait Gallery, more material was being collected and explicitly

²⁸⁴ For example, see Grayson Perry, ed., *Unpopular Culture: Grayson Perry Selects from the Arts Council Collection* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2008); Susan May, ed., *Here to Stay: Arts Council Collection Purchases of the 1990s* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1998).

²⁸⁵ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 19th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee."

organized around photography; by 1977, the V&A had an extensive acquisition program for the “aesthetics of photography” which included both contemporary and historical work.²⁸⁶

Aside from the return of prints from photographers granted awards (the Arts Council paid for their printing and the photographer selected which prints to return) select members of the Photography Committee were seconded to purchase works for areas where it was felt the collections was weak²⁸⁷ and any member of the Art Panel (in this case the photography representative on the council, Mike Weaver) could nominate works for purchase as long as the collection’s curator agreed and the cost was under £1,500; in his capacity as a member of the Art Department Lane could purchase works up to £1,000 each in value, subject to council approval.²⁸⁸ By 1981, the Arts Council had amassed around 2,000 photographs by over 160 contemporary photographers which had been bought directly or were returned by photographers from their exhibitions or award/bursary years.²⁸⁹ The Committee hoped that by purchasing photographs they could raise the profile of photography in the Council by adding substantially to the collection, foster emerging talent, capitalize on established talent, and stimulate a market for original photographic prints that would benefit individual photographers and photography in Britain more generally. The market for contemporary art photographs at the time was

²⁸⁶ Mark Haworth-Booth to Barry Lane, December 18, 1978, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain. The majority of these purchases were of American photographers (particularly contemporary work) followed by acquisitions of historical British photography. Haworth-Booth noted that the V&A anticipated collecting more contemporary British work in the future.

²⁸⁷ In 1978, Ed Barber of *Camerawork* was asked to select examples of portraiture, for example. Barry Lane, “Policy for Purchasing Photographs,” February 28, 1979, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ Joanna Drew, “Photography Policy- Note by the Director of Art,” May 1981, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

memorably summed up in a 1978 article in *The Washington Post* wittily entitled “In London, It’s Camera Obscura”:

If you go looking for contemporary photography in the fashionable galleries around Bond Street, the center of London’s art market, your enquiries will probably be met with condescending smiles...in other galleries you will have to explain that by photography you do not mean art reproductions or posters while they show you to the door.²⁹⁰

This situation would change in the 1980s, but at a slower pace than in the US. The Arts Council’s role in supporting photographers through purchasing was perhaps not one of their signature achievements at the time, but the real importance of this policy was in fostering a climate where photographers could be remunerated for their work, giving them the freedom to dedicate themselves to their work full time. Again, the Photography Committee, following from the American example, had been pioneers in recognizing the value of photographic prints and whose example paved the way for other British institutions such as the Tate to start their own collections and reassess the ones they already had.

Galleries

One of the most important factors in the growth of independent photography in Britain in the 1970s were the independent photography galleries whose space allowed for a wider public audience of photography and whose touring network, firmly established by the end of the decade, allowed homegrown exhibitions to be seen across the country. Galleries receiving subsidy as major revenue clients immediately after the Photographers’ Gallery were Impressions Gallery, York and The Half-Moon Gallery, London (the

²⁹⁰ Stephen Games, “In London It’s Camera Obscura: In the Fashionable Galleries, People Just Can’t Get a Focus on Photography,” *The Washington Post (1974-Current File)*, March 5, 1978, sec. The Arts, H1.

Blackfriars Settlement was later added to this list before the Arts Council froze funds to new revenue clients). Subsidies were required to keep these galleries open because they were not commercially viable propositions otherwise: all were non-profit, had free admission, and the revenue from shops and cafes was inadequate by themselves to cover running costs. Funding was justified by pointing to the fact that these galleries served a regional function as they were funded jointly by their respective regional Arts Council, and the continued support of these galleries also served a national function.²⁹¹

Impressions in York in particular was forging a path in innovative contemporary photography by organizing and touring their own shows domestically, and providing a venue for international photography; rather than simply being a regional client of the Arts Council, they were making a splash by exhibiting new work alongside rediscoveries, akin to the agendas of *Creative Camera* and *Album*. Noting that the gallery's "potential may be more important than their achievement so far," Lane also suggested that Impressions fulfilled a local function with its varied shows aimed at attracting the general public and those interested in photography and a national function as an "almost unique center."²⁹² In the early years of its existence, Impressions served an important function for the North of England, and would also remind the Arts Council that photographic activity did, in fact, occur outside London. As the main revenue client except for the Serpentine and Hayward galleries, the Photographers' Gallery came under close scrutiny from the Photography Committee. While generally giving the gallery money at arm's length, as per the Art's Council's general policy, in 1974 the gallery's program of exhibitions came under fire for being "too commercially-oriented and rather opportunist," and the

²⁹¹ In order to receive aid, galleries had to set themselves up as charities/non-profit entities. Barry Lane to Ron McCormick, June 29, 1973, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁹² Barry Lane, "Paper for YAA Re: Impressions Gallery," 1973, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Committee suggested that Davies and her Committee would be better off “creating exhibitions of a high standard whether of mature or unknown British photographers or international work.”²⁹³ While not controlling the purse strings entirely, the Committee recommended that the gallery’s subsidy be maintained at £6,500 and that “no increase would be considered” until those conditions were met.²⁹⁴

Throughout the early years of the Photography Committee, documentary, photojournalism and creative photography had been happy bedfellows mainly because photography was such a minority pursuit. By the end of the 1970s, however, fissures in this alliance started to develop as creative, self-reflexive, late modernism diverged from the increasingly radical left-leaning political photography dealing with class, race and gender issues. Co-founded by two American expatriates Wendy Ewald and Ellen Aronis (who had studied under Minor White at MIT), the Half Moon Gallery opened in February 1972 as London’s second photography gallery. From the outset, Half Moon sought to distinguish itself from the Photographers’ Gallery’s offerings; it shared its offices with a radical theatre company, was run and staffed by volunteers, and specialized initially in showing the work of young photographers, in particular photography about or relevant to the working-class East End of London.²⁹⁵ Pioneers in providing a venue for community photography and social documentary, the gallery’s left-leaning agenda was further developed through the magazine *Camerawork*, first published in 1976, which signaled Half Moon’s orientation towards photographic theory, socially-concerned practice, and new ways of using photography. In 1980, *Camerawork* summed up their philosophy: “we believe photography should be useful,” and defined useful as a means for

²⁹³ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Minutes of the 15th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee,” January 9, 1974, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ “Half Moon Gallery Grant Application,” 1973, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

underrepresented groups to develop their own voice and control their own representation.²⁹⁶

The Arts Council intervened numerous times during the Half Moon's history, blurring the lines between patronage and control. A November 1977 meeting of the Photography Committee discussed the controversial firing of Jo Spence from the gallery, and members voiced their concerns over the political direction the journal was taking.²⁹⁷ By 1982 this would result in censure: *Camerawork's* issue on the troubles in Northern Ireland got them into hot water at the Arts Council who "considered that several issues of the magazine in recent years, particularly *Camerawork* No. 23, were journals of politics and political education that were quite inappropriate for the council to support."²⁹⁸ While it was clear that *Camerawork* was operating outside its stated aims, this example illustrates some of the tensions inherent in state photography, and indeed, in arts funding as the Council could not be seen to endorse one particular political point of view.

Other independent galleries were beginning to glom onto photography's benefits and were also putting on shows by American photographers as springboards to their involvement with photography: the Arnolfini's show of Stephen Guion Williams' photographs of Shakers at Sabbathday Lake in 1975 is one of many examples.²⁹⁹ The Photography Committee surveyed art galleries and museums across Britain in 1975 to see if they were exhibiting photography in any form with the aim to use this for ammunition for pointing to the growth of photography and to suggest to galleries (indirectly) that this

²⁹⁶ Half Moon Photography Workshop, "Half Moon Photography Workshop: Annual Report 1980/81," 1981, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁹⁷ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 49th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," December 16, 1977, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁹⁸ Joanna Drew to Catherine Bradley, April 6, 1982, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

²⁹⁹ Arnolfini Gallery, "An Exhibition of Photographs by Stephen Guion Williams," 1975, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

might be something they should consider.³⁰⁰ The Committee's aim had always been to foster the growth in the number of galleries, and it was heartening to many at the time that galleries that were not exclusively devoted to photography were keen to exhibit photographic work. By 1981, the high water mark was achieved when there were sixteen photographic galleries (or galleries with a dedicated section for photography) in Britain.³⁰¹

Friction developed between the Art Panel and the Photography Committee surrounding gallery funding with the former believing that regional galleries should be funded mainly by the regional arts associations and not by the Arts Council of Great Britain.³⁰² This was partially due to the ever-precarious nature of finances at the Council and the ever-increasing numbers of galleries (particularly photography) that were seeking assistance. The Committee sought to clarify the situation by suggesting that the Arts Council support the galleries' operation and the regional arts associations contribute to the expenses incurred by exhibitions. In a process which started in 1982 but accelerated with the Arts Council's *The Glory of the Garden* report in 1984, responsibility for these was being transferred to the regions partially as a cost-cutting measure but also because the Photography Advisory Committee had too much to deal with.³⁰³ Arts Council

³⁰⁰ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 27th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," October 15, 1975, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁰¹ These were Arnolfini, Bristol; Half-Moon, London; Impressions, York; the ICA, London; Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham; MOMA, Oxford; Open Eye, Liverpool; Photogallery, St. Leonards-on-Sea; Photographers Above the Rainbow, Bristol; Photographers' Gallery, London; Brewery Arts Center, Kendal; Photographic Gallery, Cardiff; Photographic Gallery, Southampton; Side Gallery, Newcastle; Stills, Edinburgh and Untitled, Sheffield. The Standing Conference of Photographic Galleries, "Photography and the Arts Council," May 1980, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁰² Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 26th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," September 17, 1975, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁰³ Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Glory of the Garden: The Development of the Arts in England, a Strategy for a Decade* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1984).

support was crucial in establishing a climate whereby independent, non-profit photography galleries could flourish during the British photographic renaissance.

Publishing

Coming back from the US in 1972, Barry Lane was determined to change the state of photographic publishing in Britain after what he had seen there:

I'd seen it in America and Canada that the funding bodies had recognized that publishing was a very important vehicle for photography, so I had good arguments- it was pretty obvious, really. Most photographers had always published their work.³⁰⁴

Aside from technical manuals and old-fashioned days-gone-by picture books of British towns, publishers who were willing to print books of contemporary photographs were virtually non-existent. Moreover, the vast majority of photographic books that were available in Britain through venues like Zwemmer's, the Photographers' Gallery bookshop and the *Creative Camera* book room were overwhelmingly published by American presses and museums, the majority of which contained the work of American photographers. After Lane's visit, the Arts Council always kept a close eye on what was happening in the US. Lane acquired all of the exhibition catalogues, flyers and handbills he could from the various galleries he visited and maintained a collection of the various activities. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, book catalogues and flyers continued to arrive at the Arts Council, and the lines of communication that Lane established during his visit were fruitful in establishing relationships for the distribution of Arts Council publications. The Light Impressions book catalogue in particular, along with the Visual Studies Workshop print sale catalogue proved a good window on American publications,

³⁰⁴ Lane, interview.

and the Visual Arts Department maintained a modest photographic library to reference goings-on stateside that was often populated by exchanges of Arts Council catalogues with US institutions.³⁰⁵

If the impetus came from the US, there was also a native strand of photography that came out of a print context. Lane recognized early on that publishing would ensure that a wider swath of the UK could get access to photography:

One of the important things that all the photographers were saying is that what we really want to do is publish our work...I suddenly twigged that I could make an argument that rather than spending all this money I had on touring and exhibition, I could use that money to make the work public through publishing rather than through exhibiting. [It was] very tricky. The AC apart from catalogues for its own exhibitions had never seen publishing as something that you could do as a primary vehicle for ideas.³⁰⁶

British photojournalists had a long history with publishing through news magazines and newspapers, and the demise of the former left a gap in the market that Lane intended to fill; this coincided with the younger generation of socially-conscious photographers who were also looking for vehicles for their work beyond the color supplements to the Sunday newspapers. Photographers were becoming increasingly agitated with the lack of editorial control over their images and were seeking alternative arenas to publish their work as they intended it to be seen.

The Arts Council's first step into photographic publishing beyond photographic exhibition catalogues was a series of monographs of British photographers published by Gordon Fraser in 1975.³⁰⁷ These works on Bert Hardy, George Rodger, and Thurston

³⁰⁵ Light Impressions, "Light Impressions Corporation Catalogue of Fine Photography Books" (Light Impressions, Spring 1975), ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.; Visual Studies Workshop, "The Visual Studies Workshop Print Sale Catalogue," 1974, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁰⁶ Lane, interview.

³⁰⁷ Barry Lane to Norbert Lynton, October 23, 1973, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Hopkins highlighted the straight documentary aesthetic in Britain and were also designed to make the work of British photographic pioneers more widely available.³⁰⁸ Prior to this co-operative venture, in 1974 Lane suggested to the Visual Arts Panel that £20,000 be set aside to fund scheme of subsidies to publishers of contemporary photographic books; it was proposed that this measure would guarantee high-quality publishing of contemporary (and hopefully British) work and would protect publishers from making losses on such titles.³⁰⁹ In 1974/75 two grants were awarded, one to Co-Optic Ltd to produce a book on young British photographers, and one to the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol, awarded £625 to publish work by Paul Hill and Thomas Joshua Cooper. Although initially successful, the publications subsidy scheme was not particularly well promoted, and suffered from a lack of interest by commercial publishers who were not guaranteed a return on the books. Specialist publishers such as Peter Turner's short-lived Travelling Light (modeled on Ralph Gibson's Lustrum Press) and the later Cornerhouse, a spin-off from Manchester's Cornerhouse Theatre (itself an Arts Council revenue client), emerged to take over the task of photographic publishing in the 1980s, by which time a more robust art publishing market had begun to surface.

Designed as their signature photography publishing vehicle, the British Image series was the most important set of books published by the Arts Council in the 1970s. Originally conceived of as a quarterly magazine by Barry Lane,³¹⁰ inspiration was taken directly from the National Film Board of Canada's Image series of books which

³⁰⁸ As Gordon Fraser took care of the production, printing and promotion of the books, the Arts Council got a good deal on their investment without a great deal of work. *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Barry Lane, "Proposal for a New Scheme of Grants to Publishers of Photographic Books and Magazines," June 11, 1974, ACGB/31/94, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³¹⁰ Barry Lane to Robin Campbell, October 26, 1973, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

reproduced photographs exhibited at the National Film Board's gallery in Ottawa.³¹¹ Innovatively, each of the books was meant to serve as a statement in its own right as opposed to simply being an accompaniment to the exhibition; the series contained monographs such as *The Many Worlds of Lutz Dille*, reviews of contemporary work such as *Photography Canada 1967* and *B.C. almanac(h) C-B* where fifteen artists produced individual artist books that were grouped together for an exhibition.³¹²

The Arts Council would later produce five books in the series "British Image" which were originally designed to showcase work successfully completed by photographers awarded grants. Although generally less experimental in form than their Canadian counterparts, and more focused on documentary rather than fine art photography,³¹³ British Image was designed to provide a space for photography books that might not have been picked up by more mainstream presses for fear that the work would not be commercially viable; the first book in the series noted that "the opportunities in this country to publish or exhibit independent work are very few" and that the publication was a small redress.³¹⁴ Intended to be published twice a year, the series was eventually published annually. "British Image" naturally conjures up images of the country as a whole ("imaging Britain") but also suggests that the work promoted is

³¹¹ National Film Board of Canada, "IMAGE Series- Produced by the National Film Board of Canada, Still Photography Division," 1972, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³¹² National Film Board of Canada, *B.C. Almanac(h) C-B*. (Vancouver: Brock Webber Printing Co., 1970).

³¹³ Isobel Johnston who became head of the Arts Council Collection in 1979 confirms Lane's documentary proclivities: "Barry Lane was our photography officer. It seems strange now but in 1979 photography was run as a separate branch of the Visual Art department. Barry's particular interest was documentary photography and he oversaw a separate committee which gave grants to photographers. Archival prints were acquired for the Photography Collection as a result of these projects, the photographer being paid additionally for making prints. The Photography Committee carried on throughout the 80's until it eventually became amalgamated and with the main Collection purchasing committee, which by then was acquiring more and more photography, though not necessarily of a documentary kind." Isobel Johnstone and Robert Dingle, "Isobel Johnstone, Interviewed by Robert Dingle, 2009-10," *The Gathering: Building the Arts Council Collection: 1973-2009*, 2010, <http://www.thegathering-artsCouncilcollection.org.uk/interviews/isobeljohnstone>.

³¹⁴ Arts Council of Great Britain, *British Image 1, 2*.

indicative of British photographers (“this is what’s happening in Britain”); if the *Image* series in Canada showed what the Canadians were up to, thus could *British Image* do the same.³¹⁵

Continuing the Arts Council’s desire to give exposure to up-and-coming photographers, *British Image 1* contained photographs from most of the photographers who had received awards from 1973-1974.³¹⁶ From Homer Sykes’ and Bryn Campbell’s views of English tradition in festivals and villages, through John Myers’ Daniel Meadows ‘and Roslyn Banish’s frontal portraits of ordinary folk in domestic and outdoor settings, to Ian Dobbie and Paul Carter’s documentary images focusing on urban and community development, the book represented across-section of photography in Britain that showed (mostly) young photographers working through the British social documentary tradition inflected with aesthetics drawn from street photography and the portraiture of Bruce Davidson and Diane Arbus. Social concerns dominated as well as a sense that each of the projects was recording a Britain in flux for posterity.³¹⁷

British Image 2 followed a similar pattern to the first. The introduction detailed exciting new ventures in British photography:

³¹⁵ The *Image* series was as conscious of its national remit as *British Image*: “This is *Photography* ’67- the first annual exhibition to be presented by the national film board of Canada to stimulate creative photography across the land... this new series of annual exhibits ushered in by *Photography* ’67 will become both signpost and check-point, measuring and stimulating the development of the photographic arts in Canada.” National Film Board of Canada and Office national du film du Canada, *Image 2- Photography: Canada 1967/Photographie: Canada 1967* (Ottawa, 1968), 6. *Image 3* put the situation more bluntly and in a way that would echo the Bicentennial projects supported by the NEA “Canada’s centennial year inevitably, and perhaps quite rightly, saw Canadians vitally concerned with their own image. Photographers travelled from coast to coast, focusing their lens on their fellow Canadians and intimately exploring in detail the beauty of their own land.” Lorraine Monk and National Film Board of Canada, *Other Places. Sous D’autres Cieux*. (Toronto, 1968), 5.

³¹⁶ Arts Council of Great Britain, *British Image 1*, 1.

³¹⁷ Daniel Meadows said of his “Free Photographic Omnibus Project: “My aim is to compile a documentary record of English life in the early 70s. I particularly want to photograph people whose quality of life is threatened by the apparent necessity for rapid social change.” *Ibid.*, 38.

It is encouraging to note that since the first issue of *British Image* one new magazine, *Camerawork*, and two new photography galleries have emerged both in London- the Asahi Pentax Gallery and the Boxroom Gallery. A further gallery, the Side Gallery, will be opened shortly in Newcastle by the Amber Films group. We hope that *British Image* will be an additional means of distributing fine photographs and of bringing work of non-commercial photographers to a wider public.³¹⁸

The book featured two Magnum photographers' takes on life in Britain (Ian Berry and Patrick Ward), Josef Koudelka's images of British Gypsies,³¹⁹ Chris Killip's evocative, Paul Strand and Walker Evans influenced images of Northern Britain, Marketa Luskacova's images of street markets in London and Dennis Morris' pioneering portrait photographs of the Asian population of Southall, Birmingham. Again, documentary was squarely at the center of the British image. The series documented shifts in aesthetics, as Lane noted:³²⁰

We were definitely dealing with at that period, the late seventies, two strands of work. We were dealing with, if you like, the legacy of *Picture Post* and photojournalism and documentary work and some newer, younger, politicized documentary, and we were dealing with an American tradition: there's no question in this country we were dealing with two powerful forces at work: the art tradition, particularly the modernist art tradition was emerging with some vigor.³²¹

Representing the vanguard of young photography in Britain, *New British Image: British Image 4*, edited by Ron McCormick, presented a broad selection of work from art colleges and is indicative of the strands of influence Lane mentions above. McCormick noted the shift that was occurring as an older generation that came of age in the 1960s was maturing and a younger generation grew up with more possibilities for creative,

³¹⁸ Arts Council of Great Britain, *British Image 2*, 1976, 3.

³¹⁹ Koudelka's work was published alongside a transcription of the wall label written by John Szarkowski from an exhibition of Koudelka's work at MoMA in 1975. Arts Council of Great Britain, *British Image 2*.

³²⁰ In a nod to US quality, the series was printed in "fine duotone lithography" by the Rapoport Printing Corporation of New York. *Ibid.*, 2.

³²¹ Lane, interview.

independent photography as their education was beginning to include “a broader aesthetic and social context.”³²² The photographs chosen by McCormick “offer[ed] no simple, convenient illustration. They are rarely produced for an audience, and in nearly every case they have been made for the photographer alone in pursuit of his own intuitions.”³²³ The description and the photographs demonstrated how deep the influence of Szarkowski’s brand of modernism was: rather than reflect on the world, art students were coming out of colleges with more introspective portfolios.

In a similar vein, *British Image 3* was devoted entirely to the work of photographer John Blakemore who worked in the tradition of Minor White, Aaron Siskind, Paul Caponigro and Thomas Joshua Cooper.³²⁴ As if anticipating a reaction against this “Americanized” take on the British landscape, Gerry Badger took pains to moor Blakemore’s work to the “British” context of the series title in his introduction by suggesting that “an intrinsic love for the land and an inherent respect for nature are generally regarded as a fundamental part of our national consciousness.”³²⁵ Blakemore’s abstract, intimate and ethereal pictures of the British landscape represented a strand of American-influenced takes on the land in Britain, highly personal and impressionistic accounts of place quite far removed from the predominant photographic documentary culture.³²⁶ While Blakemore and Raymond Moore’s work in particular resonated with and was influenced by Minor White’s mystical approach to the land, another group of

³²² Ron McCormick, ed., *New British Image: British Image 4* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977), 91.

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ Although almost polar opposites in style, both Patrick Ward and John Blakemore cite the Family of Man as foundational in their interest in photography. John Blakemore, *British Image 3: John Blakemore* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977), 72.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

³²⁶ As Gerry Badger noted: “his mode of expression is not only literal but metaphorical, and the primary philosophical tenet in his work is the credo propounded by Alfred Stieglitz, developed and propagated by Minor White and termed ‘equivalence.’” *Ibid.*, 8.

photographers represented in *British Image 5*, such as Fay Godwin and John Davies, would further expand landscape photography and provide a platform for a new school of British landscape photography.³²⁷

Like magazines such as *Creative Camera*, the Arts Council's publishing program's influence spread far beyond the books' modest sales. Always a priority for the Photography Committee, photographic publishing aimed to build a photographic publishing industry in Britain that would "catch up" to the US. The mobility of books and magazines meant that books could accompany touring shows and fill specialist bookstore shelves up and down the country. Patrick Ward summed up the value of the *British Image* series:

There really is no outlet for getting these pictures before the public. While I'm inclined to think that the greatest value and interest of these pictures may be for future generations, it certainly gives me a greater sense of motivation to have someone else say— yes, what you're doing is worthwhile, and we're prepared to back you with hard cash and get the results before an audience. There are many reasons for shooting pictures, not least the adrenalin pumping moment of knowing you've caught a marvelous instant, but it's all a little empty if all the results end up in a little yellow box in a cupboard. The grant for me was a kind of guarantee that that needn't happen.³²⁸

In its best instances, the Arts Council work served the dual public service function by supporting artists and improving public access to the work.³²⁹ The Arts Council ceased publishing photographic books after *About 70 Photographs* was published in 1980, an intriguing showcase of individual photographs selected by William Messer and Chris Steele-Perkins who provided wry, impressionistic and insightful commentary inspired by

³²⁷ Bill Gaskins, *Perspectives on Landscape: New Photographs and Poems Inspired by Landscape in Britain* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978).

³²⁸ Arts Council of Great Britain, *British Image 2*, 67.

³²⁹ 2,000 copies of each volume were printed to keep costs per unit low and to provide an effective subsidy to the public and galleries for the cover price. Barry Lane to Robin Campbell, January 11, 1974, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

the pictures. Redolent of Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan's *Evidence* in structure, the photographs ranged from found snapshots, medical photographs, and design group Hipgnosis' LP art, to photographs by Sharon Kivland, Adrian Flowers and Boyd Webb that documented the shift in aesthetics towards color. Coupled with *Three Perspectives on Photography, About 70 Photographs* acted as a capstone on an era of predominant American influence and pointed towards a growing diversity and maturity in British photography that would be fully realized in the 1980s.

British Image 1 succeeded in raising the profile of British photography internationally, not least because of the British Council who recommended that copies be sent to their libraries abroad (after 40 countries expressed an interest), which also led to other Arts Council photography books being supplied. T. R. Butchard of the general exhibitions department at the Council was effusive in his praise: it "[British Image] was greeted with great admiration within the Council... it portrays good examples of leading British photographers, and it is a lively look at British people and events while completely avoiding the hard-sell approach of other publications."³³⁰ Perhaps staff at the Council had neglected to flip to the back of the book and missed the desolate images of the London Westway, but if they had seen them, the decision displays openness to sending a sometimes critical portrait of Britain overseas on the strength that form trumps content. Lane was later invited to lecture on British photography on a British Council course entitled "The Arts in Britain" to train British Council officers how they could best promote British art in their overseas postings, and he became instrumental in the growing

³³⁰ Tim Butchard to Barry Lane, June 3, 1976, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

cooperation between the Arts Council and British Council when photography shows began to be circulated abroad under the auspices of the Council.³³¹

It was not only the British Council doing the work: Lane also worked hard to get Arts Council publications distributed internationally. The Arts Council relied on outside distributors who Lane tried to cajole into sending Arts Council books to the larger American audience to middling success. Noticing that the Spring 1979 George Eastman House book catalogue did not contain any Arts Council publications, Lane wrote to director Robert Doherty asking why they did not carry them: “is it because you don’t approve of any of them, or because you haven’t seen any of them, is it because nobody has offered them to you at the right price or what can be the reason?”³³² Because the Photography Committee was blazing a trail in publishing in the Visual Arts, the decisions they made were often ad hoc, based on cost and convenience to the Council.³³³ The Council’s prior ventures in publishing and selling art books were with exhibition catalogues, usually sold during exhibitions, provided to regional galleries and the Arts Council bookshop.³³⁴ Zwemmer’s was drafted in to provide distribution after an arrangement with Gordon Fraser saw an uneven distribution of books, especially to the US.³³⁵ International distribution was important to Lane as it was one of the premier ways to raise awareness of British photography among the international image community. As the Arts Council books and exhibitions began to circulate in the 1980s, photography had notable success. An anecdote from Lane illustrates this well:

³³¹ Brian Evans to Barry Lane, June 17, 1977, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain. Michael Harrison to Barry Lane, September 6, 1978, ACGB/32/187, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³³² Barry Lane to Robert Doherty, August 21, 1979, ACGB/32/197, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³³³ Joanna Drew to Chris Killip, February 1, 1980, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³³⁴ By 1982 the bookshop was promoting and selling photographic books so extensively that the Photographers’ gallery complained that their bookshop was being cannibalized. Sue Davies and Roy Strong, August 26, 1982, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³³⁵ Barry Lane to Laurie Baty, February 25, 1980, ACGB/32/197, Arts Council of Great Britain.

I'll never forget the day when I had a phone call from Jem Southam. And Jem said 'I've just had a phone call from America saying would I accept a \$10,000 prize from this university because the students had voted your book the most important photography book they had seen that year. And Jem said 'I didn't even know my books were circulating in America!'³³⁶

The work that Lane and other members of the Photography Committee and later the Photography Advisory Group paid off in the 1980s as British photographers, so long in the shadow of other countries, was finally beginning to break out of its national confines and make an impact on the world stage.

ASSESSING THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMITTEE: EXPRESSIONS OF A NATION OR AN ARTS COUNCIL STYLE?

Was there, as Joanna Drew hinted at, an “Arts Council style” in photography? Did photographers shape their practice or applications to a perceived notion of what the Committee wanted? Like the NEA, the Arts Council can certainly in one sense be viewed as being, as Erika Doss suggests “directed by a well-educated, liberal cadre of arts professionals—the cultural equivalent of the expert managers dominating the public sphere.”³³⁷ Arbiters of taste and style the Photography Committee and photography officer may have been, photography at the Arts Council, however, was one of the more avowedly populist areas, dealing sympathetically with community arts and attempting to get photographs seen by as many people as possible. Homer Sykes’ multifaceted portraits of British folk rituals is a perfect case in point: it had national themes but encompassed a wide swath of regional examples, it was documentary in nature but informed by modernist aesthetics, it was suitable for both museums, and art galleries including many regional centers were eager to show their own local region’s folk traditions. Lane was

³³⁶ Lane, interview.

³³⁷ Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs*, 43.

attuned to the criticism of favoring documentary photography addressed the perceived bias in a 1974 report: “far from reflecting any bias in the Committee this represents the overwhelming proportion of applicants. At the moment when the range of photography taught at colleges of art and polytechnics is very limited, this documentary bias is not unexpected.”³³⁸ As the politics of the welfare state were front-and-center of 1970s life in Britain, it is understandable that up-and-coming photographers would seek to incorporate issues that dealt with public welfare into their projects. Lane’s visit to the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts in 1972 confirms a similar experience. In creating a grant program for emerging artists in the early 1970s, the council found that they were almost exclusively attracting “socially oriented” photography as savvy photographers had (correctly) discerned that the public service remit of the council might favor such work, even if the council had not explicitly defined it as such.³³⁹

David Mellor points to a strain of documentary realist portraiture as predominating at the time, and this is largely true; most successful photography projects submitted were based on illuminating society through straight black-and-white portraiture and were concerned with drawing attention to issues previously ignored or providing a stylish portrait of a vanishing Britain. As many young photographers in Britain, at least up until the late 1970s, were working through aesthetic influences emanating from the other side of the Atlantic (Bruce Davidson’s *100th Street*, Robert Frank’s 1968-reissued *The Americans*, catalogs of *New Documents* and other MoMA shows, for example), their work was steeped in both the British and American documentary traditions, such as Daniel Meadows’ desire to photograph Britain while allowing Britons to photograph

³³⁸ Lane, “Report on Grants Recommended by the Photography Committee 1973/74.”

³³⁹ Barry Lane, “Province of Ontario Council for the Arts,” 1972, ACGB/32/188, Arts Council of Great Britain.

themselves. Thus, projects that spoke to a broader sense of public purpose were often more successful. Landscape photography was increasingly popular in the 1970s but although informed by the disaffected style of photographers featured in George Eastman House's *New Topographics* exhibition, their take on the land was less distanced and disaffected and more about illuminating traditional rural lives or environmental impact, or certainly that is what the photographers argued; John Davies' grant awarded in 1976 was to "photograph the water cycle" of the West of Ireland and Fay Godwin received a grant the same year to photograph the drovers roads in Wales. Certainly, in funding John Blakemore and Thomas Joshua Cooper, the Committee sponsored the more abstract, gallery-oriented landscapes as well as the natural sublime and social studies of rural life. With the British public having generally always been skeptical of public payment for *l'art pour l'art*, it is laudable that the Arts Council was able to find space to fund personal, self-expressive ventures that were often aesthetically challenging, especially in a Committee environment where consensus does not generally yield radical decisions.³⁴⁰

The Arts Council's early attempts at bringing creative/independent photography to a wider audience did, however, meet with puzzlement from several quarters of the established photographic press. Social activist photographer Euan Duff, in his review of *Young British Photographers* and *British Image 1* was scathing:

Their work reveals not so much personal preoccupations of any importance as a common dedication to a set of pictorial rules, stylistically different but just as limiting as those of their predecessors. Equally, they are deluding themselves in regarding themselves as the vanguard of a new movement when they are in fact the rearguard of a tired old movement that reached its peak. They are being

³⁴⁰ Lane grew increasingly ambivalent about funding the artistic tradition: "I have to say that I waver more now in relationship to those questions around people like, say someone like John Blakemore, those people who were trying to make art, I have very serious questions about what the role of public support is for people who make private art and who sell it through private dealer networks. I find that a much harder thing to deal with now." Lane, interview.

simply pretentious in putting themselves forward as serious artists when not one of them is using the medium as anything more than folk art.³⁴¹

For Duff, the personal, self-reflexive aesthetic was little more than navel-gazing. Duff also derided the “Diane Arbus-like staring projects” in *British Image 1* and questioned why the Arts Council should “throw good money after bad.”³⁴² Adding to the litany of complaints was a criticism of the application process as the Committee “rarely meets or talks to applicants and the process is about as impersonal as being commissioned to take advertising pictures.”³⁴³ Myke Treasure began his ambivalently-titled review in *Amateur Photographer* (“Is this the Best of Our Young Talent?”) with a sigh, noting the prevalence of clichéd themes.³⁴⁴ Perhaps Duff and Treasure missed the point, were too swift to judgment, or the revolution in defining “art” had bypassed them, but by the late 1970s and early 1980s the youthful developments catalogued in these two books would become the mainstream of British photography, even if not all of the photographers would be part of that mainstream.

Parallels can also be drawn with the Arts Council and the NEA which, as Foresta suggests, attracted a similar type of project and photographer (the Arts Council had borrowed the idea of funding a project from the NEA/Guggenheim approach): “there is a popular suspicion, however, that government advocacy of art, and photographic art in particular, inspires or even requires a documentary style.”³⁴⁵ The NEA Documentary Survey projects, initiated in 1976 and inspired by a similar project, The Kansas Survey, undertaken by three photographers in 1974 in anticipation of the bicentennial year, were

³⁴¹ Euan Duff, “Young British Photographers,” *The Guardian*, July 12, 1975, 10, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/185849835/citation/137C20A95F5456BB91B/7?accountid=10673>.

³⁴² Duff, “Young British Photographers.”

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ Treasure, Myke, “Is This the Best of Our Young Talent?,” *Amateur Photographer* 152, no. 5 (July 23, 1975): 93.

³⁴⁵ Foresta, *Exposed and Developed*, 9.

naturally intended to produce documentary examinations on the state of the nation at its 200th anniversary.³⁴⁶ These projects tended to draw of prior examples by the FSA photographers, another federally-funded group, as Marguerite Welch suggested of the 1984 survey exhibition *Exposed and Developed: Photography Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts*:

On the whole, the exhibition was dominated by the social documentary tradition inherited from the FSA photographers of the 1930s. The photographs of Bill Burke and Todd Walker, who worked on the Kentucky Documentary Survey Project, and those of James Enyeart, Terry Evans, and Larry Schwann, who worked on the Kansas Documentary Survey, clearly and perhaps inescapably reflect their FSA antecedents. The work of Bill Owens, Robert D'Aliesandro, Danny Lyon, Bruce Davidson, and Elaine Mayes reflect either repetitions or extensions of the Robert Frank idiom... it seems that NEA support on the whole fostered a relatively conservative aesthetic or simply reinforced the dominant Evans/Frank aesthetic, which over the years has been codified as *the* academic style-echoing the career pattern of pictorialism in the early part of this century.³⁴⁷

There was room for experimentation, but the work that photographers produced for the Arts Council and the NEA (and, indeed, the types of photographers chosen for awards) suggests that if a new project was pitched to an arts organization in the US or Great Britain, most photographers tailored their projects to a perceived ideology or photographed them in a style that they deemed would be most acceptable to the Arts Council.

In a 1978 *New Statesman* article discussing accusations of privilege and the Arts Council's preference for the elite arts (ballet, opera, etc.), Director-General Roy Shaw was quick to defend the Arts Council's populist streak, and called on photography to do so: 'Ten years ago we spent nothing on photography. We now spend £180,000 on it'³⁴⁸ It

³⁴⁶ Lane is quoted in the article as "being concerned about 'spending public money on self-indulgence.'" Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Welch, "The Best Years of Our Lives: Photography and the NEA."

³⁴⁸ Anna Coote, "Them, the Arts and Us," *New Statesman*, July 28, 1978, 108.

was a telling example, and either speaks to Shaw's rather misguided belief that Arts Council photography was one of the more inherently "popular" (i.e. a refinement of a hobby) arts or to his awareness of the broadening of artistic horizons. Certainly, photography's association in the minds of many of the artistic classes with new, vaguely American ideas about the popular arts meant that it was largely embraced by the Arts Council as an adjunct to fine art, rather than an expression of it, a position that was acceptable, and even desirable to the photographic community. It is on these terms, then, that the Committee's position within the Arts Council must be judged, especially due to its unique level of autonomy and unobtrusiveness. To more radical elements in photography world, the Committee would always be an adjunct of an undemocratic, conservative elite, tainted by proximity, but close attention indicates a more complex pattern of critique. Interestingly, Lane faced a backlash against trying to raise photography's status within the Arts Council:

I also early on in my career, when I was able to make my case to the Council itself, as to why we should be funding photography and why we should get more money and why we should have a separate panel to make photography decisions and so on, and somebody said to me "why do you want to do this to photography? Why do you want to stop it being popular and make it elite? Why do you want to take all of this stuff which is being published all the time and put it on the gallery walls?"³⁴⁹

While the Committee would have eschewed any suggestions that they were trying to make photography an 'elite' pursuit, this instance highlights the careful line Lane and the Committee had to tread between arguing that photography should be afforded special recognition and highlighting that it was popular and thus deserved funding.

³⁴⁹ Lane, interview.

THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMITTEE AND BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHY

How, then, was the Photography Committee received by the broader photographic community? The consensus appears to mirror the sentiment of Bill Gaskins' letter to Robin Campbell: "the general opinion, throughout the photographic world, is one of guarded satisfaction with the work of the Committee. Few areas and interests have been left out completely although one magazine would disagree."³⁵⁰ Sue Davies' endorsement was even more ringing:

What's so nice about it is that it's not like a Big Brother establishment figure. You can turn to the Council and make use of the experience it has gained in other fields. The Photography Committee is enthusiastic and you don't have to play political tricks with its members. You can be frank and they'll react by being sympathetic.³⁵¹

The Photography Committee of the late 1970s in particular was comparatively pluralistic in its membership, activities and sponsorship.³⁵² If the two main factions were the 'pure' artist-photographers of the John Szarkowski/Minor White schools against the new documentarians and photojournalism initially, this was followed by the inclusion of members who were not primarily photographers themselves and were sympathetic to the community photography movement, and postmodernists who would critique photographic practice through the burgeoning discipline of cultural studies. Although the rifts between different areas of British photography became deeper by the mid-1980s (especially surrounding conceptual artists encroachment on the "turf" of photography and issues regarding representations of gender, race and disability) the general feeling was that everyone was fighting *for* photography, for its acceptance, and for its diversity.

³⁵⁰ Bill Gaskins to Robin Campbell, March 16, 1978, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁵¹ Sue Davies in "The Arts Council Has a New Interest," 17. As Davies was a major beneficiary of Council funds, this judgment is probably not free of bias.

³⁵² Except for the committee's rather dire representation of women and minority figures, a situation which only began to be redressed in the 1980s.

Lane's later recollection of this period may be more generous in retrospect, but it connotes the broad support for serious photography that transcended faction:

And we got on terribly well together, the photojournalists and the artists and the historians and so on, in the end worked as not a bad team, I think... there was a real sense most of the time of generosity to other people's passions. If somebody believed that somebody was worth supporting on the whole they would defer to that, they wouldn't try and argue against it. Because so little was getting support that almost any aspect of it as long as it was good... people didn't argue about that very often.³⁵³

Like the Arts Council itself, the actions of the Committee drew criticism as well as praise. There was certainly some favoritism towards certain photographers in the first few years of the Council, which could be attributed to the relatively small number of people working in positions of authority in photography at the time. Figures like Peter Turner and David Hurn were "insiders" but they were also part of a minority who were willing to devote significant time to photography; that they were metropolitan residents and friends of Committee members certainly helped. The likes of Hurn and Turner were, it is to be remembered, fighting against the entrenched photographic establishment and fighting for recognition from the art world's leading lights. Their appointment on the Photography Committee was designed by Lane to clear out the dead wood from the previous iteration that had met intermittently up until 1971.³⁵⁴ The embattled "them-vs.-us" attitude that some members held (pace Bill Jay) was no longer tenable towards the middle of the decade when it became clear that photography was winning the battle for visibility; what had become more entrenched was a sense that the some members of the Committee were, by the end of the 1970s, themselves staunchly resisting change.

³⁵³ Lane, interview.

³⁵⁴ Hughes, George, "The Arts Council Now," *Amateur Photographer* 139, no. 7 (August 20, 1969): 104.

Occasionally, the Committee's perceived lack of transparency became a problem. In 1977 the directors of Impressions, The Photographers' Gallery, the Photographic Gallery in Southampton, and the Half Moon Gallery wrote an open letter to the Photography Committee requesting a meeting and noting that "we have little chance to answer criticisms and it is difficult... for us to tell if the criticisms we receive are the general feeling of the panel or simply of one or two people."³⁵⁵ The galleries requested annual meetings with the full panel; more regular visits from Photography Committee members to shows the galleries were putting on and having a rotating member of each gallery sit in on Arts Council Committee meetings as a non-voting member just as the Arts Council sent non-voting members to individual galleries' meetings. The disquiet shown by the galleries highlights how Arts Council work was often seen as London-centric but also, in the case of the Photography Committee, communication about where funds were allocated and for what reason could be murky. By 1980, and in response to Arts Council Cuts, sixteen galleries formed the Standing Conference of Photographic Galleries to protect their interests.³⁵⁶

In response to criticism about the lack of transparency in Committee decisions and the changing nature of photography, Lane proposed changes to the Photography Committee structure in 1977 to consolidate gains made during the past five years. Lane proposed that there be formed three to five sub-committees or working groups to deal with the main areas of the council's responsibilities that would meet two to four times a year: exhibitions; publications; grants to individual photographers; and two newer areas

³⁵⁵ Sue Davies et al., "An Open Letter to the Arts Council Photographic Panel and Officer from the Photographic Galleries," August 17, 1977, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁵⁶ The Standing Conference of Photographic Galleries, "Photography and the Arts Council."

of direct interest: community photography, and education.³⁵⁷ Each sub-committee would have two members of the nine-person Photography Committee on them with three to five co-opted members serving terms of three years each. In the end, only the Support Schemes for Photographers Sub-Committee was formed (which dealt with awards to individual photographers), but the net result was that more voices had been incorporated in the Committee's decisions.³⁵⁸ Lane was not inflexible on outside demands to change the structure of the Committee, but found an opportunity while also advocating for more autonomy within the Council.

A memo discussing proposals for the Hayward photography Biennial offers an alternative view of the Committee from within the Arts Council. Richard Francis, then a lecturer in American literature at the University of Manchester and an Arts Council advisor, was asked by Joanna Drew for his opinion on the prospective show. His reply gives some insight into the feelings of other, more marginal photographers to the Committee:

I have felt for a long time that the photographers have been talking to each other, without too much outside reference and have completely turned their backs on much photographic work. There is a strong feeling among some of the photographers that I know that this has caused a particular view of photography to be promoted. Only certain images are seen as legitimate "photographs"... I have a strong distrust of the view that "the names are obvious; it's a matter of selecting the images and guiding the selection." We need, in my view, to find a selector or selectors who cannot be seen to be members of the "charmed circle."³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Barry Lane, "Photography Committee Membership, Structure and Procedures," September 3, 1977, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁵⁸ Barry Lane, "Photography Committee Membership, Structure and Procedures," September 28, 1977, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁵⁹ Richard Francis to Joanna Drew, August 8, 1978, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain. Francis proposed that Susan Sontag be asked to make the selection instead of Barry Lane because this would "raise the standard of criticism from meaningless biocrit" and challenged Barry Lane's criticism that she "is 'literary' and cannot look at specific images." Ibid.

Criticism of conflicts of interest with the Committee was addressed in 1979, partially due to Barry Lane's proposed selection of the Hayward Biennial. The Committee agreed that no present member could participate in one-man or one-woman shows, would be responsible for the selection of or organization of any exhibitions, should have a book published by the Council, or receive financial benefit from a Committee decision.³⁶⁰ The development demonstrates that by the sixth year of the Committee's existence there was sufficient photographic activity in Britain that its primary purpose was no longer to raise the profile of photography. Indeed, as this was one of the stated aims that the Committee had achieved in its short existence, some members of the Art Panel thought it better that the Committee be wound-up.³⁶¹ In a more scabrous review, William Messer accused the Committee of:

Play[ing] safe and played incestuous favourites, too often regarding its funding more as an investment than purely 'support' and 'encouragement.' Even the last Committee- which I think of as generally a quite good one- was merely irritated by the low standard of the last round of bursary applications rather than assuming some responsibility for the prevailing attitudes and situation that produced it.³⁶²

Messer also suggested that Arts Council intervention had been detrimental to British photography because it supported a moribund status quo:

The Arts Council has actually been steadily starving off photography while the world applauded its patronage- a deadly diet of mediocrity, caution and prestige, coupled with the inbuilt policy of control rather than stimulus, sickness rather than health.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 65th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," July 3, 1979, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁶¹ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 139th Meeting of the Council's Art Panel," January 23, 1980, ACGB/32/245, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁶² William Messer, "Patronage, Responsibility, Power: Part 2," *The British Journal of Photography* 127, no. 6246 (April 11, 1980): 345.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 346.

During its early years, the Arts Council's support of popular art was seen as anti-establishment in the broad sense that the establishment wanted nothing to do with more popular or radical art forms (let alone subsidize them) contemporary arts, especially the avant-garde with jaundiced suspicion. Starved as it was of funds and open as it was to young photographers and new ideas from the outset, the Photography Committee escaped the suggestion from all but the most fervent of left-wing critics that it was a tool of the establishment. Such critiques would, however, intensify into the 1980s when divisions started to widen amongst the photographic community but by supporting more radical ventures such as the Half Moon Photography Workshop and its magazine *Camerawork* ("work" here denoted more the Marxian sense and less the Stieglitzian). The Side Gallery in Newcastle, an avowedly socially-focused institution fell out with Barry Lane as they felt that their applications "were not being completely or effectively presented" to the Committee and so bypassed Lane and communicated with Joanna Drew directly.³⁶⁴ Problematic as these developments were, the Committee soon had bigger things to worry about.

THE END OF THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

The demise of the Photography Committee caught almost everybody involved with it by surprise. Indeed, the Committee seemed at the time to have been going from strength to strength. In December 1978, Lane circulated a paper entitled "Future of the Photography Committee," which reiterated his desire to set up the Photography Committee as independent from the Visual Arts Panel: "the Photography Committee has over five year proved its ability to devise and to formulate policy... becoming a

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 344.

committee of Council would be a public recognition of the status and interest in photography at the present time.”³⁶⁵ The proposal, submitted in an expanded form to the Arts Council on March 26th 1979, noted the Committee’s desire to broaden the institutional conception of photography beyond fine art, as within the Visual Arts Panel it was treated with “varying degrees of hostility and indifference,” and added that “the history and significance of photography in Britain is a proud part of our heritage that we are neglecting.”³⁶⁶ Robert Hutchinson viewed this bold move as a symbolic struggle rather than a pragmatic one:

The struggle for a separate Photography Committee or panel, a separate forum for photography, can be seen in part as a struggle against the selective tradition, a struggle to assert that photography has a breadth of aims, uses and potential, that, while having a legitimate claim on funds for the arts, partly lie outside the fine art concerns that predominate in official visual arts policy.³⁶⁷

Mike Weaver, reader in American literature at the university of Oxford and past contributor to *Form* magazine, took over as chair in January 1979. By 1979, the panel better resembled a cross-section of photographic activity. Broadly speaking, members represented the following strands; postmodernism and art: Victor Burgin and Stevie Bezenenet; community photography: Paul Carter; museums and collecting: Mark Haworth-Booth, documentary: Bryn Campbell and Chris Steele-Perkins, feminism and practice: Angela Kelly.³⁶⁸ Although Committee members often bemoaned their marginal status among the other Arts Council concerns, their liminality often worked in their favor. By walking the tightrope rhetorically between art and not-art (consequently exasperating

³⁶⁵ Barry Lane, “Future of the Photography Committee,” December 1978, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁶⁶ Photography Committee, “A Report from the Photography Sub-Committee to the Vice Chairman’s Working Party on the Arts Council’ Organization and Procedure” (Arts Council of Great Britain, March 26, 1979), ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁶⁷ Hutchinson, *The Politics of the Arts Council*, 89.

³⁶⁸ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Committee Lists 1979,” 1979, ACGB/32/109, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Visual Arts panel members who did not quite know what to think of it), the Committee expanded photography's remit while concurrently flying under the radar at the Arts Council by remaining a small concern. Buoyed by rising budget allocations and a desire to expand their activities into additional fields, the proposal represents the high water mark of the Committee's ambitions. Riding on the crest of a wave, the Photography Committee was soon to crash violently on the shore.

On November 28th 1979, *The Daily Telegraph* published an article announcing an Arts Council report: *Organization and Procedures: Report of the Working Party 1979*³⁶⁹ that detailed a "streamlining" of the Council's structure and elimination of certain committees for "increased efficiency, tighter organization and much-needed financial economies."³⁷⁰ The new policy was to be enacted by April 1st 1980, with an ameliorative corollary stating that "the areas of work covered by former sub-committees will not receive less attention" as the council's panels would now take responsibility for them.³⁷¹ Photography was for the chop, and the Visual Arts panel would take over with two members of that panel having responsibility for decisions regarding photography. It was the exact opposite of the autonomy that the Committee had been seeking, and a bitter pill to swallow.

³⁶⁹ This report was partially precipitated by Raymond Williams' critique of the Council. As Mike Weaver noted, this was unfortunate because Williams would not have agreed with the proposal. Arts Council of Great Britain, "Transcript of the 69th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," December 14, 1979, ACGB/32/245, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁷⁰ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Press Notice: Arts Council Streamlines Organization" (Arts Council of Great Britain, November 29, 1979), ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain. This can be interpreted as a pre-emptive strike against the Thatcher government's anticipated cuts of the arts budget. Opposition to Thatcher would characterize many photographic responses to the 1980s, so much so that David Mellor chose a paraphrase of her 1987 statement as the title of his survey of British photography from that period. Mellor, *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87: From the British Council and the Arts Council Collection*. See also Antony Beck, "The Impact of Thatcherism on the Arts Council," *Parliamentary Affairs* 42, no. 3 (July 1989): 362–379.

³⁷¹ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Press Notice: Arts Council Streamlines Organization."

The reaction of the panel to the Council's decision was best elucidated by Mike Weaver *The Sunday Times*: "you could say that photography had arrived in Britain. We were hoping that the Council would give it separate panel status. But instead of going forward, we have been decimated."³⁷² In a move that did not help matters, the information regarding cuts had been leaked to the press: members had found out about the Committee's axing informally from friends who read the *Telegraph*.³⁷³ The consternation surrounding the speed of the decision was voiced by Joanna Drew who expressed "alarm at the blinding rush in which we are proceeding... it seems extraordinary that we should act with such haste to dismantle our traditional structure before we have any clear idea of what is to replace it."³⁷⁴ In the next Committee meeting, Weaver expressed his dismay and anger at the decision, especially as the Working Party had not spent enough time reviewing the Committee's work, in which it had "perform[ed] its duties with a strength of mind and a freedom of discussion rarely found at the Art Panel."³⁷⁵ Paul Hill shared Weaver's sentiments and added:

This Committee, and I have travelled around quite a lot, throughout various parts of the world is envied. There is nothing like- in most countries, I would say 95% of countries of the world like this Committee, doing what it is for photography. We are envied in this country... we are doing a job for photography that no other

³⁷² Anthony Mascarenhas, "Arts 'Snub' Upsets Photo-World," *The Sunday Times*, December 23, 1979, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁷³ Barry Lane to Joanna Drew, December 6, 1979, ACGB/32/245, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁷⁴ Joanna Drew to Roy Shaw, December 13, 1979, ACGB/32/245, Arts Council of Great Britain. Drew also noted: "the commitment of officers is to the arts, or to the art forms for which they work. Their loyalty to the Arts Council or, more importantly, its senior management is dependent on the wisdom with which the Council or, more importantly, its senior management acts. They naturally identify more with those they see in action and who share their involvement and commitment to an art form than with a faceless Council about whose deliberations they know nothing (luckily for the most part!)."

³⁷⁵ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Minutes of the 69th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee," December 14, 1979, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

area or Committee in any part of the world with the possible exception of America is doing.³⁷⁶

Victor Burgin viewed the Council's decision as indicative of broader cultural shifts:

We see generally in this country now a rising tide of a particularly boorish and cynical form of authoritarianism and its now engulfed the Arts Council with such unseemly rapidity that we have to suspect that the Arts Council has rushed to join it... this is going to confirm the very worst suspicions of those people who form the general constituency of the photography world and in the art world generally that this is an authoritarian, centralized, alien body.³⁷⁷

Beyond the changes in funding, the ideological shift to "arts management," as opposed to patronage or support, signaled a shift towards thinking of the arts as a revenue-generating industry rather than an expression of popular or cultivated civilization.³⁷⁸ Independent photography, stuck between these two poles, was one of the first to suffer and responded accordingly. William Messer, in one of the lengthiest denunciations of Arts Council policy, described the 1979 Working Party report as

Thoroughly imbued with the promotion of authority, autonomy, hierarchical elitism and servitude, salary increases, staff increases, fewer advisory committees, smaller advisory panels, less interference and reduced regional representation-with very little visible concern for what might be termed 'the public,' accountability, or, really, the arts themselves.³⁷⁹

Galling in particular were the simultaneous increases in paid staff at the Arts Council at the expense of Committee members who volunteered their time, a move that did little to assuage fears that the Arts Council was now simply an adjunct of the new government.

³⁷⁶ Arts Council of Great Britain, "Transcript of the 69th Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee."

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ For a comprehensive account of the term and contemporary examples of the evolution of the culture industry (contra Adorno's term) see the chapter "The Mercurial Career of Creative Industries Policymaking in the United Kingdom, European Union and United States" in Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times* (NYU Press, 2009).

³⁷⁹ William Messer, "Patronage, Responsibility, Power," *The British Journal of Photography* 127, no. 6245 (April 4, 1980): 312.

A campaign was quickly mobilized to save the Committee: Weaver made a statement to the press that was widely reprinted, a meeting with the Visual Arts Panel resulted in a recommendation that the Committee be re-instated, and regional arts associations, groups, and individuals were encouraged to write to the Council in favor of keeping the Committee. *Camerawork's* "Open Letter to the Arts Council" indicates the impact the Committee had in the minds of photographic professionals:

Over the past seven years, photography had broadened to become a highly important field of social and artistic activity, and one of widespread interest. The Committee has played a crucial role in this development, both by its very existence and by its public advocacy for photography. The Committee usefully represented a broad spectrum of photographic knowledge and interest... it was the only visible body speaking for photography on a national level.³⁸⁰

The letter criticized the "downgrading" of photography at the Arts Council and mentioned that the "undemocratic" decision to axe the Committee was "already widely seen as an attack on photography itself," especially as the Photography Officer was now a "national spokesperson for photography" that "no matter how well informed is not sufficient to take on this role."³⁸¹ *The British Journal of Photography* was more restrained but expressed regret at the decision, noting that the Committee "fills the Council's understandable lack of knowledge of the photographic scene in the UK and how it fits with world developments and trends."³⁸² A petition initiated by the Standing Conference of Photographic Galleries and displayed in public art spaces gained 1,355 signatures and was presented to Kenneth Robinson MP.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Camerawork Editorial Group, "Open Letter to the Arts Council of Great Britain," *Camerawork* no. 18 (March 1980): 15.

³⁸¹ Camerawork Editorial Group, "Open Letter to the Arts Council of Great Britain."

³⁸² "Comment: Closing?," *The British Journal of Photography* 127, no. 6232 (January 4, 1980): 1–2.

³⁸³ Greg Kahn to Kenneth Robinson MP, November 30, 1980, ACGB/32/245, Arts Council of Great Britain.

Effective as the Committee may have been in stating their case to the Art Panel, their appeals fell on deaf ears higher up. The aims of the Photography Committee to represent photography by having persons representing the diversity of practice was a model no longer tenable under the revised Arts Council framework which envisioned single members of the panels taking “broad views” of the Visual Arts; if panelists were not experts in their field, they were to be encouraged to call on “outside experts” to make their decisions.³⁸⁴ Committees like the Photography Committee were, the Working Party stated, already exceeding their advisory roles by taking executive decisions on funding, and these functions would be retained by the Panels. Finally, “the Council as a whole concluded that the arguments advanced for retaining the Photography Committee were not materially different from those advanced in respect of other areas of artistic development which will in future be the responsibility of panels.”³⁸⁵ Along with the Opera and Jazz Sub-Committees, the Photography Committee was dissolved at its last meeting and Mike Weaver, Victor Burgin and Bryn Campbell were nominated to become photography’s representatives on the Visual Arts panel.³⁸⁶

Although photographic awards were still given out by the Arts Council (the furor centered on how funds were allocated rather than the axing of funds altogether) the symbolic loss of the Committee was probably greater than its impact on photography funding. An oft-quoted lament after the dissolution of the Committee was, following Joanna Drew’s assessment, the Art Advisory panel, which met four times a year “is

³⁸⁴ Arts Council of Great Britain, “OWP Report: Photography Sub-Committee,” February 1980, ACGB/32/245, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁸⁵ Kenneth Robinson, “Statement by the Chairman of the Arts Council on the Future of the Photography Sub-Committee,” February 27, 1980, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁸⁶ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Minutes of the 70th (last) Meeting of the Art Panel Photography Committee,” February 29, 1980, ACGB/32/106, Arts Council of Great Britain. Weaver reported on his, Burgin and Campbell’s roles in the subsequent Art Panel meetings: “We do nothing... just sit there like dummies. We’re just passengers, really.” David Brittain, “Two Hours a Year,” *Amateur Photographer*, November 15, 1980, 81.

unlikely to be able to devote more than a couple of hours a year to photography.”³⁸⁷ Another was that Barry Lane was now effectively the lone policy maker for photography at the Arts Council and, as David Brittain noted, the sole “arbiter of taste.”³⁸⁸ A June 1980 editorial in the *British Journal of Photography* voiced its disquiet at the potential for the officer to “see his office in the new role of spokesman for British photography.”³⁸⁹ Skeptics of this position such as Chris Steele-Perkins suggested that photographers “keep one eye on the photography officer at all times and another on the ground to make sure they don’t step in anything.”³⁹⁰ These sentiments were echoed by Messer:

What this [decision] means is that the one individual who previously served as a filter through which passed information to the Committee, and a funnel, whose influence could be felt in the channeling of Committee decisions to funding recipients, may now act as a hammer, a lever, a screwdriver—an entire collection of potentially damaging tools if improperly used.³⁹¹

While also unhappy about the decision to axe the Committee, Lane suggested that there were, however, some positive aspects to such “streamlining,” as “there were times and areas of discussion that were unnecessary and wasteful, and I think on the whole, I sympathise with the fact that some of the discussion has been removed and the officers just get on with the job.”³⁹²

“The sad news is that there is no longer a Photographic Sub-Committee,” wrote *What Camera Weekly* in May 1980, continuing:

³⁸⁷ Director of Art to Directorate, January 12, 1980, ACGB 32/278, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁸⁸ Brittain, “Two Hours a Year,” 82.

³⁸⁹ “Comment: Closing?”

³⁹⁰ Brittain, “Two Hours a Year,” 82.

³⁹¹ Messer, “Patronage, Responsibility, Power: Part 2,” 344. Messer acknowledged in his piece that he and Lane had a “long and varied” history.

³⁹² Brittain, “Two Hours a Year,” 82.

Photography as ‘art’ has only recently begun to make headway in Britain—largely due to the efforts of this committee. It’s been a struggle. ‘Art’ photography has been an established part of the scene in the US and abroad for many years but for some reason has been slow to gain acceptance in Britain.³⁹³

The end of the Photography Committee did not, however, spell the end of the Arts Council’s sponsorship of photography: for the rest of the year an ad-hoc committee comprising of Victor Burgin, Stevie Bezencenet, Roger Taylor, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen and Bryn Campbell selected the recipients of the 1980 photography bursaries. The panel, comprised of three historians/academics and two documentary-focused photographers, consolidated the move towards a broader construal of British photographic practice (photographies as opposed to photographers) and confirmed that British photography was on the verge of the postmodern and shifting directions politically.³⁹⁴ The photography bursary scheme was discontinued in April 1981 as a result of financial cutbacks and as part of an initiative to cease the Council’s Awards to Artists scheme.³⁹⁵ The Arts Council channeled some of this money to regional arts associations so that they could continue the awards scheme under a different aegis.³⁹⁶ By 1983 a Photography Advisory Committee was set up independent of the Visual Arts Panel, with a focus on coordinating regional and national policy, and a strong concentration on photography education.³⁹⁷ In some

³⁹³ “Photography and the Arts,” *What Camera Weekly*, May 10, 1980, ACGB/32/107, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁹⁴ Criticisms of this group’s selections for bursaries show the continuity. A letter to the *British Journal of Photography* derided the selection because three judges who were or had been at the Polytechnic of Central London had chosen several students’ work from the same institution. The author also noted: “an Arts Council bursary provided by the taxpayers of this country should be used to further British photographers’ interests; in the case of three of these recipients from the PCL, one is Swiss, one American and another Persian.” E.J. King, “Letters: Narrow Choice?,” *British Journal of Photography* (December 26, 1980): 1293.

³⁹⁵ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Awards and Schemes: Photography Grants 1981-1982,” April 1981, ACGB/31/93, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁹⁶ Arts Council of Great Britain, “Press Release: Arts Council Grants and Awards- September 1981” (Arts Council of Great Britain, September 1981), ACGB/31/94, Arts Council of Great Britain.

³⁹⁷ “New Advisory Group for Photography to Be Established,” *The Arts Council Bulletin* no. 52 (September 1982): 1.

ways, the panel had more power than the Photography Sub-Committee as it was not tied to the Art Panel and its remit had broadened, but substantial decreases in its spending and the cessation of direct awards to artists meant that its impact was not as profound and visible as before.

CONCLUSION

While the sponsorship of photography by the Arts Council was a significant coup for the photographic community and while it certainly both raised the profile and legitimized it as an art, at the Photography Committee's zenith it was only able to successfully attract 0.5% of the Arts Council's budget.³⁹⁸ Its low profile among the broader Arts Council meant that it could continue its activities unmolested, and like other aspects of visual arts policy, hardly ever courted controversy comparable to the other arts units. A glance at the Arts Council's annual reports from the period 1968-1981 demonstrates its limited visibility: funding of the Photographers' Gallery and arts panel grants to photographers were listed in the back of the accounts by 1973 but unmentioned as a direct area of subsidy until the 1974 report where it received as many column inches as a series of LPs of British Poets reading their work.³⁹⁹ In 1977 the report was illustrated its first photograph directly related to the Photography Committee's efforts: Edward Weston's *Nude on Sand*, taken from the MoMA retrospective at the Hayward Gallery. In subsequent reports, photography generally received a billing behind the Art Films

³⁹⁸ Lane, interview.

³⁹⁹ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Annual Report and Accounts, Year Ended 31 March 1974* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974), 27. Photography was introduced as an area of concern by the Secretary-General thus: "With rapid diversification of what comes under the umbrella of art the Art Panel--which advises the Council on subsidies, grants and awards, but is also concerned with a formidable exhibitions programme--has gradually been complemented with specialist committees dealing with art films, photography and performance art." *Ibid.*, 14.

division, a fitting nod to the photography's place near the bottom of the Arts Council's priorities.⁴⁰⁰

By the late 1970s, however, the Photography Committee's successes were attracting international attention. The Swiss journal *Print Letter*, a periodical set up in 1975 to cover the expanding photography collectors' market, ran an article entitled "The Arts Council of Great Britain: A Unique Photography Sponsor" where Magnum staff member Inge Bondi interviewed Barry Lane about the Photography Committee's work.⁴⁰¹ While this may have paled in comparison to the aggregate amount of photography sponsorship in the US, by 1978 the Photography Committee had established itself as Europe's preeminent state-funded sponsor of photography. In 1999, Lane recalled the experience that crystallized this realization for him:

About 10 years ago I was invited to go to Sweden to talk at a conference on the work of the arts council in particular on the work we had done in publishing, it was a conference that was set up deliberately by photographers trying to generate their own arguments about how their own arts council in Sweden should change and help support the arts. And completely to my utter surprise, the Arts Council and what we were doing in photography was seen as a really important model. None of us even thought about that at all really.⁴⁰²

By the late 1970s, Lane and the Photography Committee had created one of Europe's most wide-reaching programs of photographic subsidy. Not without its problems and exclusions, the Photography Committee's work had succeeded in its goal of raising the public profile of British photography and was instrumental in fostering a new breed of independent British photographers who were beginning to fly the flag for Britain on an international stage. Visiting in 1972, Lane saw American photography's youthful

⁴⁰⁰ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Value for Money*, 29. Homer Sykes' "Allandale Tar Parade" illustrated the 1978 report.

⁴⁰¹ I. Bondi, "The Arts Council: A Unique Photography Sponsor," *Print Letter* no. 17 (October 1978): 6–7.

⁴⁰² Lane, interview.

rejuvenation in a frisson of workshops, galleries, publications and sponsorships. Many of these would cease to exist by the middle of the decade, but for a young arts officer in a small country just realizing photography's potential, it was like finding El Dorado. Lane's visit to the US and subsequent connections that arose from this allowed him to distill a range of ideas from a time of great innovation in American photography into an experimental program of grants and support. Inspired by the NEA, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Visual Studies Workshop and others, the work of the Arts Council enlivened the photographic scene in Britain, gave new visibility to photography, and ensured that for most of the seventies at least, British photography would follow the US' lead at an institutional as well as an aesthetic level.

Conclusion

In May 1985, the blockbuster exhibition *American Images: Photography 1945-1980* opened at the Barbican Center in London. Part of an American cultural festival that was aimed at fostering social and economic ties between the two nations,¹ the photographic component was described as the “crown jewel” of the event by Mark Haworth-Booth.² Organized by former *Creative Camera* editor Peter Turner and photographer John Benton-Harris, the images in the exhibition were hand-selected in conjunction with individual photographers when on a tour of the US.³ Supported by Beaumont Newhall and Ansel Adams among others, and sponsored by Pearson, the show featured over 400 photographs spanning chronologically and conceptually from Ansel Adams in the 1940s to Cindy Sherman in the late 1970s. It was the culmination of a lifelong love affair with American photography for Turner, and encapsulated the influence that American photography had had on a generation that came of age with *Creative Camera*.

While the show was largely a success, and toured widely around large venues across the country, a wave of skepticism also greeted it. As Turner recalled, the work of Robert Heineken was criticized for being misogynist, observers questioned the supposed exclusion of Robert Mapplethorpe as a result of his homosexuality, and a prominent academic accused the organizers of “deliberately” denuding” the photographs of W. Eugene Smith of their context.⁴ A flabbergasted Turner thought the last accusation made

¹ Philip Vann, “Visual Arts at the American Festival,” *The Contemporary Review* 247, no. 1436 (September 1, 1985),

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1294627909/citation/13F160772B01EC43EFB/8?accountid=7118>.

² Mark Haworth-Booth, “American Photography. London,” *The Burlington Magazine* 127, no. 989 (1985): 561–560.

³ Turner, interview.

⁴ Ibid.

him sound like a “kind of strange Machiavellian figure deciding that I was going to alter the course of human history by deciding which page of an old issue of *Life* magazine you could look at and which you couldn’t.”⁵ In an interview in *Creative Camera*, which now had an editorial board and was funded by the Arts Council, Turner was asked by interviewer John Statathos, “why American photography? After all, for years Britain has been deluged by American photography in one shape or another, to the detriment of photography from the rest of the world, and particularly Europe.”⁶ The act of putting on a show of American photographs, something that would have raised few eyebrows ten years earlier and would have been greeted rapturously twenty years before, had now become freighted with a raft of weightier meanings.

For those like Turner, Bill Jay, Tony Ray-Jones and earlier stalwarts of the British photographic revival, turning to the US for inspiration was a natural and desirable act. Inspired by the photographic modernism of Szarkowski and the generation of photographers coming of age in the 1960s, the gung-ho attitude of personal expression had galvanized their quest to get photography into galleries, museums and art schools. In the 1980s, they found themselves facing a backlash against such “heroic” figures searching for personal truths; they were now construed in terms like phallocentrism and paternalism for their macho overtones. Critics like Victor Burgin, author of the highly influential *Thinking Photography* (1982) tore into curators like Szarkowski for their canon-building that excluded minority and female voices and a discourse of modernism whose search for truth, as revealed by the Artist “permanently displaced” politics “to a perpetual elsewhere, as if the actuality of dominance, repression, exploitation,

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Peter Turner and John Statathos, “Curating ‘American Images,’” *Creative Camera* no. 245 (May 1985): 27.

subjection... did not insinuate itself throughout the very fibre of art traditions.”⁷ These were strong words indeed, and the older generation did not see it coming.

The Arts Council’s support of photography had begun by referencing American practices, abetting a process nurtured by *Creative Camera*, *Album*, and the international traffic of photography professionals, but now that British independent photography’s roots were establishing, both documentary and fine art photographers turned inward. Thatcher’s cozy relationship with Ronald Reagan and American-inspired monetarist policies typified, for many left-wing photographers, the very worst of American power, and certain strands of American culture often became tainted by association. The cultural landscape of British photography had changed almost from the moment Thatcher took office. Observers like David Bate rightly point to the Arts Council’s seminal *Three Perspectives on Photography* show in 1979 as the watershed moment, as its three perspectives: “Photographic Truth, Metaphor and Individual Expression”, “Feminism and Photography” and “A Socialist Perspective on Photographic Practice” would go on to highlight the predominant concerns of British photography in the 1980s.⁸ The work of Angela Kelly, Jo Spence and Helen Chadwick questioned cultural norms about gender, disability and the body, while photographers, conceptual artists and theorists like Victor Burgin, Hamish Fulton, John Tagg and Simon Watney questioned the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of image making from socialist and postmodernist perspectives. Truth in photography gave way to truth(s) and it mattered much less whether a photograph looked like a Strand or a Weston than what Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes or Allan Sekula might have to say about it.

⁷ Victor Burgin, *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 215.

⁸ Bate, David, “Thirty Years: British Photography Since 1979,” *Portfolio* 1, no. 50 (2009): 4–7.

Political topics now took center stage instead of being at the periphery of British photography. Many photographers who had taken pictures of society in a more personal mode now found themselves railing against Thatcherite policies, and those working on the frontlines of Community Photography found themselves embattled by the drastic cuts in arts funding. Magazines like *Camerawork* and the avowedly left-wing non-profit Half-Moon Photography Workshop were under threat from a Conservative government. For many, being a political photographer was not a choice. Paul Graham photographed dole queues and the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Anna Fox turned her camera on Yuppies, Chris Killip surveyed unemployment and despair on the northern English seacoast, and Martin Parr, inheritor of Ray-Jones' gentle England, turned to surveying of the working and upper-classes as an examination of "The Cost of Living."⁹ These photographers were all influenced by American color pioneers like Joel Meyerowitz, Stephen Shore and William Eggleston, but they now combined the aesthetics of color with an avowedly British subject and politics. Social documentary now became central, albeit in an art gallery context and not always in a photojournalistic one. Importantly also, the new generation of British photographers now sought out influences in Europe: the "new objectivity" of the Düsseldorf photographers Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth and Candida Höfer amongst others made an impact, and signaled that a young photographer could turn to the Continent just as much as the US for inspiration.

If the creep of New Conservatism had doomed the Photography Committee, its cultural effect was to invigorate British photography and raise its international profile. By the late 1980s and 1990s, British work was gaining an audience in the US. One high point of this was the 1990 MoMA show *British Photography From The Thatcher Years* which

⁹ Martin Parr and Robert Chesshyre, *The Cost of Living* (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 1989).

contextualized the “new and vital identity” that emerged in the 1980s centered around documenting the social effects of the Conservative government’s policies and the deepening the divide between the haves and have-nots.¹⁰ As Susan Kismaric notes, “to the American viewer it [the new British documentary photography] seemed to develop overnight.”¹¹ The photographic networks fostered by figures like Barry Lane helped get this new breed of British photography international visibility for the first time. The work of Killip, Graham, Fox, Parr and John Davies, among others began to percolate through to the US in the 1980s in books and Arts Council and British Council-sponsored exhibitions. Helmut Gernsheim, Bill Jay, Tony Ray-Jones, and Barry Lane’s long-term goals had all been to raise the profile of British photography abroad, and particularly to shore up British photography’s relationship with the US, and now their efforts were paying dividends. It may not have been the turn away from American models they would have wanted, but British photography had finally declared independence.

¹⁰ Kismaric, *British Photography from the Thatcher Years*, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

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