

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

PAN FILM

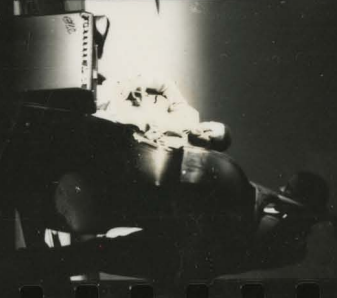
KODAK SAFETY FILM



jazz



contacts



Niklas Zimmer



KODAK SA

**'Jazz Contacts:  
Envisaging Basil Breakey's photographic remains beyond the archive'**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Fine Art

of

Michaelis School of Fine Art

University of Cape Town

by

Niklas Zimmer

ZMMNIK001

Supervisor: Carine Zaayman

Date: January 2012

Course number: FIN 503W

**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date:

## Abstract

South African jazz photography, both as a particular instance of visual history and as a local site for an international photographic genre is largely under-researched. In consequence, its iconic trajectory, with its interconnected sets of specific historical and cultural contexts, is still inaccessible to a larger viewership. One of the very few books of South African jazz photography, *Beyond the Blues: Township Jazz in the '60s and '70s*, with photographs by Basil Breakey, points to the fractured and traumatic history of South African jazz culture. Complementary to this exists a layered, un-disciplinable 'Konvolut' of Breakey's contact sheets and fragments. Forensic-quality digitisation and printing procedures open them up as a 'super-reality' that contains multitudes of overlapping, inextricable traces social history beyond photographic genre conventions. Through curatorial re-appropriation and intervention tactics, these photographs present new visualities in local jazz discourse. Exemplary close readings of the fragments trace jazz visibility in order to re-contextualise the discreet 'iconic' images already in publication. Breakey's process work is situated within a theoretical framework and curatorially staged as a discursive bridge to engage collective memories in the visual archive of an emergent, contemporary trans-national imaginary of South Africa.

## Keywords

Appropriation art, archive, art photography, Basil Breakey, documentary art photography, curatorship, intervention art, jazz culture, jazz discourse, jazz photography, photographic archives, South African jazz history, popular memory, visual archive, visual culture.

## **Acknowledgements**

I owe many thanks to the following people:

My father, Lothar Zimmer, for awakening in me all the passion for jazz, photography, society and conversation that drive this project throughout;

My mother, Dagmar Zimmer, for her unconditional love, and also the financial support in a time where I could not work as much as all my responsibilities required;

My lover, Louise Potgieter, for her great heart, her mysterious love for me, and her unfailing loving support as my life partner and mother and 'other mother' to my children;

My children, Wilder, Robin and Matthias, for bearing with me through this time marked by many days and nights in books and in front of the computer screen with the grace only loving children possess;

My best friend, Renate Meyer, for her unquestioning understanding and support, some seriously good times, as always, and sage advice whenever I needed it;

My editor and friend, Jacqueline Nurse, for such sure-handed 'butchering' and re-hanging of my rough drafts, and looking out for the myriad of details in the details;

My interviewees, who all taught me lessons, about this country's rich and difficult past, about listening, about their passion for what they did with their lives.

This body of research has been made possible with financial assistance from the National Research Foundation through a grant-holder bursary for researchers in training received through my supervisor Carine Zaayman's nomination.

## **Gender disclaimer**

Whenever I have made general comments on hypothetical situations or people in this text, I have endeavoured to use the ungendered plural. In cases where this may lead to confusion, I use the male form. This is in no way intended to discriminate against anybody, but presents a merely stylistic choice made towards aiding the flow of reading.

## Table of Contents

• <b>Preface</b>	
• <b>Introduction</b>	
.1. Opening	2
.2. Context	4
.3. Research	8
.4. Foundations	9
.5. Visual Culture	10
.6. Subjectivity	12
.7. Archive (a drama)	13
• <b>Chapter 1</b> [Photography: Theory, Documentary, Art]	
.1. Discursivity	16
.2. Overview	18
.3. Authenticity and Reproduction	18
.4. Interpretation and Text	25
.5. Power and Loss	27
.6. Apparatus and Information	28
.7. Genre and context: documentary photography	31
.8. Documentary photography	34
.9. Documentary [art] photography	38
.10. Photography and the visual arts	41
• <b>Chapter 2</b> [Curatorship, Contact sheet, Archive]	
.1. Curatorial reappraisal	43
.2. Appropriation art	46
.3. Photographs document art	48
.4. The contact sheet	52
.5. Memory	58
.6. Technical and conceptual approaches	59
.7. Beyond the – iconic – Blues	61
.8. Archive	64
.9. Uses	68

.10. Envisaging fragments	69
.11. Walls	72
• <b>Chapter 3</b> [Basil Breakey, Jazz culture, Jazz photography]	
.1. Basil Breakey's biography	76
.2. Basil Breakey's jazz photographs	83
.3. Beyond the Blues	88
.4. Steve Gordon's 'archive'	89
.5. Basil Breakey's subjectivity	91
.6. Jazz culture	94
.7. Jazz in South Africa	95
.8. Genre and context: jazz photography	102
• <b>Chapter 4</b> [Breakey's Contact Sheets]	
.1. Approaches (outline)	114
.2. Contact sheet 24	115
.3. Fragment 1	123
.4. Fragment 8	128
.5. Fragment 12	133
.6. Fragment 5	135
.7. Fragments 13 and 15	139
.8. Fragments 4 and 14	141
.9. Space	143
.10. Fragment 11	145
• <b>Coda</b>	149
• <b>Conclusion</b>	151
• <b>Appendix</b>	154
• <b>Bibliography</b>	155



Figure 1. Detail of *Contact sheet 46*, illustrating unplanned, visual lines of connection occurring. All images from here on, unless otherwise noted: scanned and named by Niklas Zimmer (2010). Photos: Basil Breakey (1960-1970). Archival material courtesy of Musicpics cc, Carstens Street, Cape Town.



## Preface

'Multidisciplinarity', 'Crossdisciplinarity', 'Interdisciplinarity' (McLuhan 1964), 'Transdisciplinarity' (Nicolescu, 2007), 'Adisciplinarity' (Rosenau & Durfee, 1995), 'Undisciplinarity' (Lucy, 1997) and 'Indisciplinarity' (Genosko, 1998) are some of the terms used in addressing the increasingly apparent problems arising from the phenomenon of isolated disciplinary silos at universities still 're-inventing the wheel' without adequate tools, experience or forums for integrating their respective resources. This section shall serve to introduce some of the issues of discursive framing and methodology that arise in situating the present thesis within a more-or-less accessible and feasible plurality of academic disciplinarity.

Writing and submitting a thesis of this nature within the academic structure briefly outlined below is not unproblematic. But this choice serves to position a contribution I hope to make within local discursive formations in the arts. This intellectual environment seems at present beset with sentimentality and melancholy, and marked by concerns for differentiated renegotiations of the recent past. Therefore it is felt that a larger, revisionary project is eminently in need of new propositions in terms of methodology, terminology and objects of research. Local, visual archives from the 'Short Century'<sup>1</sup> (Enwezor, 2001) are being revisited in view of developing 'New Identities'<sup>2</sup> (Duiker et al., 2005) and the plethora of questions this throws up are now actively engaging more different fields at once than traditional academic investigations have necessitated before. In view of the politics of inter- and intra-departmental institutional dimensions, I am prefacing my thesis with this brief sketch of the institutional framework at hand.

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of a Master of Arts in Fine Art (MA(FA)) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), one of South Africa's eleven traditional universities.<sup>3</sup> At UCT, the MA(FA) is supervised alongside the much more commonly studied Master of Fine Arts (MFA), at the same seminars and by the same staff. The brief blurb on the nature and purpose of the Master's degree attained by dissertation only on the website of the Michaelis School of Fine Art reads:

---

<sup>1</sup> Okwui Enwezor's 2001 exhibition *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movement in Africa, 1945-1994* (in conjunction with its outstanding, comprehensive catalogue) explored the post-independence context of culture and the political transformations that took place in Africa from 1945 up until the end of apartheid in 1994.

<sup>2</sup> A 2004 exhibition in the Bochum Museum, Germany presented sixteen South African artists under the catch phrases identity, urbanity, multiculturalism, and AIDS.

<sup>3</sup> as opposed to universities of technology and comprehensive universities, see: [Online]. Available: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_universities\\_in\\_South\\_Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_in_South_Africa) [last accessed: 21.04.2011].

*'The Master of Arts in Fine Art (MA(FA)) is intended for those wishing to pursue advanced study in an aspect of contemporary art discourse, or the theory and history of art. Although the submission is likely to contain illustrative material, this need not have been by the hand of the applicant and the degree is otherwise theoretical. Examination is by way of a dissertation'* (Michaelis School of Fine Art 2001).

While it would seem that the reason for the apparent lack of concerted efforts towards establishing a more differentiated institutional practice in addressing the essentially very different requirements of these two separate degrees merely lies in the small quantity of MA(FA) post-graduates locally, a look at other 'traditional' universities internationally presents the same pattern of disciplinary interference waves. The current Wikipedia entries sum it up in this manner:

*'The [Master of Fine Arts] MFA is a postgraduate study beyond the bachelor's degree level and is usually awarded in visual arts, creative writing, filmmaking, dance, or theatre/performing arts... The MFA differs from the Master of Arts [MA] in that the MFA, while an academic program, centers around practice in the particular field, whereas programs leading to the MA are usually centered on the scholarly, academic, or critical study of the field'* (ANON 2011).

The Fine Art Department within which I write is the 'Michaelis School of Fine Art' or simply 'Michaelis,' one of eighteen departments at the faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town. The Faculty of Humanities at UCT is one of six other faculties,<sup>4</sup> and is comprised of three main clusters: the Arts,<sup>5</sup> the Social Sciences<sup>6</sup> and the Creative and Performing Arts.<sup>7</sup> Due to the fact that there are a number of study subjects with courses that are taught from within different disciplines, the ascription of some departments as belonging to any one cluster becomes virtually impossible. It would depend, for instance, on what the student's other major is to decide whether his/her respective department falls into the Arts, the Creative and Performing Arts or the Social Sciences cluster.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I have been made aware that a 'new school' is in the process of forming at UCT, which will include what is currently the Centre for African Studies, which appears to have been threatened with dissolution for a number of years now. It appears that this

---

<sup>4</sup>The others being: Commerce, Engineering and the Built Environment, Health Sciences, Law, and Science.

<sup>5</sup>The Arts comprise five departments (some termed 'centres' or 'schools'): English Language & Literature, (the School of) Education, (The Centre for) Film and Media, Historical Studies and (The School of) Language & Literature.

<sup>6</sup>The Social Sciences comprise nine departments: Social Anthropology, The Centre for African Studies, Psychology, Political Studies, The African Gender Institute, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Social Development and Sociology.

<sup>7</sup>The Creative and Performing Arts comprise three departments: (The School of) Dance, (The Michaelis School of) Fine Art, and Drama.

<sup>8</sup>At UCT, this is the case with: Archaeology, Economics, Information & Library Studies, Law, Environmental & Geographical Science, Mathematics & Applied Mathematics (Faculty of Science), Organisational Psychology, and Statistical Sciences.

‘new school’ will have a focus on interdepartmental exchange, but due to the fact that this is not official news yet, I will not comment on it further.

The cursory outline of the institutional structure from within which the present text is produced serves to present the fact of a ‘Master of Arts’ degree being awarded outside of the Faculty of Arts as somewhat of an anomaly. In the current local and temporal context of disciplinary divisions, the ‘Arts’ – or at least relevant departments in the Arts – would appear to have a decisive role to play in shaping a document such as this one. Yet as it stands, it is being written and supervised from within the ‘Creative and Performing Arts’ only. It must therefore be mentioned from the outset the crucial role that one *trans-disciplinary* research initiative at UCT has played over the course of my two years of research and writing towards this body of text, namely the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative (APC), chaired by Professor Carolyn Hamilton. Nick Shepherd, currently still Associate Professor in the Centre for African Studies at UCT, writes in a published note of one of our seminars:

*‘Our discussion threatens (or promises) to produce another kind of division, a division not between belief and unbelief, but between a disciplinary voice, which falls back on established categories and conceptualisations, and a non-disciplinary (or undisciplined) voice, which wants to refuse the confinement of these categories, to reach for something new. This is an internal division, and in our responses we wobble between these different voices, like learner-cyclists, or like what we are (divided subjects, imperfectly interpolated into disciplinary frames and a modern cast of mind)’ (Shepherd 2011).*

Without regular attendance and feedback from the reading groups and workshops hosted by the APC,<sup>9</sup> the discursive gaps between the Arts and the Creative Arts that this text is attempting to sound out, configure and animate, might have presented no less than the proverbial chairs to sit between. As it was, the large variety of inter-, trans- and un-disciplinary texts read and projects presented in the context of this initiative served well in establishing as communicable and commonly felt reality among academics from a wide range of traditionally discreet, ‘professionalised’ disciplines that, in the current moment, drawing from intellectual resources outside of the bounds of their particular, institutionalised discourses is becoming ever more productive in addressing their respective subjectivities *and* objects of inquiry. I am well aware, however, that the difficulties expressed here have a tradition of their own. Roland Barthes famously formulated this as a challenge:

---

<sup>9</sup> For more, current information see: <http://www.apc.uct.ac.za/>

*Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a "subject" (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one' (1972: 72).*

It is interesting to note at this point that the only other academic thesis on Jazz Photography that I am aware of, Koren Heather Pinson's *The Music Behind the Image – A Study of the Social and Cultural Identity of Jazz* (PhD thesis, 2007), was submitted to the Faculty of the School of *Interdisciplinary Arts* of Ohio University (my italics).

A detailed discussion on the historical developments of – and the intricacies implied in the fault lines between – the various terms mentioned at the beginning of this section would in itself necessitate an international meta-study of proportions far beyond that of an MA thesis. Yet this terminology is all that is currently on offer to sketch out the areas of interest co-presented through this text: a multi-layered, multi-disciplinary and, in essence, un-disciplinable 'Konvolut'<sup>10</sup> of specific photographic archival objects, aspects of the history of jazz music, memes and themes from modern and contemporary South African social history. What shall be teased out of the connections between these fields, as they appear in relation to one another through the focal point of a small selection of photographic fragments in a quasi-archive, is a challenge to the viewers of these fragments – re-imagined for the reader of this text as being made publically accessible – to engage in a non-specialised, personal reading activated by a curatorial envisaging project. 'The real' of the authentic fragments of Breakey's photographic process-work, re-presented and re-produced<sup>11</sup> by forensic-quality digitisation and printing procedures opens up as a 'super-reality', which contains overlapping, inextricable traces of jazz history and South African social history and productively engages the formal aesthetics of the medium of photography.

---

<sup>10</sup> 'Konvolut': an archival term denoting 'mixed lot' or 'bundle (of papers)' Translation [Online]. Available: <http://www.dict.cc/?s=Konvolut> [last accessed: 26.10.2011].

<sup>11</sup> The break in the words by hyphen serves to indicate that some of the fragments that are being considered here have in fact in part been reproduced and presented in the past, albeit in different forms and forums, and with different meanings in mind.

If art is a  
How can  
destroy  
without  
A self.



Figure 2. *Contact sheet 17* (back and front), illustrating the relevance of the reverse side of image-objects.

## Introduction

*‘The past two years will go down as a very sad period for jazz lovers as we have lost a number of peers, Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Robbie Jansen, Ezra Ngcukana, Alex van Heerden and Jeff Weiner. A generation has gone from our midst. ‘Tony Schilder and his peers will all live on through the unforgettable music they created. May their legacy live on in their influence on new generations of musicians who have been inspired by their work and continue to fly the flag for South African jazz music,’ says Minister Mashatile’ (Department of Arts & Culture, 2010).*



Figure 3. *Contact sheet 26*, illustrating the pronounced phenomenon of excision in many of Breakey's sheets.

## 0.1 Opening

To date, South African jazz photography, both as a particular instance of visual history and as a local site for an international photographic genre with its own stylistic trajectory through interconnected sets of unique cultural contexts, remains under-researched. This is unsurprising, since its primary subject, South African jazz culture, has so far received relatively little attention. Despite a few notable exceptions, respective publications are rare, whether on sound carriers or in the form of books, both academic and popular. One of the very few books of South African jazz photography,<sup>12</sup> *Beyond the Blues: Township Jazz in the '60s and '70s*,<sup>13</sup> with photographs by Basil Breakey, points to the fractured and traumatic history of South African jazz culture being in imminent need of a carefully considered, comprehensive 'reappropriation'<sup>14</sup> (Ballantine 1997: 4). The presentation of Breakey's photographs in this publication, however, does not reveal the creative potential resident in the photographic archive<sup>15</sup> to visualise the dramatic fragmentation and loss that lie at the heart of the narrative of South African jazz.

This thesis proposes that the 'rediscovery' Ballantine calls for in his introduction to *Beyond the Blues* can only work on the condition that, alongside further work in other disciplines than the visual arts alone, close and innovative readings of the visual archives of South African jazz are performed. Such readings will need to trace jazz visibility against the grain of explicit,<sup>16</sup> neo-colonial trends associated with the current 'heritage craze'<sup>17</sup> in South Africa. This text does not attempt to construct a supposedly distinct and unique visual language of South African jazz photography. On the contrary, this text can be read as critical engagement with the political

---

<sup>12</sup> While there are a few 'coffee table' publications, all of which without any accompanying text to speak of, there are, to date, only three other book publications specifically focused on the photographic representation of South African jazz culture (particularly pre-1994): Rasmussen, L. & Stockmann, H. 2001. *Cape Town Jazz: 1959-1963: The Photographs of Hardy Stockmann (Volume 2 of Booktrader's Jazz Profiles)*. Copenhagen: Booktrader. And: Schadeberg, J. & Albert, D. 2007. *Jazz, Blues & Swing: Six Decades of Music in South Africa*. Cape Town: New Africa Books. And: Mzileni, M. 2008. *All That Jazz: A Pictorial Tribute*. Cape Town: Highbury Safika Media.

<sup>13</sup> Breakey, B. and Gordon, S. 1997. *Beyond The Blues: Township Jazz in the '60s and '70s*. Cape Town: David Philip.

<sup>14</sup> The citation comes from a segment of the foreword that reads:

*'The pointed conjuncture of jazz and mass politics symbolized the release of energies and processes that had essentially been repressed since 1960. But such release was also a reappropriation: part of the work of rediscovering all that had been silenced and forgotten. Such work continues, as indeed it must: it has much to uncover, even – or especially – in the changing political and social circumstances of the 1990s. The resurgence of interest in basil Breakey's photographs – painful though the experiencing of them necessarily must be – can only contribute to this vital and continuing act of reappropriation.'*

<sup>15</sup> 'Musicpics Africa, Archive & Photo Collection' in Carstens Street, Cape Town, from here on referred to as 'Musicpics cc.'

<sup>16</sup> An interesting discussion of 'explicit' dynamics in white South African culture here: De La Porte, J.P. 2011. *explicit/implicit*. [Online]. Available at: <http://kaganof.com/kagablog/2011/06/17/jean-pierre-de-la-porte-explicitimplicit/> [last accessed 11-06-2011]: *'Since colonial societies do not have control over their own norms but imitate them from afar, they cannot change these norms, even after changing their own social relations and group boundaries strenuously.'*

<sup>17</sup> A term loosely borrowed from Prof. Daniel Herwitz (University of Michigan and Research Associate of the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative, University of Cape Town), speaking to his paper *Sustaining Heritage Off Road from Kruger* on 12.08.2010 at the Department for Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town.

power play at work in conferring ‘national heritage’ or, worse even, ‘indigenous knowledge’ status on archival objects. These should remain independent from wholesale appropriations by political interests, and properly accessible for public consideration in a number of ways. One such way is presented here, in exemplary form, as an engagement from the visual arts.

In the staging of this thesis as a curatorial deliberation, the significantly fragmented contact sheets<sup>18</sup> from Basil Breakey’s archival collection are envisaged in public view. These trans-disciplinary<sup>19</sup> readings and suggested curatorial re-presentations of Breakey’s imaging oeuvre aim to offer up new opportunities for public engagement with Apartheid history through the prism of a jazz photographer’s work in the 1960s.

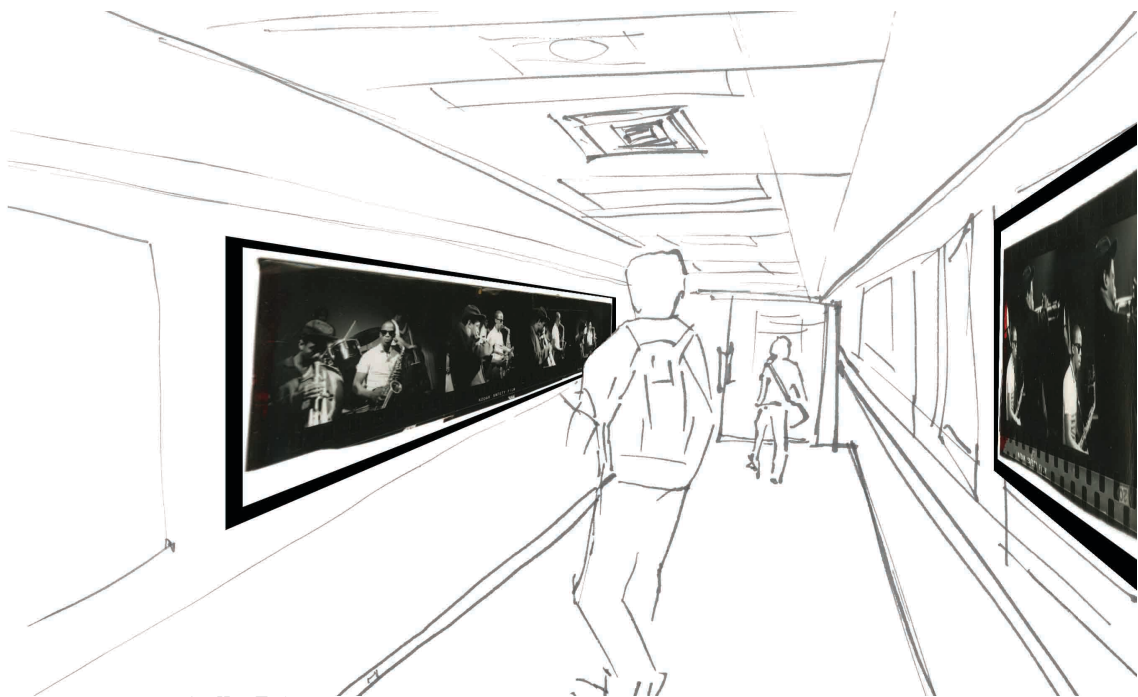


Figure 4. *Fragment 04* and *Fragment 14* envisaged as enlarged print-reproductions installed in an institutional corridor, such as a college of music. Illustration: Sunette Viljoen.

Presently all sorts of photographic ‘archives,’ often mostly rather incomplete, semi-private, and dislocated and in part web-based collections, of heritage materials are proliferating locally. The materials they contain tend to receive literalist readings that do not complicate issues of provenance, collection practice or the shifting motivational perspectives in their production and use. In rare instances, though, the lack of a broader archival consciousness in South Africa,

---

<sup>18</sup> The archive contains 48 contact sheets as well as 15 contact sheet fragments.

<sup>19</sup> On trans-disciplinarity, see for instance: UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Division of Philosophy and Ethics. 1998. *Transdisciplinarity: Stimulating Synergies, Integrating Knowledge*. Paris: UNESCO.



specifically around the troubled history of popular music and jazz, can be productively contested through the visual arts and other extended archival practices<sup>20</sup> in order to provide new opportunities for creating and critiquing the collective memories that constitute the emergent, trans-national imaginary<sup>21</sup> of South Africa.

## 0.2 Context

This text aims to make a contribution to research and critical thought in the fields of public culture, audio-visual archives and theories on photography through a curatorial review of a specific set of photographic representations of South African jazz culture in the early 1960s. While the field of visual arts (theories of art and photography, aesthetics, genres, iconology), will act as an anchor to many observations and analytical approaches made here, the discourses of several other fields, such as archival studies, critical studies, ethnomusicology, social history as well as visual culture studies will also be engaged in the course of discussion.

The highly divergent visual representations of jazz culture, created by a multitude of different photographers – professional or amateur, commissioned or ‘ad hoc’ – contribute to our overall understanding of the particular identities and spaces we inhabit in the still extremely heterogeneous urban contexts of South Africa. Particularly in the USA and South Africa, this vast, scattered and largely hidden body of visual records plays a part in shaping ideas around individual and collective cultures, be they local, national or global, past, present or future. The focus of interest is of course cultures of resistance and difference. In considering some of the possibilities of working with archival materials and records on South African jazz culture,<sup>22</sup> this work attempts to frame, in and through envisaging archival fragments re-presented in public view, their unsanitised, chaotic logic intact, a palimpsest of the unsettled South African present, so troubled by what might have been, what should not have been. In other words, to respond, in miniature, to Sarah Nuttal’s urgent challenge

*‘... to revisit, in the aftermath of official segregation, the concept of segregated space in socio-historical terms and use this as a methodological device for reading the post-apartheid situation’ (2009: 24).*

---

<sup>20</sup> For instance in the work of artist Siemon Allen, whose artworks and collection practice address the need to revisit the past across disciplines relating to sound and vision, music and art.

<sup>21</sup> In reference to Deleuze’s redefinition of Lacan’s concept of the Imaginary, as ‘*games of mirroring, of duplication, of reversed identification and projection, always in the mode of the double*’ (Deleuze 1968: 172), I mean to express that the national culture I speak of here is always unequally created, contested, and marked by degrees of alienation.

<sup>22</sup> Ranging from non-existent, imagined, missing and inaccessible materials to correctly stored, accessioned, meta-tagged materials.

The aim, therefore, is to address a larger – albeit largely unrealised – methodological framework: a systematic and careful assessment and evaluation of the presently hidden and inactive potential in aesthetic, ethnographic, historiographical terms comprise the benchmark of a curatorially sound public staging of archival records of South African jazz culture, in connection with newly created, relevant audio material, such as oral history interviews.

Any study of representation is necessarily complex. Due to the requirements of the MA(FA) thesis format, this text cannot and will not attempt an encyclopaedic study of ‘South African Jazz Photography’. Instead, it will present an interdisciplinary trajectory of argumentation from observations on theories of photography (specific photographic genres, motivations and contexts), over the lives of images in archives (envisaged operating beyond their initial purpose) through to an interrogation of the relationships between the languages of music and art, the image and the written text.



Figure 5. Full-resolution crop of scan of *Contact sheet 46*, illustrating attainable scale and detail.

In conducting this research it is necessary to look both ‘outwards’ at general, universally applicable questions around visual communication on the one hand, and ‘inwards’ at specific, local questions: how are South African practitioners in the fields of arts and culture dialogically grappling with their own and respective – hybrid and contested – identities?

The matter of the Blue Notes,<sup>23</sup> some of South Africa’s most important jazz musicians of the time, going into exile in the 1960s speaks to the heart of this country’s wounded psyche and its conflicted identities. Basil Breakey’s purpose as a photographer can be – brutally – summed up in retrospect as his having photographed the Blue Notes musicians on a few occasions before they went into permanent exile, and never returned in that formation.<sup>24</sup>

*Beyond the Blues* gives little attention to Breakey’s working process and private life in favour of a pictorial narrative of South African jazz. Via environmental portraits and stage shots Breakey took, it presents a range of brief biographical introductions to the key players he happened to have photographed. Without the same strictures relating to market and marketing dynamics, common sense or ‘good taste’ that such a popular publication has to anticipate and endure, the present thesis envisages a very different, curatorial engagement with Breakey’s archive.

Several writers on South African jazz, most importantly Gwen Ansell (2005), have convincingly argued that the trauma of this nation is powerfully echoed in the silencing of jazz musicians of colour by the apartheid state. Concurrent to the enforced silencing of jazz musicians of colour, concurrent to what was *not* recorded, *not* published on records and *not* played on radio, are visual absences: who was *not* seen on stage, *not* in the newspapers, *not* on the record covers. While *Beyond the Blues* provides some of this information by implication through by-lines with names, dates and places, it does not, however, visualise or image the defacing of South African jazz as powerfully as the contact sheets<sup>25</sup> and fragments thereof in Breakey’s archive do. The contact

---

<sup>23</sup> ‘The Blue Notes were a South African jazz sextet, whose definitive line up featured *Chris McGregor* on piano, *Mongezi Feza* on trumpet, *Dudu Pukwana* on alto saxophone, *Nikele Moyake* on tenor saxophone, *Johnny Dyani* on bass, and *Louis Moholo* on drums. After moving away from their home country in 1964, they established themselves on the European jazz circuit, where they continued to play and record through the 1970s. They are now considered one of the great *free jazz* bands of their era, whose music was given a unique flavour by their integration of African styles such as *Kwela* into the progressive jazz ideas of the time.’ [Online]. Available: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Blue-Notes/108413265847293?sk=info>, last accessed: 02.01.2012

<sup>24</sup> With the exception of drummer Louis Moholo-Moholo, who now has a home in Langa, but still only performs internationally.

<sup>25</sup> The term ‘contact sheet’ or ‘gang print’ refers to the joint 1:1 scale exposure of (a ‘gang’ of) negatives, typically from one discreet roll of film, on a single sheet of photographic paper, achieved by placing them directly onto it (in ‘contact’ with it). In (negative reverse) film-based photography, it forms part of a usual working process of viewing and choosing the images captured, as well as writing and drawing basic notes and indications onto, such as dodging or burning, and cropping.

sheets are regarded as objects first, enabling a semiotic un-bracketing<sup>26</sup> of the subjects encoded on their surface. In the second instance, they are envisaged – beyond their mediated self-reflexivity – as a metaphorical open form score for a cacophonous visual narrative. This disallows a nostalgic presentation of loss and fracture, but instead faces – ‘*en-visages*’<sup>27</sup> – the past as continuously and immediately present. It is argued here that *Beyond the Blues*, in adhering to popular genre expectations, remains ‘too true’ to Breakey’s original photographic intentions – his dreams perhaps – to do justice to the extent of the absence, fracture and loss that occurred in reality, and that can be read from his process work in the archive – the ongoing present.



Figure 6. *Fragment 08*, illustrating the powerfully evocative, spontaneous juxtaposition of presence and absence in some of the fragments. This is an image that will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

The archival remains of Breakey’s work of photographing these musicians, as well as the biographical particularities of his life lived with and without them, powerfully mirror the social, cultural and personal fracturing and loss incurred under Apartheid. Nevertheless, Breakey’s contact sheets are more than a mere visual elegy. As spontaneous and unplanned visual narratives, they cannot pretend to become more tragic and telling as the passing of time takes away the last of their subjects. Particularly the fragments do not disappear in discreet, ‘glass-like’ frames (McLuhan 1962: 365) of self-denying media<sup>28</sup> in a conventional – that is to say, expected and predictable – book or exhibition format. Breakey’s photographs re-appear on the contact sheets – in their scuffed, clipped and drawn-on state – as silent and visibly only partially

<sup>26</sup> According to Nichols, bracketed perception – which can be likened to photographic *framing* in contrast to knowingly *seeing* the world – is marked by flattening, distortion, patterning and limited focus (Nichols, 1981: 13, 20).

<sup>27</sup> *en vis age*. 1) To conceive an image or a picture of, especially as a future possibility, 2) to form a mental image of; visualize; contemplate [Online]. Available: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/envisage> [last accessed: 06.07.2011]

<sup>28</sup> I wish to point to a noteworthy critique by Lambert Wiesing on how the meaning of the term ‘Media’ in the dominant media theories by McLuhan, Luhman, Merleau-Ponty et al has long become arbitrary. See: Wiesing, L. 2005. *Artifizjelle Praesenz – Studien zur Philosophie des Bildes*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. 149-155.

retrievable accounts of real-world, intimate engagements. They are envisaged in their representation as a *contestation* of John Szarkowski's<sup>29</sup> famous statement:

*'You're not supposed to look at the thing [the photograph], you're supposed to look through it. It's a window'* (Myers & Christie, 2006).

The sheets present the same photographs as one can see in the book – side by side with those that were eventually discarded – as raw, unedited, contextual, authentic remainders of Breakey's working process. Viewed as original prints in their own right, particularly if envisaged as installed in faithful reproduction in a variety of sizes and contexts, they appear as time capsules, as technically self-constituted collages of Breakey's work of gathering light for sound.

### 0.3 Research

Supplementary to the standard library-and-internet-reading and the work in the archives,<sup>30</sup> the research presented here is developed from a body of ten oral (life) history interviews, which I conducted between April 2010 and January 2012.<sup>31</sup> Due to financial constraints, transcripts of these will not be available at the time of printing, but the audio files will already have been made available to the public via the Centre for Popular Memory at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Out of a wide range of possible subjects to interview for this sub collection,<sup>32</sup> I identified a number of representative individuals, whose experiences of – and creative responses to – South African jazz culture now serve as a starter collection for the kind of urban ethnography outlined above that reaches broadly into a large variety of traditionally separate fields. The statements by these individuals, largely photographers and musicians, provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of the *becoming* of the new South Africa, and into what role jazz culture and its visual representations have been playing in it. The term 'becoming' is used in this manner in reference to Deleuze's *Negotiations*:

---

<sup>29</sup> John Szarkowski was the Director of Photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art from 1962 to 1991, and through his acquisitions, exhibitions and publications has had an inestimable influence on the way art photography has been seen, bought and understood in that time and beyond, to the present day.

<sup>30</sup> The archives I have consulted are: Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape; The District Six Museum, Cape Town; Manuscripts and Archives, University of Cape Town; Musicpics cc, Cape Town, as well as the Centre for Popular Memory (CPM), University of Cape Town. Of inestimable value have been Colin Miller's life history interviews with Cape Town Jazz Musicians held at the CPM (Sub-Collection: Amu1).

<sup>31</sup> 2010.03/23: Rashid Lombard; 2010/04/07: Rafs Mayet; 2010/08/23: Peter McKenzie; 2010/08/24: Paul Weinberg; 2011/01/06: Tina Smith; 2011/02/25: Basil Breakey; 2011/03/04: David Goldblatt; 2011/03/15: Steve Gordon; 2011/10/31: Morné Bezuidenhout (unrecorded); 2012/01/02: Louis Moholo.

<sup>32</sup> Holding Collection: ARTS (A), Collection: Visual (AVI), Sub-collection: A History of South African Jazz Photography (Avi6)

*Becoming isn't part of history; history amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become,' that is, to create something new. [...] Men's only hope lies in a revolutionary becoming: the only way of casting off their shame or responding to what is intolerable'* (Deleuze 1995: 170-171).

What transpires is that the visual arts and its various related disciplines of documentary image-making continue to play an active part in identifying, analysing and responding to vital changes in knowledge creation in the local context. The broad research into visual and oral memory artefacts of South African jazz culture and the subsequent close selection and analysis of relevant examples from this field points to a new framework for '*deploying sound urban ethnography*' (African Centre for Cities (ACC) / Centre for Urban and Built Environments Studies 2010).

All forms of aesthetic expression, visual, sonic or written, are 'political', at the very least through their placement in specific contexts, in which they are continually (re-)read and (re-)interpreted.<sup>33</sup> Under extreme circumstances, such as those inflicted by the Apartheid policy in South Africa or of racial segregation in the USA, the apparently inert, inherent openness of aesthetic production to political readings and interpretations often, more or less automatically, led to an active politicisation of all forms of art, and the artists themselves.

#### 0.4 Foundations

Larger-scale future research projects would involve the securing of specific materials, that is, audio-visual records, and their insertion into an already existing archive (such as: Manuscripts and Archives and the Centre for Curating the Archive at the University of Cape Town) or as a new collection (at, for instance, the Centre for Popular Memory, also at the University of Cape Town). One of a growing number of international benchmarks to such larger-scale, integrated heritage materials project is the Oral History of British Photography (OHBP), established in 1989 '*as a response to the lack of primary source material about photographic culture in the UK*' (Barnes et al. 1998: 3). However, in terms of what has been outlined here so far, it is noteworthy that, programmatically, '*the OHBP does not regard the making of photographic history as an exercise in nostalgia...Much recognition is given in the collection to photography's multiplicity of aesthetics and agendas*' (ibid.). Clearly, in terms of infrastructural, financial and human resources, the National Sound Library in the new British Library in London has established an extremely wide and effective

---

<sup>33</sup> A noteworthy discussion of the difference between 'reading' and 'interpretation' see: Flusser, V. 2000. *Vogelflug*. Munich: Hanser.

network with regards to collecting and preparing records on all aspects of photographic culture throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By uneven comparison, the limitations on time, funding and man-power typical of a solitary MA(FA) project in South Africa, require aiming for more humble results: in the present case, an overview of elements for a sound theoretical foundation for the creative, curatorial engagement with archival photographic objects of South African jazz culture, that is to say: musicians and milieus. This should serve to circumscribe a pragmatic, useable terrain, which may be developed further in-depth via research, critical inquiry and innovative curatorship.

### 0.5 Visual Culture

*Indeed, the institutionalization and disciplinary formation of the newly emerging field of visual culture studies, with which many scholars of the visual turn associate themselves, aims to overcome the old dichotomy of word and image' (Horstkotte & Pedri 2008: 2).*

My ruminations on the subject of Visual Culture Studies, attempt to situate this text in an intellectual landscape that is continually and repeatedly marked by in-between-ness. It is a space of yearning, no doubt a space in which memory, particularly public memory, is something that requires careful retrieval and, in that sense, re-creation. South Africa is a space in which we do 'memory work,' reviewing and recreating a patch-worked past in order to see and make a different, desirable way forward. I am well aware of a certain disciplinary isolation, chosen in the moment of proposing to write this thesis in the context of a generalised fine art department. While the University of the Western Cape offers a course in 'Public and Visual History', Rhodes University a course in 'Art History and Visual Culture' and University of Pretoria a course in 'Visual Studies', the University of Cape Town, does not offer anything comparable. At UCT, the Michaelis School of Fine Art belongs to the 'Creative and Performing Arts' cluster, which is made up of all those 'practical' and 'non-scientific' disciplines that are not traditionally text-based – such as dance, drama and music, and which are all physically situated away from Upper Campus, the site of all the 'hard' sciences.

Current departmental restructurings at UCT involve History of Art moving out of the History department on Upper Campus, back to Hiddingh Campus, after several decades of 'absence' there. The future will tell what fruits this new physical proximity of art practice, theory of art and art history will bear. Yet, in view of the present thesis, it stands to reason that the art historians, even if they would like to, would find it difficult to argue for taking a professional interest in a

close investigation of the set of photographic images presented here. The traditional confinements of art history to only dealing with objects that can meaningfully be termed ‘art’ leave a vast range of other kinds of visual works – however artful or culturally relevant they may be – out of its reach. For art history, it appears, images can only find discussion as art. New specialisations have emerged to address this, allowing ‘*art historians to look beyond the parameters of the canon, at objects that have not traditionally been the focus of their interest*’ (Moxey 2011: 12).

As I will discuss in more detail in the first chapter, it is particularly the so-called ‘new media’<sup>34</sup> that have challenged traditional historiographical and analytical approaches. The apparent helplessness of classical disciplinary approaches to images with regard to the specific needs and uses to which (particularly technological) images have been put in almost any other discipline and aspect of public and private life, has led to the establishment of new fields of enquiry such as Visual Culture Studies.<sup>35</sup> A course outline at Harvard Summer School reads:

*‘... the relatively new yet highly dynamic field of Visual Culture Studies...emerged only recently as a response to what was perceived as an unreasonably rigid division between the so-called fine arts (architecture, painting, sculpture) and popular visual media (advertising, film, television). The field is variously construed, but has always been highly syncretistic, involving contributions from anthropology, art history, linguistics, and other disciplines touching on visual communication and the sociocultural significance of imagery’* (Harvard Summer School 2011).

Visual Culture Studies, therefore, appears to be looking outward at all other areas in whatever instances they involve visual phenomena – an impossibly paradoxical project, as James Elkins (2002) has variously put forward. From the other side, as it were, History, (Social and Philosophical) Anthropology, Archaeology, Cultural Studies and Gender Studies, to name but a few prominent examples, have all been deliberating visual representation – particularly through technological images – ever more intensively since the 1960s, the time of the cultural, linguistic and visual turns. The reoccurring question whether visual culture studies are in fact a discipline or rather a movement of sorts, illustrates how difficult it is in every instance of delimiting its respective objects of study without falling back on reactionary or essentialist categorisations.

---

<sup>34</sup> The discussion over what constitutes ‘new media’ is not central here, but the fact that the term has been problematised (from within a variety of disciplinary perspectives) needs mentioning. It is clear that the role of photography (including all its more-or-less conflicting definitive and critical discourses) and its applications are key to the ‘new media’ discourse.

<sup>35</sup> See for instance: Bredekamp, H. 2003. *A Neglected Tradition? Art History as Bildwissenschaft. Critical Inquiry*. 29(3): 418-428.; Mitchell, W.J.T. 1985. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; Mitchell, W.J.T. 1995. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Mirzoeff, N. 1999. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.



Notwithstanding this, the fact that beyond the obvious dangers of provincialisation and its possible concurrent nationalisms, the emergence of new courses of study all over the world – engaged in tensions between specialisation and integration – seems to point to a sea change in human consciousness, expressed through both popular culture and academic research. It appears that particularly in Historical Studies, including its relevant specialisation, Visual History – which is explained as *‘the shared practices of a group, community, or society, through which meaning is made out of the visual, aural, and textual world of representations’* (Sturken & Cartwright 2001: 7) – the cognitive or semantic dimensions of the aesthetic may not be able to be engaged deeply enough without falling short of the demands of the discipline to surface narratives and textual meanings.

### 0.6 Subjectivity

Over the past ten years, I have worked and continue to work in a number of different fields. After having been employed as Head of Department of Visual Arts at the German International School in Cape Town for three years, where I began to develop an extensive information architecture for digital resources relating to the visual arts, I am currently employed in my second year as Digitisation Manager at an oral history archive, the Centre for Popular Memory at UCT, where I attend to digital workflow, online access and presentation, digital hierarchies and naming conventions, as well as research. For the past three years I have also been working as a part time lecturer, both at Michaelis, the School of Fine Art at UCT, and at the department for Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University, where I have mainly been teaching second and third year students in theory and discourse of art, as well as new media practise and theory, such as digital sound, video and photography. I also work as a photographer, producing original works of art for sale via gallery exhibitions, and commissioned photographs for print and online use by private and corporate clients. In addition to all this, I play music as a drummer, mainly with a small noise or free jazz ensemble called *As Is*, which includes the artist-musicians Brendon Bussy, Garth Erasmus and Manfred Zylla. Of late, the infamous author, filmmaker and performance artist Aryan Kaganof has joined us to make a new ensemble named UNGA DADA. We rub shoulders, but do not compete with the professional jazzers in the fringe venues in Cape Town. My days are full, but quite often they end with me taking the camera along to photograph Cape Town’s jazz culture, either because I have been asked to, or because I feel like it.

All these professional engagements resonate and swing with each other through my irrationally strong passion for art and music, and the life and thought that give birth to them. Irrational drives are undoubtedly the enabling force to take a first step into unknown territory, as the first

card in the Major Arcana of a Tarot deck, ‘The Fool’, visualises so well – reality has not yet taught the fool about the cliff off which he is stepping, and that thin air does not support his body in this world: often I have found myself learning a lesson or two, working in a library or an archive, about the vastness of different perspectives on this world with its innumerable multitudes of histories .

Woven into the fabric of the following chapters are a variety of perspectives on the term ‘archive.’ Having worked as an archivist at the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany (2003 – 2004), as well as having been engaged in academic discourse on archives at the Archives and Public Culture platform at UCT years later (2010 – 2011), I would like to preface my ‘both sides now’<sup>36</sup> vision with a poetic sketch:

### 0.7 Archive (a drama)

A drifting cloud of boxes above barren land / scorched earth

A trophy, signifying power

A false challenge: doing future-work in the present?

Eternally at war with *the library*

A no-man’s land, talked around, disputed across, but never inhabited or talked from

A non-space, disturbing whatever orders desire to establish themselves around it

A paradoxical institution, structurally in denial of its own contradictory hierarchies and hopeless challenges

An institution beyond the legislative repository of agreed-upon truth – specifically created for the neurotic / obsessive-compulsive acting out of desires to suppress ‘dirty secrets’

A self-conscious joke, like the tragicomic corpse, popping out of its coffin every now and then throughout the story

A schizophrenic persona, forever lost between its name and its body.

---

<sup>36</sup> A reference of deep acknowledgement to Joni Mitchell for her beautiful song ‘Both Sides Now’ (first released in 1969 on the album ‘*Clouds*’) – it is a work that has the power to permanently deepen one’s perception, indeed one’s feeling towards life.

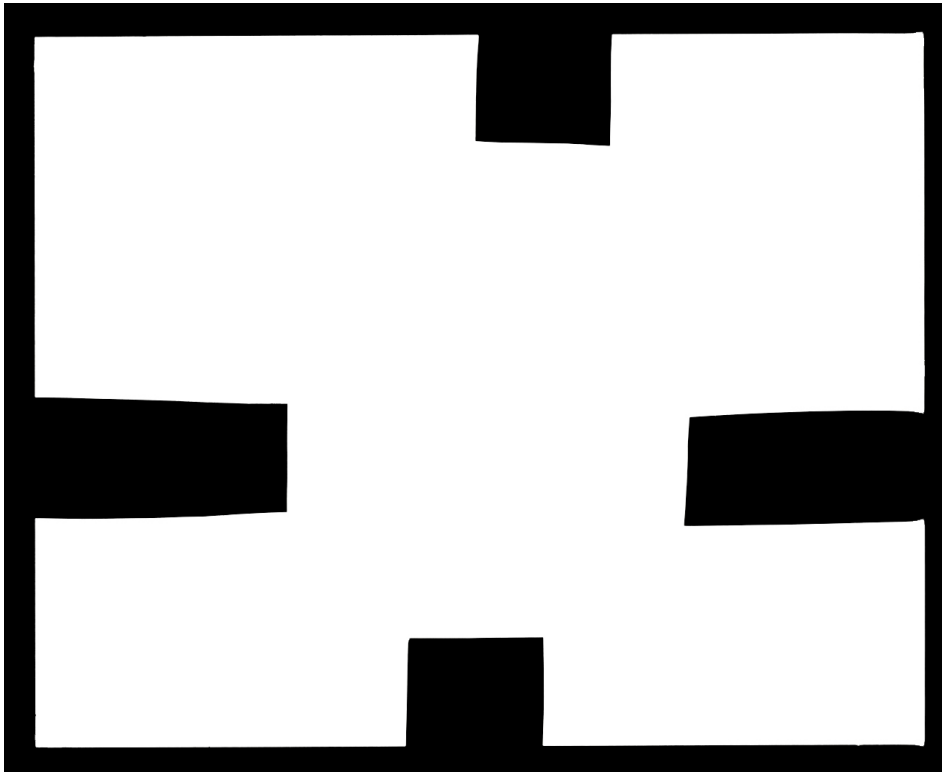


Figure 7. The negative space (white) of *Contact Sheet 4* (against a black ground), illustrating the formal qualities of the cut paper itself.



Figure 8. *Contact sheet 4*, as it looks lying on a white surface. This is the chosen mode of display for the scans throughout this text, unless otherwise noted.

## Chapter 1

### Photography and the Visual Arts – A Theoretical Framework



Figure 9. *Contact sheet 23*, illustrating the fact that Breakey's contact sheets contain many different categories or types of images. Note the reproduction photographs of damaged portrait photographs in the bottom row.

## 1.1 Discursivity

Ever since their invention in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, photographic media have sustained a powerful impact on our perception of and engagement with the world. Since the time between 1822 (Niépce produces the first fixed photograph) and 1839 (Herschel and Fox Talbot produce the first photographic negatives), these technological ‘light-drawings’<sup>37</sup> and their application as images and processes have become ubiquitous. Their progress into almost every aspect of human existence on earth has been traced by generations of theorists and practitioners in a large variety of more-or-less closely linked fields, ranging from aesthetics to zoology. There is virtually not a single academic discipline or aspect of public and private life that has not been radically affected by the phenomenon of photography. In effect, the continually and ever more rapidly unfolding artistic, scientific, military, popular and innumerable further applications of ‘photographic’ technological imaging processes have inaugurated a multitude of heterogeneous discourses.<sup>38</sup>

In many instances, these discourses of photography tend to revolve quite uncritically around decorative, technical or financial concerns, while others have as their aim to philosophically theorise the historical, cultural and ethical nature of photography’s impact on our world.<sup>39</sup> These highly specialised new fields essentially extend from an ancient philosophical tradition of questioning the nature of existence (ontology), and more particularly the extent and nature of our knowledge and perception of the world (epistemology). Images have undoubtedly impacted our understanding of the world and our engagement with it, but they remain curiously difficult to categorise and describe. This is true especially of photographic images: a symptomatic instance of these historically still very recent contestations is the swiftness with which Lefebvre<sup>40</sup> (amongst many others later on) – as an intellectual with no particular specialisation in traditional image-specific disciplines – threw into question the whole concept of Indexicality – a system of

---

<sup>37</sup> ‘Photography,’ first used by Sir John Herschel – derives from the Greek words *phōs* or *phōtós* meaning light, and *gráphein*, meaning to write. For more information see: [Online]. Available: [http://www.photographers-resource.co.uk/photography/history/Photography\\_timeline.htm](http://www.photographers-resource.co.uk/photography/history/Photography_timeline.htm) [last accessed: 10.02.2010]

<sup>38</sup> The use of the term ‘discourse’ goes back to Foucault’s notion of ‘discursive formations’: ‘A statement belongs to a discursive formation as a sentence belongs to a text, and a proposition to a deductive whole. But whereas the regularity of a sentence is defined by the laws of language (*langue*), and that of a proposition by the laws of logic, the regularity of statements is defined by the discursive formation itself. The fact of its belonging to a discursive formation and the laws that govern it are one and the same thing’ (1969: 130 – 131).

<sup>39</sup> Most notably of late: Bolton, R. (Ed.) 1996. *The Contest of Meaning*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

<sup>40</sup> Henri Lefebvre, author of more than 60 books of what has been collectively called ‘critical theory,’ is interesting here because of his insistence on his thought, however well-argued and integer, always returning to a personal, everyday, lived experience of the world.

interpretation that Peirce<sup>41</sup> had spent half his life developing, and which had finally seemed to offer a useful foundation for understanding technically produced images:

*'...every object in the world relates existentially to an indeterminate number of other objects, either directly or indirectly...Restricting photographs to their indexical status is just as unproductive as restricting verbal language to the status of symbol without considering the various semiotic functions of words in, say, a proposition. Images and language, like most other semiotic systems, are composed of signs that possess iconic, indexical, and symbolic functions'* (Lefebvre 2007: 1).

It is due to the ubiquity and diversity of the application of photography-related processes and uses of photography-related images that one cannot speak of 'Theory of Photography' in the singular. Nevertheless, most theories pertaining to photography do tend to address some of the same core issues, which include questions around access, agency, archive, authenticity, code, digital culture, ethnography, gender, history, iconicity, memory, performance, power, preservation, trace, race, record, signs, spectatorship and witnessing – to mention a few.

In many of the histories of photography published until the present day, the aspects of technological invention and progress (the physics of lenses, the chemistry of films and papers) are foregrounded above all other possible trajectories of reconstruction.<sup>42</sup> Even when the historical perspective is lengthened somewhat, for instance, to allow room for an investigation of the continuity of aesthetic concerns far older than the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a period undeniably marked by an eclectic, retrospective and retro-active historicity – the discussions often do not go further beyond the technological than to make superficial, comparative judgements around relative merits and disadvantages of image-making before and after the birth of photography, particularly in relation to the arts of painting and drawing. Yoder most recently published along these lines:

*'...it would be more accurate to say that the failure of optical aids to allow the creation of realistic drawings led to the development of photography rather than that the successes of optical aids led to the creation of realistic drawings'* (Yoder 2011).

A number of authors have argued that photography cannot be understood at all from within the more commonly employed framework of narratives of technological progress and invention.

---

<sup>41</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, the philosophical counterpart to the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in modelling comprehensive sign theories.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance: 1) Newhall, B. 1964. *The History of Photography: from 1839 to the present day: Volume 1964, Part 1*. New York: Museum of Modern Art. 2) Brian, C. 1976. *The Birth of Photography*. London: Ash & Grant. 3) Rosenblum, N. 1997. *A World History of Photography*. Ann Arbor: Abbeville Press.

John Tagg, for instance looks at what kinds of psychosocial conditions constituted an *a priori* need, rather than a post-invention purpose, for photography:

*Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have. Its history has no unity. It is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces. It is this field we must study, not photography as such* (Batchen 1999: 172).

Following a more general look at some of the theoretical discourses on photography, this chapter comprises a closer discussion of some of its genres – in particular those of photojournalism and documentary art photography. This will provide the groundwork for an even more detailed discussion of the genre of jazz photography and the types of photographer that contribute to it in chapter three, and part of a scaffold of information from which to hang the curatorial staging of Basil Breakey's contact sheets in Chapter Four.

## 1.2 Overview

I have chosen to explore a variety of different ways of theorising photography chronologically for three reasons: foremost, it is a way of economically acknowledging the historical development and embedded-ness of critical thought, and arriving more-or-less succinctly at a present situation that is in part burdened and in part liberated by this intellectual legacy. Secondly, it serves to make the gaps – publications, figures and tropes *not* discussed here – more immediately recognisable for the informed reader. Thirdly, this approach emphasises the points I will be making about fragments and fragmentation further on in the text, beginning with the section on contact sheets. I am aware that a chronological framework bears dangers in relation to the demands of the objects of study, since dates impose their specific 'empty' logic on the contents of threads of an original argumentation that, strictly speaking, can have no history. In the present case, a degree of historical stage setting is imperative to situate this thesis in the fine arts, and support the readings of Basil Breakey's contact sheets in the final chapter.

## 1.3 Authenticity and Reproduction

In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin wrote two essays that broke new ground in thinking about photography. In the first one, *A Short History of Photography*, Walter Benjamin describes the manner in which the earliest portrait photographs were created and viewed:

*'The first people to be reproduced entered the visual space of photography with their innocence intact, uncompromised by captions...the portraiture of this period owes its effect to the absence of contact between actuality and photography'* (1931: 59).

It is conceivable that, despite the fact that the world is now more mediated by photographic imagery than many science-fiction writers of Benjamin's day even dared to imagine, the potential for the photograph to set up a 'corridor' between its subject and its viewer<sup>43</sup> still resides in carefully curated encounters with archival photographic objects, such as will be done with Basil Breakey's contact sheets in this thesis. In fact, Benjamin touches deeply upon the shifts irreversibly introduced by imaging technology in our relationship with reality in this statement:

*'For it is another nature that speaks to the camera than to the eye: other in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious'* (Benjamin 1931: 56).

In the later essay, *The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction* (1935), looking at photography as a means of reproduction, Benjamin views photographs as mechanical petrifications of pictures lacking in the 'aura' that only paintings or other uniquely existent artworks can possess. In contrast to this, I want to put forward here that there is immense creative, curatorial potential in re-imagining and re-presenting photographic materials from the archive. If this is done in ways that self-consciously address the multiple existences in time and space of such 'un-auratic' objects, their re-presentations can effectively direct the viewer to the archive as the home of a collective, social memory: the more inauthentic and lacking in aura the objects themselves (prints, digital files) are, the more potential they gain to transport the idea of their own mediality, and operate as references, signifiers of something real elsewhere: in the archive of a past that can never be grasped, but needs to be imagined.<sup>44</sup> Ellison, as cited by Shields, puts an even finer point on this:

*'Replication isn't reproduction. The copy transcends the original. The original is nothing but a collection of previous cultural movements. All of culture is an appropriation game'* (Ellison, 2003, as cited in Shields [undated]).

*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* has been quoted innumerable times in academic papers concerning theories on modernism and the preconditions for post-modern art.

---

<sup>43</sup> A concept I am borrowing from John Berger, as I will make clear further on.

<sup>44</sup> Breakey's contact sheets were never intended to be seen as 'art,' have no 'aura' to begin with, but may in fact be re-presented as artworks *through* mechanical reproduction processes.



It is less often regarded for providing essential theoretical and philosophical insights into the nature of photography itself – at least in the way in which it has later been utilised and theorised as a physical medium and a cultural practice.

In the discursive spaces of photo-theory Benjamin tends on the one hand to be seen as somehow outmoded, but on the other as requiring correction or extension. This begins with the title that emphasises ‘the work of art’, and seemingly less so the particularities of whatever media are used to technologically reproduce it.<sup>45</sup> Also, Benjamin’s essay sharply critiques the political and cultural conditions of Nazi Germany and therefore may appear to be historically secluded. There are many other reasons for such repeatedly reductionist readings – not least the fact that it is so dense and economical a text that any discussion of it tends to billow out into writings far more word-heavy than their object of study. Yet this work still stands today as one of very few deeply illuminating enquiries into the crucial differences between traditional imagery and the historically young phenomenon of photography: what may be said to be constituent of it? How is it utilised? How may one begin to approach a critical engagement with it?

The German-Jewish Benjamin writes this intensely compact treatise on art and society in Paris in 1935, after having fled Nazi-Germany two years before. He develops throughout it an outspokenly anti-fascist, radically socialist (Marxist) line of argument. His position is that of the counter-establishment, anti-classist and politically radicalised outsider-intellectual. In the preface, he makes his intention clear to debunk such traditionalist and authoritarian notions as ‘genius,’ ‘mystery’ and ‘eternal value.’ Across the roughly 40 pages, two years before the infamous ‘Entartete Kunst’ exhibitions in Munich (1937) and Berlin (1938), Benjamin sets out to create a new terminology for art, which he intends to be ‘*entirely unusable for fascism*’ (10), and conversely useful for ‘*revolutionary demands in the politics of art*’ (ibid.).

The similarly francophile émigré John Berger takes up and popularises Benjamin’s socialist theory of art again in 1972 in a TV-series and a book entitled *Ways of Seeing*. The program was very successful and the book remains in print to this day. Much of Benjamin’s critical apparatus is inevitably watered-down here and is now dated through Berger’s dependence on a rather literalist application of Benjamin’s concepts to contemporary examples from popular culture, such as magazine and television advertisements, which have since become far more sophisticated and speak to different markets. Still, the success of the programme and the book largely contributed to the long-due popular ‘rediscovery’ of Benjamin’s thinking. Within his more

---

<sup>45</sup> Certainly, the term ‘reproduction’ has also been critiqued – Michel Frizot (2010: 274) has suggested doing away with it, and rather using ‘replication’ in reconstructing the photograph as a matrix.

pedagogically motivated text on art Berger has contributed some of the most powerful, singular insights on the nature of images, held by the comprehensive range of novels and various works of non-fiction that were still to follow. In fact, in certain instances, the clear critique of Benjamin's notion of the auratic in *Ways of Seeing* have served to introduce one of the most important features of photographic mediation to the general public:

*'A lot more is possible, but only if art is stripped of the false mystery and false religiosity which surrounds it, this religiosity usually linked with cash value, but always invoked in the name of culture and civilisation is in fact a substitute for what paintings lost when the camera made them reproducible...the experience of this has almost nothing to do with what anybody teaches about art, it's as if the painting – absolutely still, soundless – becomes a corridor, connecting what it represents with the moment at which you are looking at it, and something travels down that corridor at a speed greater than light, throwing into question our way of measuring time itself' (Berger, 1972).*

Benjamin sees photography and its related phenomena as historically contained within and constituted by certain programmatic and epistemological orders outside of scientific discovery and modern progress: as much as lithography is contained within the (illustrated) magazine, photography contains sound film (Benjamin 1935: 11). In the present moment, an age where film (more precisely: video) with sound has in fact become *'ubiquitous'* – in Paul Valéry's use of the term in *'La conquête de l'ubiquité'* (1928), a quotation Benjamin makes in the beginning of his essay – a central question that has arisen is what new roles *still* photography has come to play in the present, and how these will change in the future. In the fluidity of interrelatedness of all 'media' creatively employed by humanity, those that have become less frequently used, less common, and in a sense more still, do regain a certain potential for inviting contemplation of their increasing historical weight. A case in point is the gigantic rise of photography – notably still largely film photography – on the international art market in the past ten years, so much so that one could currently claim that 'photography is the new painting.'

Our perception of still photography is undergoing great shifts in relation to what functions it is – and is no longer – expected to fulfil: for one, in the fine arts both as 'art photography' and as a documentary and reproductive medium; also in the rapidly diversifying and expanding mass media, including the new category of so-called 'social media;' and not least in science and the military, where questions around the nominal limits of technological imaging are more accurately addressed than within the fine arts. While the discourses around 'photography' as still images and 'cinema' as moving/moved photographs are traditionally rather distinct, the recent surge in consumer moving-image electronics will for instance necessitate a reshuffling of such

separations. As first generation media-artist Nam June Paik made clear, video, in its early, analogue stages in the 1960s, was technologically as well as aesthetically closely related to sound recording – not to photographic film (Merrington, 2011). Since then, we have seen the great successive shifts from analogue to digital technologies, which will be discussed further on.

According to Benjamin, reproductions of artworks lack the *'Here and Now'* – they annul the context; in fact *'depreciate'* it (1935: 13). Beyond the question of photographs acting as technological reproductions of other visual works, we may ask whether photographs – be they produced and/or regarded as staged, manipulated artwork or as found, unedited, documentary 'evidence' – bring the contexts they depict (closer) to the viewer, or whether they effectively seal them away. Furthermore, we may argue that, for instance, a photographer's (technician's) contact sheet – in reproduction or not – as an 'unintentional artwork'<sup>46</sup> can in fact present one such *'unique object upon which that history which it has been subject to in the course of its existence'* (1935: 11) has bestowed changes in terms of its physical structure, its ownership and reproductions made of it. In a footnote on the *'profane cult of beauty'* (1935: 16), Benjamin speaks of the increasing importance of the notion of authenticity: *'with the secularization of art, authenticity displaces the cult value of the work'* (1935: 17). In this time of social networking media, where images self-multiply into the millions within days online by being 'shared' (all it takes to 'reproduce' an image by the number of 'friends' one has is to simply click 'like') – authenticity does not seem to be a central concern any more, although a nostalgic sensibility for the authoritative look and feel of authentic imaging documents is extremely widespread at present.

Both the factors of physical and chemical analysis (subjects of restoration and photochemistry) and of the site(-d)-ness of the original<sup>47</sup> remain relevant in a possible re-reading of Benjamin, in which the question of the authenticity of the artwork is set aside in order to foreground an investigation of the relationship between the technological image ('original' or not – we are perhaps never to know) as a 'corridor' connecting a subject with its beholder, be that the first one, the photographer's eye (which gives him/her copyright of the trace of photons captured), or any of the infinitely possible onlookers after that.

Certainly with regards to the physical limitations of specific means of technological reproduction such as still photography in relation to 'artworks' that are either too large, too small, too temporal or procedural in order to be accurately reproduced in such a medium, the question of

---

<sup>46</sup>I will discuss the notion of intentionality in relation to the experience of art further on.

<sup>47</sup>In the case of a photograph (independent of whether its subject is an artwork or not) an interesting, more lively, journey: Camera > darkroom > (port-) folio > gallery > museum > storeroom > archive (and all the possible alternative or additional loops and turns thereof).

authenticity shifts back to the initial point of focus – the ‘auratic’ original object. While Benjamin does mention photographs of cathedrals and (wax/shellac/vinyl) records of classical symphonies, and their transportation and translation into new (originally unintended) situations, he does not pay any closer attention to the various theoretical and aesthetic implications that arise with the specific limitations of the technological medium beyond its materiality, in its choice and application. In this regard, a less absolutist notion of fidelity will be productive in attempting to reach beyond Benjamin’s binary of original-copy, authentic-inauthentic, and in developing a smooth continuum of shades of relative veracity, and of veritable relevance: in connection with this, a discussion on the power inherent in the act of photographic miniaturisation – which Benjamin raises but does not develop further.

Is it conceivable, for instance, that the documentary photographer’s (infinitely reproducible, technological) image renders a live music performance less authentic than the ‘original’ attendance-experience of it? Obviously this is chronologically impossible, but an invasion of sorts does take place. It is only the recording as relative to any other actual or hypothetical, contemporaneously possible or utopically presumed recording that can be judged to be more or less faithful (‘fidel’) to an actual or presumed, ‘original’ experience of the event, which is ‘live’ for once, and once only. Can ‘authenticity’ in terms of its theoretical idea survive as a distinct state, come into question or be destroyed? Theorists in performance studies, such as Peggy Phelan, have built on Benjamin’s political views in answer to such questions:

*‘The pleasure of resemblance and repetition produces both psychic assurance and political fetishization. Representation produces the Other as the Same. Performance, insofar as it can be defined as representation without reproduction, can be seen as a model for another representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other as the Same is not assured’* (my emphasis) (1993: 3).

What is the experience of a technological record such as a photograph of a live event to somebody who was present at the event? In what relationship to each other can such records – respectively technological and neurological in nature – be said to stand? With regard to the difference between the reception of feature films and theatre performances, Benjamin states that *‘the audience’s identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera’* (1935: 24).

Benjamin’s claim that *‘the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition’* (1935: 14) holds true with regards to the material inadequacies (that is, colour shift or lack of texture) and conceptual fallout (that is, infinite reproducibility, near-irrelevance of scale)

regarding translation, or trans-substantiation. It does, however, not consider the new sets of traditions that any new medium will necessarily produce. For Benjamin,

*'the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced'* (Orig.: *'geschichtliche Zeugenschaft'*) (1935: 26).

Benjamin sees reproductions occur necessarily in inflationary masses, and thus destroy the authority and aura of the original. This destruction, of course, cannot take place if there is no 'original' being reproduced, but rather an instance of reality – however staged – being framed and 'captured,' without any pretensions or hopes of having retained or transmitted anything, let alone the original essence of a specific, unique time and place. Perhaps it would be expecting too much from the text to also answer to an approach in modern photography of re-presenting images, neither with specific truth claims, such as in the 'documentary' mode, nor any disclaimers, such as in the 'art' mode. Via photographic reproduction the unique occurrence of an image has indeed been replaced with a massive one (1935: 13), but Benjamin's claim that reproductions are updated all the time – a process that *'removes them from tradition'* (ibid.) – needs to be differentiated further in relation to technological, aesthetic and cultural developments in the decades since his writing. It may be true that in relation to traditionally established works of art and/or modes of imaging *'film...liquidat[es] the traditional value of the cultural heritage'* (1935: 14), but in relation to future developments in art and popular culture post-film, film itself – as envisaged by Benjamin – will, and already does, no doubt present a tradition of its own with values to be 'liquidated.'

It is therefore quite difficult from a contemporary art-theoretical perspective to apply or even follow Benjamin's politically oriented, specifically socialist-Marxist arguments in view of a contemporary discussion of photography as a practise that is neither 'art' nor 'advertising.' It is in fact this curious impossibility of categorisation – and even of conclusive definition – of photography and photographic images<sup>48</sup> that seems to set photography apart from the objects that are traditionally conferred with 'art' status. Benjamin holds the *'negative theology'* (1935: 17) of modernism<sup>49</sup> responsible for the eradication of subject-matter categories and the social function of art – that is, an openly acknowledged one, as traditionally was the case. Interestingly though, it is not this lack of generic nomenclature or embedded-ness in rituals, but the notion of

---

<sup>48</sup> A phenomenon which Roland Barthes problematises at length in *Camera Lucida* (1980).

<sup>49</sup> Although Benjamin does not use the term 'modernism' here, he speaks of 'the idea of a 'pure' art' (1935: 17). Diametrically opposed to this notion of purity (*'Reinheit'*) is of course that of degeneration (*'Entartung'*).

authenticity through which he explains the paradigmatic shift that photography caused in art production in the course of the early twentieth century:

*But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics’*  
(Benjamin 1935: 18).

Through the unintended and unforeseen loss of its spatial and temporal specificity, the work of art has suddenly, forcibly become nomadic<sup>50</sup> and politicised.

*With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles [cult value and exhibition value] turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature’* (Benjamin 1935: 20).

In the ‘*Short History*’, Benjamin points to a turnaround in a discourse that started around one of the founding fathers of modern art education, Alfred Lichtwark (1852-1914), at the time of Pictorialism: a shift away from the discussion of the validations of the technical photograph-as-artwork towards the dynamics of the reproduced artwork-as-photograph. In effect, the specific qualities of the technological image have altered our perception of the ‘great work of art’ inasmuch as it is now perceived as a *collective* creation rather than one of isolated genius.<sup>51</sup> Rather than seeking validation as art, photography as a reproductive technique now holds the power to allow or disallow artworks entry into the consciousness of the increasingly democratised masses, marketplaces and knowledge systems. Hence, the discussion of images per se has become a primarily sociological one, and can no longer be the domain of aesthetics and art history alone.

#### 1.4 Interpretation and Text

Erwin Panofsky’s *Studies in Iconology: Humanist Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (1939) was a comprehensive exposition of his key concerns with achieving the correct interpretation of a work of art. For Panofsky, iconography merely constituted the identification, description and classification of subject matter in (art) images – a predominately formal approach, looking at abstract components such as line, tone and colour. Motivated by the apparent lack in this system to reach and ultimately interpret the *intrinsic meanings* of (art) images, he developed a new, systematic approach called iconology:

---

<sup>50</sup> to borrow a term from Deleuze & Guattari (1980).

<sup>51</sup> Although Nietzsche is not mentioned, Zarathustra’s ‘*God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.*’(2006: 258) resonates in this notion for this reader.

*In iconological analysis the equipment for interpretation is synthetic intuition, familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind, conditioned by personal psychology and world view' (Liukkonen & Pesonen 2008).*

Panofsky's own application of iconology was later criticised by Pierre Bourdieu (1972), who essentially argued that no theoretical system, including iconology, could account for, let alone describe, the ineffability of an artwork or any image, in its incommensurable capacity to enable an exchange with its viewers. The shift away from classical Semiotics in the Post-Structuralist era inaugurated new, broader contextualisation of images, both art and non-art. In this time of the Cultural Turn, of Postmodernist Deconstructionism, new discourses around technological images in particular opened up, proposing less categorical and overarching readings while at the same time calling for an even more radically personally committed approach than Panofsky's. W.J.T. Mitchell's key work, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, for instance, became

*'a book about the fear of images...not just the science of icons, but the political psychology of icons, the study of iconophobia, iconophilia and the struggle between iconoclasm and idolatry' (1986: 3).*

Generally, scholarly investigations into the social function of images, such as Ernst Gombrich's *The Uses of Images* (1999) began to augment and critique the limitations of art history, and rather put forward possible theories of art with which to adequately address pressing questions around contemporary visibility. Disciplines began to merge and overlap, and the act of looking and reading images and texts was now a contested affair, far from innocent, always potentially complicit in a range of underlying interests.

*'...visual studies is not merely an indiscipline or dangerous supplement to the traditional vision-oriented disciplines, but an interdiscipline that draws on their resources and those of other disciplines to construct a new and distinctive object of research' (Mitchell 2002: 179).*

The immense range of knowledge required to perform such kinds of readings is best exemplified again by Benjamin: his unfinished and only quite recently published and translated masterpiece, *The Arcades Project* (1927 – 1940)<sup>52</sup> presents a milestone of critical thought around 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century visual culture. With a work of this order, it becomes beautifully, and painfully clear that formulaic or 'scientific' approaches in the arts will always fall short of those investigations that take their object of study as their very own, and create and integrate new tools and approaches as

---

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin worked on this immense project for 13 years, and never finished. The publishers have – to some critique from others – described it as '*a monumental ruin*'. See: [Online]. Available: <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674008021> [last accessed: 04.01.2012].

needed, rather than aiming to borrow or develop some kind of definitive or universally applicable methodological apparatus elsewhere. A key move is to integrate quotations from a vast array of sources to allow that web of intertextuality, which essentially forms the object of study itself, to surface.

It is hoped that the present thesis – within the given framework of institutional requirements – can hold a similar spirit in miniature, and envision re-presentations of Basil Breakey's contact sheets with the necessary breadth of referentiality required to visualise an aspect of their value beyond their present condition.

### 1.5 Power and Loss

In two of her most famous works, *On Photography* (1977) and *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004), the essayist and cultural theorist Susan Sontag interprets the distinctive features of photography almost entirely through their sociological, contextual contingencies. This culminates in an exposition of the power dynamics inherent in the use of camera images that is still unparalleled in its pessimism. Sontag's criticism provided new tools with which to interrogate and unmask the motivations behind 'shooting,' 'taking' and 'capturing' images by amateurs and professionals alike on the one hand, as well as the voyeuristic desires that drive the act of looking at photographs on the other. These desires are in turn exploited by the mass media through advertising and hard news photography. *On Photography* is the kind of text that instils fear of and loathing towards cameras, photographers, distributors and viewers of photographs in general. Her much later *Regarding the Pain of Others* – in which she revokes some of the more sweeping claims made in *On Photography* – is a more focussed treatise, taking as its primary subject the issue of war photography. Particularly the notion of veracity and documentation are of interest for this thesis. Also her noteworthy 'minimal definition' of art, the context into which such truth-burdened and -burdening objects as war photographs are increasingly entering:

*'So far as photographs with the most solemn or heart-rending subject matter are art – and this is what they become when they hang on walls, whatever the disclaimers – they partake of the fate of all wall-hung or floor-supported art displayed in public spaces. That is, they are situations along a – usually accompanied – stroll'* (Sontag 2004: 108).

Sontag's writing, with its focus on the deeply ethical concerns around the social uses of photography, does not form a key reference point in this thesis beyond the next section on documentary photography. However, I do wish to emphasise the importance of supporting any



engagement with the photographic through conscious consideration of the psychological and moral dimensions that it always necessarily includes. Sontag's critical solemnity and elegiac tone may come in and out of fashion, but the value of her writing is still inestimable in providing a cautioning background, a checklist. There are always human lives entangled with photographic images, which is why looking at them places a responsibility<sup>53</sup> on their viewer. While the larger technological, political and cultural contexts do shift, affecting the manner in which photographs are produced (which includes their reception), we continue to ask: who is looking at whom, how they are looking at them, why and for whom was the picture taken, and so forth.

*'Social misery has inspired the comfortably-off with the urge to take pictures, the gentlest of predations, in order to document a hidden reality, that is, a reality hidden from them...Gazing on other people's reality with curiosity, with detachment, with professionalism, the ubiquitous photographer operates as if that activity transcends class interests, as if its perspective is universal'* (Sontag 1977: 56).

In *Camera Lucida* (1980), one of the most often quoted texts on photography, Roland Barthes also investigates the ethical dimensions that photographs appear to open up beyond all other kinds of images. But in contrast to Sontag's all-inclusiveness of statement, Barthes takes a highly personal, in fact anti-theoretical stance. He sees no possibility for erecting an all-inclusive theory on photography, a notion he prefaces with the impossibility of conclusively defining what a photograph is. According to Barthes, each and every photograph, however similar it may be to any other, possesses a unique, phenomenal objecthood of its own – in effect, there is no such thing as 'a photograph' (as distinct from other objects), but only an unpredictable occurrence of image-objects that each carry their unique, inextricable set of relationships between 'subject' – what was in front of the lens, for instance – and 'object' – what one may see in looking at the thingness of the paper print, plastic negative, glass plate. In doing this, he deepens the meaning of 'reproduction' to unfathomable, almost metaphysical degrees.

*'What the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially'* (Barthes 1981: 4).

## 1.6 Apparatus and Information

In the often overlooked or underestimated volume *Towards a Philosophy on Photography* (1983), media philosopher and art critic Vilém Flusser – in his idiosyncratically succinct and visionary

---

<sup>53</sup> Further on, I have hyphenated this word several times (response-ability) in order to denote an ability (and a challenge) to respond.

understanding of the information age – gives no consideration to any of the technical specificities of this-or-that photography at all, much like Barthes. Flusser refers to the camera as an ‘*apparatus*’ (21) – though he makes no reference to Foucault’s much earlier use of this term, since he generally makes no references at all – and as a ‘*black box*’ (27). He argues that nobody – perhaps least of all the photographers themselves – can understand the programming and operations of the apparatus while or from using it. Much of what Flusser sets out to achieve in his proto-philosophy goes back to and builds on what Benjamin wrote in *The Work of Art* sixty years prior. It is as important to Flusser as it was to Benjamin to abstract and generalise the technical details of this-or-that device. In so doing, Flusser presents the human condition in our contemporary, ‘media’ age as one in which we have become users of apparatuses that are subsuming us into their programmes. To Flusser, the primary question we need to ask about technical images is how we may retain or regain our freedom as human beings in a world in which we are essentially controlled through them. He picks up on a metaphor of shooting/hunting originally proposed by Benjamin (and which Sontag, expectedly, had repositioned in terms of gender and class), but reverses it in order to illustrate his decidedly cautionary vision on the overpowering effects of imaging and information technology:

*‘If one observes the movements of a human being in possession of a camera (or of a camera in possession of a human being), the impression given is of someone lying in wait. This is the ancient act of stalking, which goes back to the Palaeolithic hunter in the tundra. Yet photographers are not pursuing their game in the open savannah but in the jungle of cultural objects, and their tracks can be traced through this artificial forest’* (Flusser 2000: 33).

What we can see in, and say about, images, photographic or not, may be deeply influenced by any contextual information made available to us, but it is never per se dependent on it. Popular wisdom has it that ‘a photograph / a picture says more than a thousand words,’ but this sentiment rests on a logical slur, not recognising that photographs have neither a sound-system to refer to, nor an alphabet of abstract symbols with which to do this: either an image speaks or it doesn’t. Interestingly, we still don’t have words for this ‘speaking’ of images. Flusser, like Barthes, has little interest – and sees little or no value at all – in most photographs. However, where Barthes chose to take an interest in the ethical dimension that photographs enter as mnemographic traces, promising but withholding remembrance, Flusser’s key argument about photography’s power is that, as technical images, photographs are in fact extensions of historical text: they need to be understood, ‘read’ from beyond the troubled continuity of written history:

*'...technical images were invented in order to...put [texts] under a magic spell – to overcome the crisis of history'* (1983: 7).

On the other side, W.T.J. Mitchell's (1987, 1994 & 2002) investigations into images as texts and texts as images, and Peirce's much earlier (1931 – 1958) proposals towards a regulatory system of different iconicities, present important insights for a complex understanding of the relationship between photographic images and language. They did not make as radical an assertion as Flusser did in claiming that photographic images cannot be made to operate arbitrarily like linguistic codes since they are, in his view, *'magical'* and *'post-historical'*:

*'The fascination that flows out of the television or cinema screen is a different fascination from the sort that we observe in cave paintings or the frescoes of Etruscan tombs...The ancient magic is prehistoric, it is older than historical consciousness; the new magic is 'post-historic', it follows on after historical consciousness. The new enchantment is not designed to alter the world out there but our concepts in relation to the world'* (1983: 17).

According to this idea, photographs cannot be understood, or even seen, unless through the historical text, which they are designed to undo: *'Technical images are metacodes of texts which, as is yet to be shown, signify texts, not the world out there'* (Flusser 2007: 15). This view is extremely helpful in envisaging the kind of curatorial re-presentation of archival objects such as Breakey's archival fragments: the question as to what textual information should be provided is essentially unanswerable, for each viewer would require a different text, and each one of those texts would dramatically preclude – in a fashion specific to each reader – the kind of re-search that will need to be undertaken to make sense of the image seen at that moment. It remains a matter of curatorial responsibility to claim one of many possible argumentative positions with regard to a chosen mode of (re-)presentation. Here, my claim is that Breakey's materials are actually fragmentary and come without text, and that their presentations by others so far have left that aspect aside or occluded it. I therefore see potential in a presentation that foregrounds their silent, fragmentary nature. Neither position is right nor wrong, I believe, and it is fascinating to envisage having both available in public view.

*'Both imagic and diagrammatic iconicity are not clean-cut categories but form a continuum on which the iconic instances run from almost perfect mirroring (i.e. a semiotic relationship that is virtually independent of any individual language) to a relationship that becomes more and more suggestive and also more and more language-dependent'* (Ljungberg 2009).

Photographs depict specific contexts, events and figures, which need to be ‘read’, that is, re-constructed, from what can be seen in, and said about, them. Both these modes, the quiet gazing (the ‘pouring over’), as well as the verbal dialogue (the interview about memories, about the ‘who, what, where, why, when’) require a set of terms and concepts in order to take steps beyond the ‘deictic’ or ‘*indexical*’ act of re-presenting or *pointing* of photographic representations. This happens via an interactive ‘telling’ of participants in these representations, towards an analytical, discursive and critical description and interpretation of the contexts, events and people both ‘shown’ and ‘told’:

*‘Unlike the performative speech acts analyzed by Derrida, one could perhaps argue that there is not necessarily an intent to communicate something in the photograph, that there is not really an address to an other, at least in a strict or straightforward sense’ (Wike 2000: 3).*

In *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*, John Tagg (2009) uncovers some of the power-dynamics that govern the manner in which photographs are received, and in effect makes clear that reception is always an ongoing act of production or reproduction: photographs are continually re-made, re-presented and re-viewed as falling within the categories of artwork, documentary image, historical record or official evidence of some kind:

*‘Photography has no identity, but the photograph may, for the photograph captures meaning even as the inexhaustible openness of the photographic appears to be captured and fixed by the discursive apparatus of the frame. The workings of capture, however, clearly exceed the framing of the photograph’ (15).*

With this contemporary perspective I will conclude the general overview, having established that the concerns historically raised around photography require careful consideration, particularly at the meeting point between the visual arts and visual history.

### 1.7 Genre and Context: Documentary Photography and Visual Art

Through the troublesome search for a set of essential qualities and possible working definitions for photography one encounters a vast and uneven terrain of photography’s uses, commonly termed ‘genres.’ Names for genres in the visual arts – unlike the terminologies used in the ‘hard sciences’, which require a maximum stability of definition – operate more like mobile sites for a discussion that seeks no final conclusion. Making reference to any visual genre means to conjure a discourse into being which draws equally on present as well as, paradoxically, on missing information relevant to the various constituent elements requiring (or resisting) consideration:

historical, stylistic, material or philosophical, to name but a few. Rather than possessing finite, permanent feature sets, all genres are fluid complexes that have as much to do with the frontiers of scientific achievement as with the entropic whimsy of fashion fads in high society and popular culture. None of the constituent sets of knowledges can be claimed as necessarily primary: for instance, art history as an academic discipline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century tended to focus on formal, stylistic developments as if they were entirely discreet from economic contexts, whereas in the 20<sup>th</sup> new approaches were developed in art theory – now cultural critique – which regarded art as the materialist-symbolic expression of sociological needs with regard to exerting and submitting to power. In summary: genres are defined by conventional uses.

In the visual arts the term ‘genre’ refers to two things: firstly, a classificatory system of categories according to stylistic, formal, or content-related features, and secondly, a specific category of ‘unstaged’ images depicting scenes from everyday life. According to the second usage of the term, most ‘Jazz Photography,’ for instance comprises a distinct type of genre photography. ‘Jazz Photography’ never appears in lists of photography genres. To try to more generally position jazz photographs in a larger system of classification quickly becomes a very complex undertaking: does one consider the photographer’s motivations, his subjectivity, above the uses to which the images were put? Or does one discover or invent new uses for them according to a continuously evolving catalogue of trends and perceptions?

Very soon, it becomes evident that a curatorial engagement with archival photographs necessitates working from both sides at once, as it were – from the presumed and researched historical constitution of the image-material on the one side, and from the manner in which comparable and/or related materials are being produced and received at present on the other. This way – via a careful consideration of genre then and now, and the shifting landscape in between – a curator may hope to arrive at creating a self-reflexively intensified, deepened present engagement with this-or-that particular photographic item at hand.

We have seen that it always remains important to consider the epistemological dimension of photographs. ‘Photography’ as a term refers to so many different objects and practices that it can only be meaningfully activated when it is defined or discussed from within the specific motivations and uses of each and every, more-or-less distinct approach, discipline or field in public or private life. This is an interrogation of photography’s social, transactional constitution – a process defined by carefully sounding out specific milieus, and possibly by leaving behind all-inclusive projections. In other words, to cite Maria Markowska (2010), *‘photography cannot be interpreted as a separate art, but must be understood within other disciplines, mainly sociology and anthropology.’*

This is an instance where the snake of a negative dialectic bites into its own tail – where the iconoclastic desires awakened by a survival instinct in the time of unprecedented image-flooding enforce a looking aside. In contrast to this, the envisaging I put forward here is less concerned with separation than with integration, and this involves looking *again* at an image, more carefully each time, looking at exactly what the image is, at how it works. Beyond the visual, it also requires *listening*: what does the image bring up, each time anew and differently so with every viewer?

The question of genres presents treacherous ground. But it is also utterly unavoidable, since it speaks to the viewer's multiple, encoded entry points into photographic images. Classificatory reading of photographs via genre categories is a learnt behaviour, as automatic as breathing, talking or walking: an unconscious practise. The troublesome aspect of this is what usually constitutes a one-way street: photographic images appear to *present themselves*, quasi-naturally as coming from or belonging to this-or-that genre, but their *production* as that remains largely unconsidered. The professional process of encoding, designing and assigning photographs for categorical consumption is for most people a hidden or mysteriously complex one: at best there is a consciousness of a secret knowledge being employed, at worst, as Benjamin made so clear, the uncritical assumption of a spontaneous, unattainable giftedness at work.

For example, under the category 'Photography by Genre,' Wikipedia currently lists 18 Subcategories (from 'Aerial' to 'Wedding') and 98 Pages (from 'Action Shot' to 'War photography'). These unstructured lists not only overlap, but also do not differentiate between forms and functions – something that, as has been discussed earlier, is in fact near impossible to conclusively achieve with regard to images. Nevertheless, the terms advertising, commercial, fine art or stock photography, for instance, tend to designate usage rather than form, style or, more specifically, content. Interestingly, in most non-amateur realms, the non-adherence to clear genre expectations is generally evaluated as a failure: a photo is expected to send a clear 'message.' This message can be about anything at all, as long as it encodes unmistakably the genre context in which it expects to be seen.

The 'content' of most photographs, it can be argued, is eclipsed by this genre code. One example of this slippery relationship between general and specific uses is how a hypothetical photograph of a human being may be treated: it may at first glance appear to fit into sub-genres called 'boudoir,' 'fashion,'<sup>54</sup> 'glamour,'<sup>55</sup> and 'nude' photography (under a main category called 'Model'

---

<sup>54</sup> Focussed on the apparel (clothing and accessories), the beauty and character of the model being incidental.

photography) but, should its content overshadow or complicate the associated, primary genre expectations, it may require filing in, for instance ‘abstract’ (under: ‘Creative’), ‘event’ (under: ‘Wedding’), ‘photojournalism’ (under ‘Human Interest’), ‘candid,’ ‘studio’ or ‘environmental’ (under: ‘Portrait’<sup>56</sup>) categories. This kind of situation becomes even more complex considering different possible types of brief: if the image is a ‘commercial’ photograph – essentially an advertising tool in print or online media – or an ‘editorial’ photograph – essentially a non-advertising image displayed in conjunction with an article in a magazine, or on its cover. The commercial value of these two types of images can differ dramatically, yet they are both designed to support the written words. In their particular contexts they are expected to perform as literal texts.

It is evident how necessary it is to investigate the photographic ‘medium’ from without, as it were: from the vantage point of the needs, expectations and applications involved with photographs produced for or inserted into a given scenario. Of central concern for the work here are a set of specific *practises* (‘photo-documentary’, ‘photojournalistic’, ‘decisive moment’), *subjectivities* (‘insider-outsider’, ‘hustler’, ‘user’), *approaches* (‘candid’, ‘available light’, ‘unstaged’) and *applications* of photography (‘newspaper’, ‘book’, ‘exhibition’) at their intersection with certain, specific endeavours in the fields of *personal* (‘recreation’, ‘sensitivity’, ‘addiction’), *cultural* (‘jazz’, ‘aesthetics’, ‘design’) and *political* life (‘anti-apartheid struggle’, ‘rally’, ‘underground’).

Having indicated some of the general issues around the troublesome, yet inevitable phenomenon of genre, I will focus in more detail on those categorical frames with regard to Breakey’s work, particularly the process work never intended for the public eye.

### 1.8 Documentary Photography

‘Documentary photography’ is an odd term, as are most terms that tie a medium and a subject rendered through that medium, together. If ‘photography,’ as we have seen, is already a Gordian knot of form and content, the addition of the word ‘documentary’ loops another strand into it: the potentially highly elusive ‘content.’ The only way to constructively problematise the meanings of the term ‘documentary photography’ is to question the notion of genre itself – and genres are generated through the use of specific sets of ideological, aesthetic and technical motivations, new responses and perspectives. Thus the ‘straight,’ documentary photograph, made possible in the

---

<sup>55</sup> Focussed on the beauty (sensuality or sexuality) of the model, the apparel and character of the model being incidental.

<sup>56</sup> Focussed on the character of the model, the beauty and apparel being incidental.

context of rapid technological progress at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, presents the amalgamation of the two meanings of ‘genre’: photo-documentary as a result of cameras becoming more portable and the miniaturised film inside them being sensitive enough to capture ‘candid’ or ‘genre’ pictures. Genre pictures are an ancient tradition in the visual arts, which David Bate corroborates:

*‘Most of the other genres used by photographers already existed as genres, formulated in painting, before photography appeared. Landscape, portraiture, still life, domestic scenes and ‘history painting’ were all already identified within art academies.’ (2009: 4).*

Genre categorisations are wholly determined by the dynamics of popular trends and markets – most dramatically exemplified by their use in the distribution machinery of popular cinema. Genres are *names*, catchall phrases and titles for aesthetic products that – at some point in their existence at least – have a public life, but which may not necessarily have been created with that life in mind. The conflation of the words ‘documentary’ and ‘photography’ contains the seed to a set of very persistent philosophical questions in relation to the discussion of photography as a ‘record’ or ‘trace’ of the real. One of these questions is whether photography is at all capable of *not* documenting something. Put differently, the photograph, constituting a technological record, is necessarily always a document – however abstract, falsifying, flawed, incomplete, misleading, staged, manipulated or uninformative. It seems that the moment at which a photograph ceases to record anything at all, it ceases to be a photograph. Again, the way out of this epistemological impasse lies in looking to the motivations and claims driving the various uses of the medium, in what ‘to document’ means over and above ‘to record’:

*‘The history of photography could be recapitulated as the struggle between two different imperatives: beautification, which comes from the fine arts, and truth-telling, which is measured not only by a notion of value-free truth, a legacy from the sciences, but by a moralized ideal of truth-telling, adapted from nineteenth-century literary models and from the (then) new profession of independent journalism’ (Sontag 1973: 86).*

There are infinite ways in which light may be captured to produce a technological image, moving or still, and in which such images may be manipulated (*handled*) afterwards, in conjunction with the machine, be it in the laboratory or on one’s desktop. On the one hand, light does not require any mechanical apparatus at all to produce a picture (for example: cyanotype, sun print<sup>57</sup>).

---

<sup>57</sup> These earliest photographic processes involve capturing traces of photons – without a camera or lens – on a chemically prepared surface that in the early stages was self-developing and could not be fixed.



On the other extreme, light traces are processed by highly elaborate arrays of machinery and workflows (for example: photo-spectography, 3-D live-action animation). Therefore, as with the discussion of any other set or species of images, the intentions and expectations – however attributed, inferred and deconstructed – of producers and consumers (*users*) become the cornerstone of a meaningful interpretation. It can be argued therefore that a photograph does not necessarily have to present a technological document (record, trace), while it is also true that the record-making, imaging nature of photography plays out more-or-less intentionally in such a large variety of photographic applications, that the term ‘documentary photography’ needs to effectively be understood from the point of view of the users’ – producer *and* consumer – intentionalities. In a discussion of the most ubiquitous use of cameras, the amateur snapshot, in the age of mobile phone applications, Jurgenson (2011) states:

*Documentary vision is kind of like the ‘camera eye’ photographers develop when, after taking many photos, they begin to see the world as always a potential photo even when not holding the camera at all.’*

The photographic document is a key phenomenon of modernity. In its digital manifestations it continues to penetrate ever more deeply into our everyday experience. It appears that we as humans are desperate to learn something from it. As we increasingly view our lives from camera angles, and re-create our own image through photographs, we are also creating ‘photography’ as such in our own image: topical new words such as ‘*smile detection*’ and ‘*face recognition*’ illustrate this. The practise of photographically documenting people, places and events speaks of a deep desire to be able to enlarge the historical window of our lifetimes, and eventually of our age. The desire is twofold: firstly, to be able to look out into the past, and survey and re-evaluate it in terms of what we have come to know since then, and secondly to frame and fix the present in the hope of understanding it better through this procedure of instant historicisation.

For those professionals working at the coalface of the genre ‘documentary’ – formally the social documentary photographer, now more commonly the photojournalist – the urgency of advocacy through visual narration is the driving force. David Griffin (2008), former director of photography of *National Geographic* magazine, articulated this almost evangelically in a public talk:

*‘It is these kinds of stories, ones that go beyond the immediate or just the superficial, that demonstrate the power of photojournalism. I believe that photography can make a real connection to people, and can be employed as a positive agent for understanding the challenges and opportunities facing our world today.’*

Photographic documentation may hold out the promise of making us fully conscious of our present condition. It also fractures every present into a kind of mosaic, by rendering and transmitting it as a subject that is believably and evidently reducible to the limits of what photography can and cannot capture *and* communicate at any given moment in time – including the textual appendage of the by-line. While this photographic documentary project has been – and will continue to be – the subject of ongoing critique, the urgency and aggressiveness with which it is pursued is notable. Photojournalists and amateurs alike are taking more photographs than ever, and an ever-growing audience of consumers demands to see the world presented and explained through them:

*‘Although photojournalists can take properly exposed and well composed photographs all day long, they hunt verbs. They hunt them, shoot them and show them to their readers... The readers are insistent: "What are they doing?" "What did you see?" and "What happened?" ... The eyes always want to know what they missed. Readers can't see what they missed with a noun. It works if the question is specific enough (what did the condemned building look like?), but most answers require verbs’* (Hancock 1996).

In summary, we note that the motor of the photo-documentary project is the assumption that photographs can indeed constitute accurate, archive-worthy records, as well as transport truthful, significant news, thereby – so the hope – effecting social, political and environmental change. From as far back as the 1950s, successive new movements in this genre have aimed to interrogate its innate tendency to stand above all comparison with other photographic genres as the only truthful use of the medium. These interrogations intensified the tension between what is viewed as truthful record and as (potential) visual construct, as either ‘fact’ or (possibly) ‘fiction,’ or – most pointedly – as documentary and as art. Due to the fact that producers of photo-documents are using an artistic medium, and that photographic artists are using a technical recording medium, it can be confusing and challenging for viewers to find appropriate viewing modes respectively. Much photo-documentary work is – sooner or later – exhibited, sold and collected as ‘art’, even if this was not originally intended. Usually, before this happens, work waits for some time in the archive: living memories have faded or died out, and the technology, the socio-political environment, and the genre expectations have shifted enough to warrant a retrospective of sorts. Most of the time, such reviews are arranged in galleries or other art-related spaces. This is not necessarily wrong or even inappropriate, if care has been taken to communicate to the audience the specific motivations behind the images then and the choices made in displaying them now. A recent, good example of this can be found in the exhibition

catalogue to *Social Forces Visualized: Photographic and Scientific Charity, 1900-1920*, held at Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University:

*‘It is not a documentary image, but the documentary mode that we see here on journal pages and exhibition walls’* (emphasis in original) (Johnson, 2011).

It must be stated clearly at this point that of course only the fewest photojournalists are actually working on documenting wars, open conflicts and disasters. Most sub-genres of documentary, in fact, do not aim to accuse or change the world. Photographer Søren Pagter explains that

*‘[a]ll photojournalism can be divided into two genres: portrait/illustration and feature/news. The main distinction between the genres is the degree to which the photographer has actively framed the photograph. In other words: The degree to which the genres allow for stage-managing’* (Pagter 2008).

This statement again illustrates the asymmetrical relationship between the reader of the newspaper text-cum-photo and the producer of the photojournalistic photograph and the article. The reader may notice if something about the image is too rote or does not seem to ‘read’, but the encoding-knowledge typically lies with the media professionals. Furthermore, the choice of photographic genre for an individual journalistic topic is so standardised – *‘Sports journalists will typically use feature photos whilst business journalists use portraits’* (ibid.) – that the reader is unlikely to become fully aware of how differently these types of images are in fact constructed. At this point it becomes clear why Breakey refers to his jazz photography as ‘naïve’<sup>58</sup>: it serves to state his perspective as someone working on his own behalf, without a given brief from an outside interest, such as an author or editor, to illustrate or visually communicate a given story.

### 1.9 Documentary [Art] Photography

The amount of writing on the differences between the practices of documentary and art photographers is beyond survey in the context of this thesis. All that I wish to outline here is that the crossover of these practices has existed for as long as photography has exists, and that it continues to grow in significance as the world is experiencing, to say it with Hal Foster, a *‘return of the real’*:

---

<sup>58</sup> He is quoted as saying this in numerous publications (*Art Design Architecture* 1993, Vol.11; Jonker 2009) including his own, and also used this term in the interview I did with him.

*We have become wired to spectacular events. This wiring connects and disconnects us simultaneously, renders us both psychotechnologically immediate to events and geopolitically remote from them* (Foster 1996: 222).

These two arenas in which photography is used, documentary and art, always exhibit tendencies towards denying or overcoming the frictions between them. Yet, the subject of their images can never be stabilised enough to entirely fulfil the desires invested in either project. Apart from sharing the same technology, they have in common at least one more thing: they push at the formal and conceptual boundaries of what the medium has to offer. This can be felt in the face – and most often there is a human face there – of most photographic works which, exhibited in the context of art, depict the ‘reality’ of others. Particularly the abject, troubled or exotic reality of ‘the Other’ has been the key subject of this crossover terrain. Arguably, the relatively recent emergence of a new sub-genre to art photography, ‘documentary art’ presents a denial of the differences between the social uses of ‘documentary’ and ‘art’ while masquerading as a resolution in the form of a head-on acknowledgement. The resulting ethical frictions have been made the viewer’s business, a smoke screen of evidential relevance in the confrontation. Behind this the systemic violence of art commerce is visible, but forever untouchable, on an amoral<sup>59</sup> high ground.

*‘Our art/ documentary distinction, for instance, assumed exaggerated proportions through the usually self-serving efforts of identifiable photographers, curators, collectors, and critics’* (Johnson 2008).

Again, to attempt any kind of general survey of notable examples here would be foolish, for they are simply too numerous. Locally, in the post-‘94 period in South Africa, a few documentary art photographers have risen to international fame, and David Goldblatt has widely been constructed as their forefather – however wrong or of little use to the viewer that may be. Guy Tillim, Pieter Hugo, Zanele Muholi and Mikhael Subotzky – to name a few of the most famous, however different their respective projects may be, all have in common that they make photographs which show people, environments and situations from Africa that Western and Westernised African audiences will find strange, fascinating and usually disturbing. More importantly, these photographers also have in common that their work is presented in top-end

---

<sup>59</sup> I use the term *amoral* in a value-free sense as denoting ‘free from morality’ or ‘without morality.’ I do not wish to be understood to be meaning ‘immoral,’ which would judgementally denote the negative opposite of ‘moral.’ I am speaking of an observed trend in the commercial art world to exhibit ‘confrontational’ or troubling images, but without taking up any observable moral position towards them. This implies a conscious choice on behalf of gallerists and curators not to engage with morality: to be, as it were, outside of morality. Whether an amoral position is actually a realistic possibility cannot form part of this discussion, so I will leave this question as it is here.

galleries, at international art fairs, and at museums all over the world in the form of large-scale, high quality, high-priced, limited edition art exhibition prints.

While their work is always project-based, presented as series, and ‘issue-driven’ – in the sense that it is ‘about’ topics such as urban poverty, traditional cultures in decline, environmental disaster and various human rights issues – it represents these issues in the form of seductively presented, beautifully crafted, editioned and therefore collectable objects. They are for sale at a given market. To their buyers, these objects not only promise to be a good financial investment, but also an authentic – rather than merely aesthetic – engagement with reality. If ‘art documentary’ can be defined as documentary photography at the formal, aesthetic heights of what can be achieved within the limits of the documentary, the term ‘art’ relates to the highest levels of artisanship in achieving an aesthetic impact with a ‘straight’ photo. One highly esteemed proponent of this type of photography is, for instance, Sebastiao Salgado:

*His epic sensibility has raised questions: Is he a photojournalist or an artist? In fact, he is both, an artist with a journalist's eye for the unfolding story, typically on a mythic scale. In cinematic terms, he combines the starkness of Ingmar Bergman with the scope of Cecil B. DeMille’* (Bookhardt 2011).

In contrast to this, ‘documentary art’ presents itself as a kind of super-form: it borrows meanings and approaches from the worlds of documentary and art alike, presenting itself as more beautiful and true than either. Documentary art photography finds its way – in perfect technical reproducibility – from the gallery walls into the mass media with unprecedented visual and financial force, challenging the restrictions imposed on photography in either realm. A recent example is Richard Mosse:

*‘...because [Mosse's] images “disorder the aesthetics of conflict,” notes artist Mary Walling Blackburn in an exchange with critical theorist A.B. Huber, they make us ask further questions about the “ethical dimensions” of suspending “the real”’* (Jayawardane 2011).

In conclusion to this cursory overview: while (social) documentary photography does not per se constitute an art form, it does present at the very least a form of visual communication – often visually very powerful, and emotionally affecting. The presence of documentary photography in art galleries and museums has increased dramatically since the 1970s for a variety of reasons, one of which is that through the trajectory of modernism, everything from pissoires to family snapshots can potentially be declared ‘art.’ Nevertheless, the ethical dimension is persistently attendant to all of these issues: to some, the journalistic photograph – ‘straight’ rather than

‘staged’ – even though it may be a highly successful image in all its visual aspects (composition, shape, form, colour, texture) is not to be regarded as a work of art. To others, the world of art constitutes less of a separate environment, and the increasing mobility of traditionally discreet imaging disciplines is something to be acknowledged rather than policed.

#### 1.10 Photography and the visual arts

There are a myriad of ways to approach the relationship between art and photography, requiring different levels of detail. This section attempts to economise in that regard, since the primary aim is merely to mention a number of conditions under which art and photography intersect. At the beginning of this chapter, a number of historical, theoretical and contextual markers were set in relation to photography. To do the same here for ‘the visual arts’ (in short: art) would take up unwarranted amounts of space. Hence only a rudimentary, working definition of the term ‘art’ is used here: art comprises aesthetic objects and experiences created in view of being regarded and experienced as art, typically within public and private, art-related contexts. Although this is a highly reductionist model, it serves to clarify two important aspects: firstly, most art is made as art – things and events generally do not become art without intention. Secondly, objects and experiences are perceived as art largely because of the contexts into which they are placed, or in which they take place. Beginning with a discussion on curatorship, the next chapter will map out some of the relevant institutions and practices that take place on the plane of reference developed here.



Figure 10. Detail of *Contact sheet 7*, showing one of many unidentified people in Breakey’s leftovers. Breakey photographed other photographers on a number of occasions. This was shot in Swaziland 1966.

## Chapter 2

### Curatorship, Contact sheet, Archive

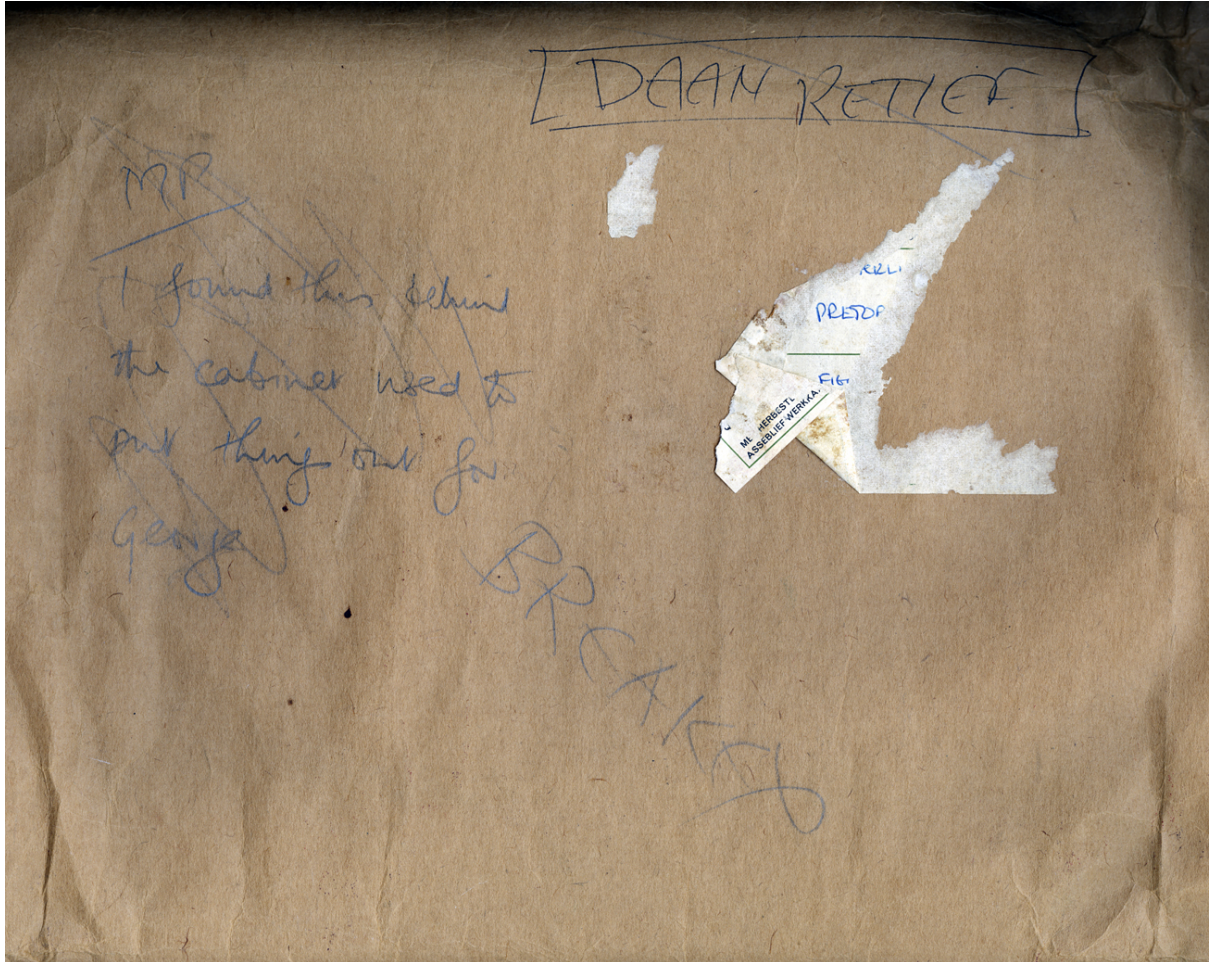


Figure 11. The envelope in which Breakey's contact sheets and fragments are currently stored at Musicpics cc.

## 2.1 Curatorial reappraisal

Specific intentionalities drive and delimit the experience of creating and consuming art. These intentionalities can be understood as a complex set of encultured motivations, expectations and otherwise acquired behaviours. Within them lie codes, tropes and memes – different types of information that define, that is enable and disable, an experience of art. What appears in the external modulation of our consciousness through art by vested interests is a moral dimension that is as impossible to deny, as it is to define. In contrast to documentary photography, as we have seen, art (photography) is made to condition an amoral space. Put differently: such spaces, museums, but particularly commercial art galleries, are created to condition ‘art’ through a more-or-less self-reflexive or self-conscious meta-experience: the experience of experiencing art.

This inextricable relationship between object, experience and context plays a key role in the production of those ‘significant surfaces’ that we call art.<sup>60</sup> Other kinds of surfaces however, as significant to our lived realities as they may be, are traditionally kept separate from art spaces. Initially, photography was altogether not considered to be ‘art.’ Then, over the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some photographic genres rose to art status. Documentary photography, largely due to the ethical concerns that writers like Sontag have deliberated on, has taken a long time to find its way into the world of art. Up until about fifteen years ago in South Africa, for instance, documentary art photography was rarely seen in museums and galleries. At present it is ubiquitous.

Since the establishment of this trend towards the reappraisal and subsequent specialised production of documentary photographs as art, we have recently seen an increase in interest in other traditionally non-art photographic genres, such as amateur, hobby or non-professional, ‘archival’ photography. In South Africa this happened within the larger post-‘94 shift away from ‘struggle’ towards ‘identity’ politics in art. This reappraisal of non-art as art happens via discovery by third parties, and is typically managed by a curator. Examples of recent discoveries and subsequent exhibition and publication projects in this area are Billy Monk (South Africa), Vivian Maier (USA) and Richard Billingham (Great Britain), none of whom had training in photography, let alone any career ambitions. Now their work has been given prominent place as

---

<sup>60</sup> ‘Images are significant surfaces...This space and time peculiar to the image is none other than the world of magic, a world in which everything is repeated and in which everything participates in a significant context. [Images] are supposed to be maps but they turn into screens: instead of representing the world, they obscure it until human beings' lives finally become a function of the images they create – human beings cease to decode the images and instead project them, still encoded, into the world 'out there,' which meanwhile itself becomes like an image – a context of scenes, of states of things’ (Flusser 2000: 10).



‘street’ or social documentary photography, albeit with an ‘outsider’ label attached.<sup>61</sup> The hand at work here is that of the curator or the curatorial team, overseeing a range of integrated processes: the *recovery* (indexing, storing, scanning), the *exhibition* (selecting, editing, printing, framing, hanging), the *publicity work* (press releases, walks, talks), the *selling* (editioning, pricing, advertising) and the further ‘*life*’ of the work after its first appearance (travelling and group shows, important collections, museums). An inherent danger here, in the words of Hal Foster, is that *‘the institution may overshadow the work that it otherwise highlights: it becomes the spectacle, it collects the cultural capital, and the director-curator becomes the star’* (1996: 198).

Such photographic projects, often private and discovered posthumously, tend to form at least one complete body of work that can be shaped to the curator’s desire. The ‘artists’ generally cannot intervene in the curator’s choices in word or action – for instance by adding or taking away or making entirely new work. New work for instance may not be as successful, or may appear to throw into question the curatorial decisions made about the existing work, and concurrently with this, its credibility or public interest. A case in point in terms of this thesis would be Basil Breakey’s current photographs – shaky snapshots of water patterns or passengers waving from the train – which he peddles off as signed, lab-printed jumbo prints to whoever takes pity on his lot in life. If this thesis were presented as an attempt at (re-) discovering Breakey as a significant photographer in terms of his *overall* body of work, his rather uninteresting personal ideas on art, as well as the decidedly haphazard and unprofessional snaps he takes every now and then would discredit it entirely. However, this has led me to understand the importance of the personal subject for the photographer. Without it, there nothing left to visualise for him. Beyond that, it has also reconfirmed how limiting biographical readings are to images that address – irrespective of who made them – a larger social and cultural history, which in the case of Breakey’s 1960-1970 period is South African jazz culture.

*‘We may distinguish between two types of imaginative process: the one starts with the word and arrives at the visual image and the one starts with the visual image and arrives at its verbal expression’* (Calvino 1988: 83).

Finite collections of images from almost any area of photographic practise can meanwhile be exhibited in art environments. One example of this are the studio (self-)portraits of Samuel Fosso, which, originally a private hobby of his, have now become such valuable assets as

---

<sup>61</sup> ‘Outsider art’ has a rich history, which will not be discussed here, but it is important to mention that photography is rarely included. The focus traditionally lies on hand-made objects, environments or private collections by – typically obsessive-compulsive or otherwise mentally unusual – eccentrics.

artworks that the legal battle over their custodianship has been waging for years. Without judgement, one can speak of a trend in the art world to look for photographic bodies of work that challenge previous notions of art photography. Beyond showing up the unquenchable thirst of the '*Society of the Spectacle*' (Debord 1967) for new kinds of images, the increasingly popular move to look for them in the past, as it were, is indicative of an increasing desire for finding authenticity in photography. This desire for photographic authenticity, in turn, can be understood as a response to the anxiety the medium itself produces, forever seducing the viewer to enter – to say it with Barthes – '*flat death*' (Barthes 1980: 92). In my imaginary role as the curator of a re-envisaging of Breakey's archive, I had initially expected to dislodge many more good photographs from the archive; it was, initially, disappointing not to find more 'jazz photographs' than I had already seen in *Beyond the Blues*, and to see that what Breakey had produced since – within that genre or not – is nothing much to speak of.

In terms of a biographical reappraisal with a focus on individual jazz musicians of the time – Steve Gordon<sup>62</sup> had in fact extracted Breakey's jazz photographs in the collection of negatives for *Beyond the Blues*. The book, however, narrates a period of South African jazz history through the biographies of those musicians that Breakey happened to photograph. The images in that context become historical illustrations, and point to the lack of a larger visual and textual anthology: all those musicians Breakey did *not* photograph, meaning the images of jazz culture taken by other photographers. This missing anthology, however visual, would need to be edited by a musicologist. What I aim to achieve from the plane of reference of the visual arts – in envisaging a curatorial position towards Breakey's archival objects – is to open the images up to new meanings and readings that lie beyond what they individually disclose or preclude. Breakey's contact sheets, and particularly the fragments thereof, lend themselves much more to such a project, since they can sustain a primarily visual interest – an interest that does not instantly require names and dates, but can allow the silence of the found archival object to surface.

Viewing, reading and envisaging the archival objects as more-or-less isolated visual occurrences in their own right presents specific challenges and opportunities each time. Interpretative motions are highlighted in view of creating new figurations and formations of the archive into which I am working. These might themselves solidify into a more-or-less stable and 'inevitable' substrate for future engagements with the material at hand and in view. The curator-as-artist perspective and modus operandi chosen stand in a particular tradition of the subjective review

---

<sup>62</sup> Steve Gordon at Musicpics cc holds Breakey's all photographic materials; his role will be discussed in detail later on.

and representation of materials that has been formulated in relation to the work of some 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary curators, such as, for instance, Hans Ulrich Obrist. Obrist's often surprising engagements as curator criss-cross boundaries between traditionally discreet practices: curatorship, archival work and art practise.

The discipline of Historical Studies uses objects – including images – as artefacts that serve to support a particular historical narrative. The technical reproductions of such artefacts tend to appear in publications as illustrations of historical accounts and analyses. Often, no particular reference to them is made in the meta-historical or historiological text – they are presented de facto, filling a page to illustrate and stagger an otherwise dry, written work. It has been made clear that the images in the archive are being viewed curatorially<sup>63</sup> rather than being made to serve as either evidence or illustration. Certainly, the one area of specialisation within Historical Studies that would appear to offer the appropriate tools with which to do this would be History of Art. The objects of study here neither constitute works of art, nor other kinds of visual remains for the discussion of which a discreet, stable academic framework has developed. Their visual impact on the viewer, including the constructions of their possible meanings can, however, be discussed using some of the methods developed by art historians. This is the work that aims to position the overall thesis in a direct relationship to the larger kind of archival and curatorial project envisaged beyond, and thereby creates its effective value. It is a committed process of reading-as-decision-making, a curatorial re-view considering a range of possible public representations.

## 2.2 Appropriation art

*'Every exploration is an appropriation'* (Barthes 1997: 18).

Working with photographs by non-artists is not only a curatorial, but also an artistic practice. Appropriation artists, working in the methodological tradition of the Cubists' collages, the Dadaists' assemblages and Duchamp's 'objects trouvée', typically focus on *found* photographs, often taken by unknown strangers. In contrast to the more self-contained photographic collections (private archives) that contemporary curators tend to 'appropriate,' artists have largely been working with more dispersed and haphazard, banal, incidental or vernacular photographs,

---

<sup>63</sup> Not in the traditional sense of curatorship relating to preservation and custodianship, but in the contemporary sense relating to re-presentation of present visual materials in new constellations with each other and their societal contexts.

such as cinema stills or discarded snapshots. Examples for this are John Baldessari and Christian Boltanski, who rearrange, re-present (present anew) and assign new meanings to photographs snapped from television or taken from anonymous family albums bought on flea markets.

More recently, the artist Fiona Tan has introduced a new, interdisciplinary self-reflexivity to such approaches by appropriating the role of the curator itself: *Disassembling the Archive*, Tan's collaboration with the author Philip Monk, visually re-presents a full archival collection of portrait photographs of unnamed children. While Tan – similarly to Boltanski – comments on the erasure of cultural memory, *Disassembling the Archive* goes beyond negotiating general phenomena of forgetting and loss. Tan, as artist-curator performing the archive – the very place that appears to protect us from this loss – presents a visual argument towards one of the most confounding aspects of the archive: that, to paraphrase Derrida, it is a place of forgetting:

*'The concept of the archive shelters in itself, of course, this memory of the name arkh'. But it also shelters itself from this memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets it'* (Derrida 1997: 2).

Generally, what we see when we look at images of anonymous faces, is narratives, attitudes or moods. In Tan's work, looking at so many faces, one face after another, all unnervingly similar but of course never *quite* the same, a general reading becomes gradually more unavailable.

Looking at images of faces that once must have held deep, emotional meaning to a parent because of the (troublesomely unavailable) likeness of their child, we have no choice but to see ourselves, and nothing more than that. Such a re-presentation completely destabilises the knee-jerk response of othering so endemic to most people photography, which 'automatically' highlights difference in terms of, for instance, ethnicity and gender. Monk (2007) writes:

*'Essential to photography, this inaugural divide between the photograph and its referent sets off an abyss of divisions. Yet, critical interrogation always presumes adequacy between image and referent in order to secure a subject, the subject: ourselves. Photography, it seems, was made for us'* (Tan & Monk 2007).



Figure 12. A crop of *Contact sheet 25* at near full resolution, illustrating how physical constituents of the contact sheet, such as the staples, creases and scratches visually interact with the images on and within them.

### 2.3 Photographs document art

There exist noteworthy crossovers between the desires at play in the fields of appropriation art, archival practice and documentary photography: realities are re-constructed *primarily* through *inclusion* and *exclusion* of material, and the subject matter is sought, found, framed and conserved in a stable medium. The subjects that have now become objects remain otherwise self-contained, separate and ideally unmediated, with the effect that their container, instead of re-presenting the subject-object as a construction, becomes a force field: we look into it, not because we want to, but because we must – it is all that is left.

This section shall serve as an exemplary discussion of relevant uses of photography in the context of the visual arts, particularly in relation to the documentary idiom, ethics and social memory. I have purposefully chosen a well-known contemporary artist whose work is never discussed in relation to photography, yet addresses many of the concerns that convene in the overall argument of this text.

The artist Santiago Sierra engages the public in the tradition of Joseph Beuys' conceptual approach to working on 'social sculpture' using installation, performance and intervention, albeit driven by a less idealist, perhaps more cynical, political outlook. Sierra, who works internationally, draws the raw materials for his work from the local archives wherever he is. 'Archive,' in an extended sense (beyond that of institutional repositories), may also denote popular memory and myth, significant sites or the intersections between historical events and conditions and current, usually contested and confrontational issues. While certain approaches and modalities that reappear across Sierra's oeuvre may indicate a 'style' of sorts, he does in fact consistently avoid formal aestheticisms. Favouring a minimalist, pared-down approach, Sierra's aim is to communicate as clearly and directly as possible, creating artworks that radically avoid all mimesis, embodying the metaphorical in all its unavoidable immediacy. They are sincerely radical attempts at un-mediation, at – however paradoxically – an iconoclastic visuality, where there are only signs and no symbols.

Because Sierra never makes 'art objects' that could be bought, kept, revisited, collected and resold, photography plays a key role in the documentary representations of his time-based and site-specific interventions. Employing a deadpan, disengaged snapshot aesthetic similar to that of forensic police investigations, these contrasty, often flash lit and exclusively black and white digital snapshots, accompanied by terse, objectivist written descriptions, serve to illustrate each and every one of Sierra's many works presented on his extensive website. It may be argued that throughout this large archive of documentary snapshots, Sierra follows an anti-aesthetic, purposefully ugly visual program in order to avoid making them into artworks in their own right, thereby allowing them to retain some power of description. It appears that by often avoiding straight lines or overly careful composition and by excluding colour, Sierra is attempting to reinstate rather than problematise the line between the real (his artwork in situ, in time) and the document (the self-consciously banal snapshot).



Figure 13. Santiago Sierra, *4,000 BLACK POSTERS*, Shoreditch and Bricklane, London, United Kingdom. June/July 2008. Sierra's sparse, no-nonsense use of language is similar to his use of photography – the 'artist's statement' for this work on Sierra's website simply reads: *'put up in public places'* (Sierra 2008). [Online]. Available: [http://www.santiago-sierra.com/200806\\_1024.php](http://www.santiago-sierra.com/200806_1024.php), [last accessed: 24.03.2011].

The likelihood of encountering one of Sierra's works in real time and space is relatively low. This is in fact true for all artwork outside the gallery system that is not commissioned, permanently public art. What remains for most viewers of Sierra's work is his public archive of 'straight' snapshots – highly economic, effective visual communications that are, as the context of their presentation consistently affirms, not the artwork itself. Having taken time to browse through Sierra's website one may say that one now knows his work and, without ever having experienced it in real time-space, one may even feel very moved by it, trusting in the knowledge that it has in fact taken place sometime, somewhere.

Sierra's work operates in the ideas and through the mental responses of its viewers. Black and white snapshot photographs and texts are set up and sent out in tandem to transmit the catalytic ingredients of the work (Sierra's research-based concepts) to the material of the work (the viewers themselves). The overlap between what the viewer brings to the work and what Sierra has brought to it is in fact what the work *is*. While this occurrence, this location itself, is not materially bound, invisible and therefore not documentable, it is the photographic and textual *descriptions* of the once-off interventions *in action* that provides information, suspends disbelief and ignites the reaction that constitutes Sierra's work. This mode of working stands in the 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde tradition of performative and interventionist approaches ranging from Dada, Situationism, Lettrism and Fluxus through to Body Art and contemporary approaches recently dubbed by Bourriaud (2002) as 'relational'.

*Bourriaud has been an effective advocate for the contemporary tendency to emphasize process, performativity, openness, social contexts, transitivity and the production of dialogue over the closure of traditional modernist objecthood, visuality and hyper-individualism'* (Radical Culture Research Collective 2007: 1).

'Conceptual' art such as that by Santiago Sierra exists through the same conditions as a musical composition: the work-as-it-will-be is first of all conceived, then it is notated in some form or other, and eventually performed. The performance always involves an act of interpretation, and some aspects of the work are always gained or lost in mediation.

The piece of music is immaterial – a set of waves, sent and received, once and forever. Where does it reside, what is its locus? Crucially, this is what we have begun to ask of photographs now, too – they are too different from 'auratic' works uniquely existing in real space-time to support the same reception. In that sense, photographs continually perform a set of relations, and from



within the countless archives they inhabit they continue to do this in an on-going interplay between historical and contemporary imaginaries.

*'Sierra's work functions as an anti-statement, addressing the way in which we share information and communicate within the public realm, and highlights the lack of spaces for unregulated self-expression. The colour black is highly symbolic, and points to ideas about silence, negation or suppression of communication, and censorship'* (Lisson Gallery 2008).

Viewing Breakey's process work in the context of Sierra's use of photography offers a number of interesting parallels. Breakey's peripheral existence in the big, wide world of jazz photography is deceptive. His images, particularly in their 'found' archival state, have the potential to make a contribution to new insights about ways of looking at – and constructing meaning for – lived spaces and experiences in recent South African history. Seen through Sierra's lens, Breakey's visual agglomerations and fragmentations have a mosaic-like quality, comprising part of a multi-faceted overall image, a sociogram of South African cultural history. This is why, as incomplete as Breakey's work may appear at first, it is of importance in the context of its time, the South African '60s.

The contact sheet comprises a footprint along the way to making a final photographic print. It is outmoded now, but all the more educational for understanding – 'seeing is believing' – the workflow of making a photograph. The contact sheet visibly represents the zone of alignment between *concept* (what does Breakey want to make visible?) and *performance* (what does the image say to me?).

#### 2.4 The contact sheet

Having outlined and illustrated a number of relevant theories, genres and sub-genres of photography in relation to the given objects of study, we have progressed into the field of reference 'curatorial and artistic practice in relation to (art and non-art) photography,' and relevant opportunities and limitations for the present thesis have begun to emerge. We have seen that a key aspect of the experience of art is a high level of self-reflexivity with regard to subject-positions and the media employed. A particularly productive instance of engaging self-reflexivity around the photographic process as it was used in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is a close consideration of the 'gang print' or 'contact sheet.'

The term ‘contact sheet’<sup>64</sup> in its common use refers to a technical extension of film photography. While ‘contact prints’ of individual photographic negatives or positives were made from about 1866 onwards, the term ‘contact sheet’ refers to a specific grouping (‘gang’) of smaller images (usually from one discreet roll of film) imprinted on a single sheet of photographic paper. Historically, this process is far younger than the beginnings of photography (Daguerreotypes,<sup>65</sup> for instance). Contact or ‘direct’ printing has its beginnings with the invention of transparencies. Before the first transparent plastic film was produced in 1889, high-quality, expensive and fragile glass photographic plates were used for the production of un-enlarged, final prints. From the 1920s onwards (the older, highly flammable, nitrate film was replaced with cellulose acetate or ‘safety film’) contact printing whole strips of film together<sup>66</sup> became ubiquitous as an in-between process – part of the working photographer’s editing workflow of reviewing and selecting images to be enlarged and printed (again).

Currently, with the imminent death of film, these kinds of contact sheets are in the process of going extinct (direct prints in certain niches of large format art photography may survive a little longer still).<sup>67</sup> Certainly, the professional photographer’s practice of gathering, surveying and pre-selecting his or her photographs for the client has changed considerably since the now near-complete switch from film to digital. However, one of the key components of working towards a final image-product is still that of making a final selection out of a range of options presented in close proximity to one another for comparison. In the ‘hybrid’-to-digital<sup>68</sup> photographic age, where computers with acceptably colour-calibrated monitors have become ubiquitous in the relevant industries, it is no longer always necessary to make test prints, and contact sheets are, thus, now basically things of the past. Still, the results of the day’s work still have to be presented and discussed. Contemporary ‘digital darkrooms’, such as Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Lightroom offer some very sophisticated and fully automated functionalities designed to create a single document of any size and shape, with any given number of smaller images placed on it in

---

<sup>64</sup> Other terms include: ‘contact print’, ‘contact proof’, ‘index print’, ‘proof sheet’, or ‘gang sheet’.

<sup>65</sup> The process of exposing and fixing a lens-based image on a metal plate coated with a light-sensitive emulsion – the resulting images are of extraordinary resolution, luminance and tonal breadth, but cannot be reproduced (printed), and are therefore always unique, opaque originals.

<sup>66</sup> Industry-standard sheets are often 8 x 10” (20,32 x 25,4 cm) or 9 x 12” (22,5 x 30 cm) or 11 x 14” (27,94 x 35,56 cm) in size, with 36 images arranged in 6 rows by 6 strips of 6 images each.

<sup>67</sup> As neither the traditional scale of the paper sheet (suited particularly for medium format film) nor its related implications regarding cost and speed meet the requirements of today’s digital workflow (including delivery to the client via digital communication media, i.e. high-speed wireless ftp transfer), it is no longer useful in doing the work of selecting and editing. At least as a physical tool, the contact sheet must be regarded as an outmoded – or at least an outgoing – phenomenon. The virtual or hybrid ‘contact sheet’ file still finds some use next to a variety of other, more flexible, platforms for presenting, viewing and final-selecting photographs.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Hybrid’ referring to those who still shoot on film, but who then digitally scan and edit the image further. ‘Digital’ referring to those who no longer shoot on film but on cameras equipped with a digital sensor.

any orientation. These ‘thumbnail’ documents look very much like a traditional, film-era contact sheet, yet they are necessarily of an entirely different constitution. These differences form a crucial component of the project envisaged here – they point to the emergence of a philosophical dimension that only very rarely finds visible expression in curatorial and artistic photographic appropriations.

It is important to understand that some ‘contact’ – in other words exposure to photons or other kinds of rays – is, of course, necessary for any kind of photography. What the word ‘contact’ refers to in the common of this term, however, is the immediate, physical contact of a strip of developed film<sup>69</sup> with a piece of photosensitive paper in order to make a ‘direct’, 1:1 scale print, produced without an enlarging lens. It is very interesting to look at these kinds of prints through a loupe<sup>70</sup> – a view that can be emulated and concretised for a viewer at a distance by high-quality digital scanning and enlarged printing. Suddenly, a world of detail opens up that makes the physicality of the film as well as the paper underneath (which is not the same paper as that of the enlargement) tangibly visible, as Figures 14 and 15 show:

---

<sup>69</sup> Rather than a single image, as is the case with the more rare, specialised and expensive practise of direct printing large-format photographs, either from another sheet of exposed paper, or, later on, a transparency.

<sup>70</sup> As would be standard practice with a traditional contact sheet, where the images always necessarily measure exactly 2,4 x 3,6 cm (unless of course a different kind of camera and film are used to the standard 135mm SLR).

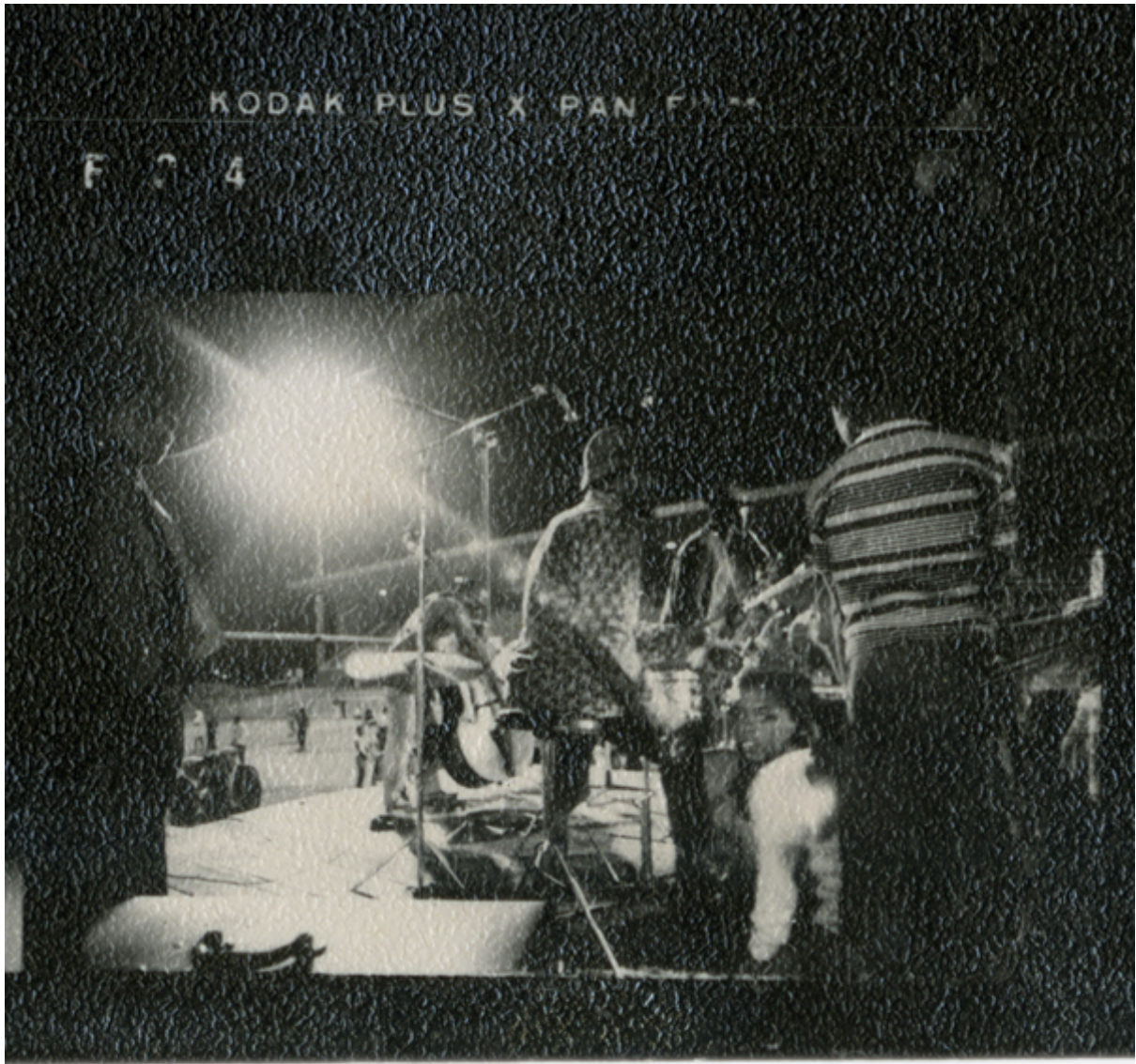


Figure 14. *Contact sheet 16* (detail), illustrating how the texture of the photo-paper makes the image of the film lying on top of it more visible.



Figure 15. *Contact sheet 36* (detail), illustrating how the different thicknesses of the transparent film come within reach in the layering of different visual elements: paper, film, pen.

This visual effect is something a conventional enlargement or digital scan can *not* achieve, because the film is not in the same way present in the image. For a conventional enlargement or digital scan, light is projected *through* the film onto the photographic paper or digital sensor. Only the light passing through the film is recorded.

For a scan of a contact sheet, however (direct printing of it is not possible, for it is an opaque object), light is projected *against* the image, which in this particular case already contains an *image* of a strip of negative film lying on a photographic piece of paper. What the scan makes visible, therefore, are several physical determinants of photography that are normally out of view: normally, we are always looking *through* and cropping *past* them.<sup>71</sup> In combination with the visible traces of their *use* (rearrangements, doublings, red pen marks, cut out gaps, stickers, staples),

---

<sup>71</sup> Even in looking at a direct print produced as a final work, the lack of enlargement keeps these factors from view, foregrounding the image over the details describing its physicality.

these physical determinants communicate a behind-the-scenes narrative that has a forensic quality.

It is at this point that a philosophical dimension emerges. One can now literally see the different thicknesses of the photographic negative having allowed more or less light through onto a sheet of paper underneath, which itself – as a coated, textured surface – has changed tonally in response. Layered on top of all this are the physical interventions by the photographers' (the editors' and the archivists') hand. The layers visible in the reproduction prints in this very thesis-document that the reader is holding at the moment are: a) the paper of the document holding an image and b) the ink on this paper constituting the image of 1) the (textured) photographic paper of the contact sheet that was scanned and 2) the variably thick film strips lying on top of it, and 3) the photographer's pen, fingerprints, scratches and all other marks left on or in the physical surface of the imaged original.

The photographic image proper – so apparently seamless in a conventional book like *Beyond the Blues* – loses a fixed position in this layering. It hovers in a virtually *invisible* space between the negative and the paper in the enlarged reproduction. The eye cannot quite make out where exactly the photograph emanates from, since the film – so present in the image – appears to cover it in the same moment as constituting its first appearance.

With the contact sheet fragments, the viewer becomes witness to an active moment of interest, construction and interpretation: in the past on behalf of the photographer, and in the present on behalf of their own subjective experience. Relative to this, the 'final' single print – and even to some extent the full contact print – tend to obscure this more self-conscious kind of viewing. Through the fragment presented as an artwork, we consciously participate in the fluidity of exchange, response and figuration that challenge and enrich our sense of history as an ongoing practice within the communal, trans-national present.

*In the same way, the transparent film, that which has a narrative that proposes to tell everything, rests upon a denial that anything is absent or that anything has to be searched for... 'Discourse' is then what corrects this self-validation, what fosters this bringing to the fore of the multiple voices actually sedimented into this effective absence' (O'Kane 1985: 54).*

## 2.5 Memory

The figuration and experience of the world through art is without a doubt primarily constituted by cultural, social and biographical contexts, conferring it with a personal signature of sorts. The ongoing process of gaining consciousness of this, and of making such insights transparent for others is therefore a vital precondition for collective valuations and understandings. Hence this section shall serve to communicate a few of the – in part merely construed – conditions which have been formative in my path towards the various approaches explored in some depth in this thesis.

Due to my German parent's work in Lesotho (1979 – 1983), my first childhood experiences fell outside of the usual middle-European socialising schemata. This created a permanent state, or stance of 'in-between-ness' in my psychological makeup. My first encounters with music through piano lessons followed a rather local, African pattern, far away from bourgeois sonatas and minuets. Besides that, my father regularly hosted a Jazz listeners circle at home, with the latest Jazz LPs imported from Europe.

Furthermore, the photography my father enthusiastically practised as a pastime took up a place in my recollection as a very serious activity. When I was wheeled in his big camera trolley, I felt part of this mystic assemblage of apparatuses, lenses and tripods.

The most vivid recollection I have of my childhood imagination from this time, however, is an internal one – it doesn't appear in conjunction with faces, objects or environments. I doubt this could have ever been captured in a photograph, but it is conceivable that a specific photographic image could prompt or 'prick'<sup>72</sup> me to remember. What I remember is a deep, entirely private anxiety around speaking aloud: I used to believe that I had to be careful and efficient with the number of words I spoke, because I imagined that there was only a finite amount available. Whether just inside myself or generally in the world, words were most likely going to be used up at some unforeseeable point in time. When this feeling began to fade I cannot remember, but I suspect it's still there somewhere inside of me, for I still can't think of an answer to the question it begs.

What does this excursion into personal memory bear for the reader? Mainly to indicate a confluence of influences forming a curious interest in the sound, the gathering, the remembering, and the fixing of memories in a recent past, beset by socio-political injustice and

---

<sup>72</sup> In reference to Barthes' concept of the *punctum* (Barthes 1983).

turbulence. The encounter with Basil Breakey's photographs of jazz musicians in the South African 1960s revitalised this desire to better understand present times through the recent past.

At the moment the only way to Breakey's work is through an enthusiasm for jazz and for photography. If we as viewers were to encounter reproductions of the more contextually varied contact sheets placed in various, less conventionally appropriate sizes and contexts, however, it is very likely that first of all we would see *our* history mirrored in them. We may not feel informed enough to make judgements or draw conclusions, particularly when it comes to the specialisation of jazz, but we would be drawing from a heterogeneous 'Konvolut' of personal memories, popular culture and socio-political conditionalities to access to a *sense*, and an emotional condition in the face of what this may mean to us now, and what this may refer us to in the recent past. To be made to see *that* we were unaware of being ignorant – rather than *what of* – is the productive stage in self-discovery.

The process-work images we are regarding here constitute meta-images in a double sense: they were there *before* the final print, and they remain in the archive *after* the final print has gone out into the world. Therefore the photographer's presumed intentionality expressed in and on them is important to consider: some frames are marked with red pen, designating them for cropping and printing. In going to print,<sup>73</sup> this *one* image leaves behind the others adjacent to it on the unique strip of negatives and on the unique, but potentially infinitely reproducible contact sheet. In a sense, they might as well never have existed, while the *one* becomes more 'indestructible' the more often it is reproduced, the wider and deeper it penetrates the public domain and popular culture. Because the 'siblings' of this image have been excluded from public scrutiny, the one that does go out into the world can stand for a better representation of the photographer's work as excellent and noteworthy.

## 2.6 Technical and conceptual approaches

The physical objects studied in this thesis – 48 contact sheets and 15 contact sheet fragments residing in the Musicpics cc archive – are envisaged to be publically viewed via high-end digital scans made of them in June 2011, using a high-resolution Epson 10000 XL flatbed scanner at University of Cape Town. The scans offer up an entirely new view of these fragments that goes

---

<sup>73</sup> Final choices and edits are available in book form or as exhibition prints (which in Breakey's case were often indeed signed, but never editioned, and printed by a number of colleagues in a number of different processes, and are thereby inconsistent with each other).



beyond their phenomenological<sup>74</sup> physicality, particularly if enlarged prints of the scans, installed in different sizes and contexts, are envisaged.<sup>75</sup>

*Pictures can on the one hand can be defined in terms of functions, or on the other hand be described in terms of properties. Defining pictures functionally means assuming that pictures cannot exist independently of functions attributable to them. Linked with this is a principle of semantic actions, which can be called “pictorial acts” and which are conceptually determined. Phenomenologically describing pictures presupposes that pictures exist independently of functions attributable to them’ (Seja 2005).*

Moving the contact sheets from the archive into public view via digital scans acknowledges and actively engages the fact that images from a (photographic) archive can very well perform as unsigned, unique originals (such as the contact sheets); as signed print-enlargements (such as Breakey’s exhibition prints); as digital scans on the internet (such as on Steve Gordon’s Musicpics website); as illustrations in books (such as Julian Joker’s *In a Silent Way*); as well as a variety of more conceptually driven reproductions such as are envisaged here throughout.

However, while envisaging reproductions amounts to a thinking-through of the contact sheets on paper, the scans of the contact sheet fragments are not in themselves ‘as if’ objects – they simply have the *potential* to be used to make very large-scale and/or very high quality reproductions. For the purpose of this text, these new, digital image files<sup>76</sup> enable a number of contemporary discussions to take place, one of which revolves around the complex and dynamic relationship between traditional photographic media and contemporary and projected future imaging media. At present, archives are undergoing a new, radical process of transformation: the migration to digital. As a consequence ways of seeing and engaging with the content of archives will be affected as much as the management of archives themselves.

Traditional photographic media are based on physical, chemical processes best summed up in the term ‘analogue.’ As physical objects, both traditional, pre-digital photography and film constitute discreet, still frames. Contemporary, and most certainly future, imaging media are, and will increasingly be, electronic and in that sense ‘immaterial’; they are coded in numbers, digital binaries. Digital photography and ‘film’ (actually now video) exist in continuous strings and

---

<sup>74</sup> Franz Brentano developed the notion that physical phenomena lack the ability to generate ‘original intentionality’ and can only facilitate an intentional relationship in a second-hand manner (‘derived intentionality’), while it remains possible for intentional objects to coincide with real objects (Brentano 1995).

<sup>75</sup> The examples for contexts, developed in some detail throughout this text and via illustrations, are: billboard, corridor, gallery, living room, magazine and restaurant.

<sup>76</sup> In this instance irrespective of whether they are onscreen or printed re-presentations and re-views of the originals.

streams of computer data codes, saved in an increasingly heterogeneous array of file formats<sup>77</sup>, on an equally expanding and rapidly dating variety of data-carriers ('media')<sup>78</sup>. The essential lack of physical objecthood of digital media (as coded 'information') poses a variety of theoretical questions relating to how we engage with ('produce' and 'consume') them, as well as conservationist/archivist questions as to what their future life should and can be. In brief, whether they are immediately apparent on some kind of physical surface or not, digital photographs are produced differently, consumed differently, and will exist differently in future to the way 'analogue' photographs were produced and consumed and, indeed, had an existence in their world in the past. Benjamin, in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* cautioned that '[e]very image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably' (1969: 247).

## 2.7 Beyond the – iconic – Blues

It is impossible to create an iconic image *a priori*. An image *becomes* iconic through historical factors extrinsic to itself. The photographer may create the image, but mankind makes it iconic for itself.

To access an 'iconic'<sup>79</sup> image on a contact sheet – which is almost always different to the context in which it is originally known – is not as straightforward as recognising it, although in the deeper sense of the word 're-cognition,' this process of accessing does constitute a returning-to-consciousness. 'The iconic' has its own narrative – that of the stand-alone, the stand-apart. The 'iconic' image by necessity needs to be separate from other, similar images. It needs to be read as being inherently more successfully conceived and executed and therefore 'worth the look' and, finally, a more valuable investment. The organization of more-or-less iconic images on the playing field of the contact sheet requires an entirely different navigation than the standard photograph. Connections need to be made between related images, following a number of variable logics. The sheet asks to be scrutinised and browsed. The viewer, now turned browser, may read the sheet as a group, or as several sub-groupings according to presumed or inferred

---

<sup>77</sup> In photography/still images: tiff, jpg, bmp, etc.; in video ('film')/moving images: .avi, .mov, .mpeg, etc.

<sup>78</sup> Hard-discs or –drives (SCSI, e-SATA, SSD, etc.), CD (pressed/printed), CD-R, CD-RW, DVD (pressed/printed), DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, data tape (various sizes), 'memory sticks' or 'flash drives'

<sup>79</sup> 'The similarity between sign and object may be due to common features inherent in both: by direct inspection of the iconic sign we may glean true information about its object. In this case we speak of 'imagic' iconicity (as in a portrait or in onomatopoeia, e.g. 'cuckoo') and the sign is called an 'iconic image' (Fischer & Ljungberg 2009).

date and time, known or unknown subjects and any number of further categories, such as particular stylistic or genre conventions used.

There is an educational, exploratory, cross-referencing aspect to this process. Already in simply having to angle one's head by ninety degrees this side and that, in order to see differently oriented photos the right way up, the viewer is unconsciously engaged in autodidactic activities. The sheet may not add up to much, or it may be bursting with information. The even less common or familiar mode of access in the (smaller) fragments – which present themselves in a more idiosyncratically unique, un-standardised, 'undisciplined' format of their own – tends to disrupt even this relatively chaotic visual 'logic' of the standard contact sheet. There is always a *contextual* logic at work in the reading, the scanning-across these *sheets* that do not lend themselves to becoming definitive or 'iconic' images. However hard one may try, the habit of reading text, for instance – and in this case one may speak of a compulsion to read – will always pull the eye away from surfaces which, now mere part, mere detail, in isolation may have added up to an iconic composition, and transported a more or less clearly discernible or unmistakable message. Contact sheets, while presenting a relatively standardised practise, are always slightly differently arranged – something always slips, butts in or goes off-register. Unforeseen tonal densities or linear patterns occur haphazardly, and the viewer cannot but see such designs. It may be frustrating to know that none of what we behold in the overall organisation of such a print was intended to be seen as a whole, but the eye reads on nevertheless, and the mind continues to make connections between images that would not hold our gaze for a moment in any other context.

Photographers, writers and publishers have seen the contact sheet do a variety of different things. For instance, Swiss Magnum photographer René Burri's rise to international fame was cemented with the publication of black-and white contact sheet prints of Che Guevara (see Figure 16).

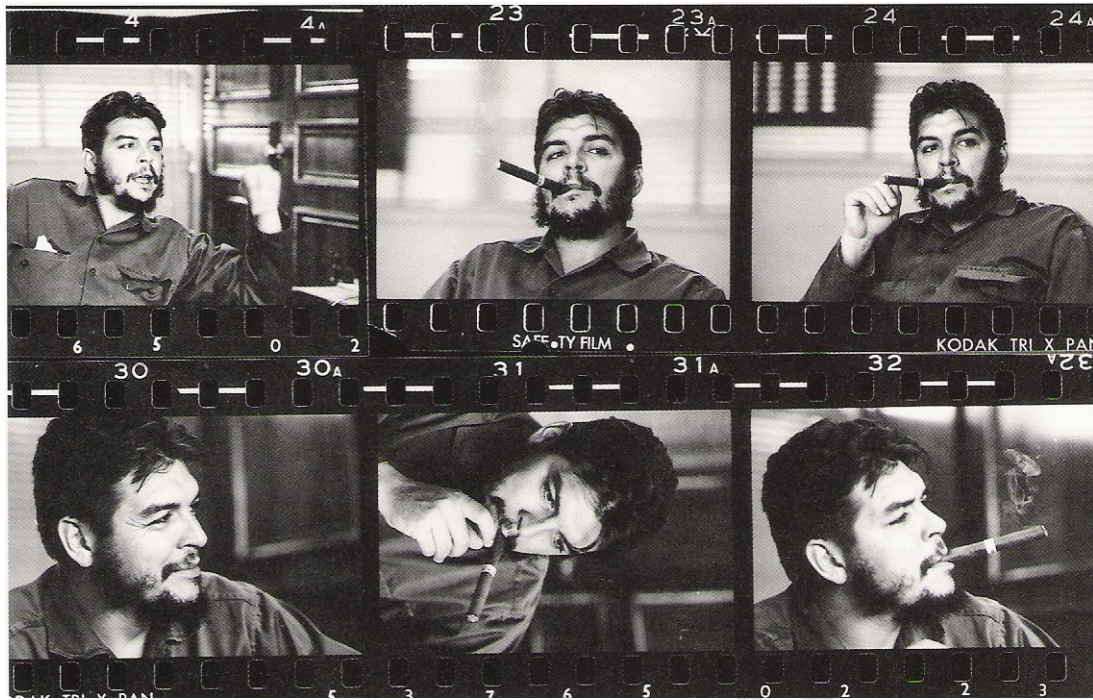


Figure 16. René Burri, *Contact sheets of Che Guevara* (1963), Havana, Cuba. Scanned from: Museum Ludwig Cologne 2006. *20th Century Photography: Museum Ludwig Cologne*. Koeln: Taschen. Pg. 86.

In a time in which the image of Che Guevara already exists as an icon in its own right, this detail of one of Burri's contact sheets makes obvious how much more information we feel we are getting in comparison with a single image. Had we for instance only seen frame 30, we wouldn't have known Che Guevara smoked, or had we only seen image 23, we might have thought him to be sitting outside. Of course, it goes much further than that: even more deeply seated than our compulsion to read text – once we have learnt how to – is our compulsion to read facial expressions. We experience satisfaction from comparing the different expressions in each frame, because it appears to offer us a chance to learn more about the subject's character than only one image would. We feel closer to this mysteriously charismatic man who played a part in world history. For a moment, in between all those gaps, when the camera was shut, not recording, only to briefly snap open again, we feel part of the conversation with someone significant, ourselves present in history being made.

In the recently published *The Contact Sheet*, author and photographic archivist Steve Crist draws our attention to the 'unseen' (or never-seen-before) condition of the images neighbouring a world-famous image on a significant photographer's contact sheet. For Crist, the value of a contact sheet lies in engaging the audience's interest in the production of *fame* and *importance*:

*'When the photographer creates an extraordinary or famous photograph, these unseen images take on even more importance'* (Crist 2009: 12).

Photographer Paul Mobley, on the other hand, describes the *stylistic* value of the sense of *continuity* in a presentation of contact sheets as an alternative to cropped and isolated individual (portrait) prints:

*‘What gives it value and fills each image with interest are the nuances of the film, the ragged edges and the information printed around the perimeter of the negative... These small but subtle details embed themselves inside the picture and become inseparable in a way that ties each image together with the next, giving them all a continuity’* (Mobley 2011).

Overall, not very much appears to have been done curatorially or artistically around the contact sheet while it was just part of a process towards a finished product, but now that it is a *‘relic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’* (Lubben 2011), Magnum photo agency has published *Magnum Contacts*, and invokes Cartier-Bresson in the advertising blurb:

*‘Cartier-Bresson said a contact sheet is “full of erasures, full of detritus”. He understood why many photographers kept them hidden. Reputations are built on a handful of spectacular images, not the hundreds, perhaps thousands of lesser frames documented in contact sheets. “A photo exhibition or a book is an invitation to a meal,” he said, “and it is not customary to make guests poke their noses into the pots and pans, and even less into the bucket of peelings”’* (ibid.).

## 2.8 Archive

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, notions of ‘archive’ have been deliberated from a number of intellectual platforms. One of the most notable key texts is Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1996), in which he problematises the traditional conception of the archive as a store of documentary artefacts in order to diagnose a core dis-ease of our time: the feverish search for an origin, the *mal d’archive*.

*‘... a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement’* (Derrida 1996: 91).

At present, particularly in the context of the visual arts, the term ‘archive’ has become almost meaningless: even the idea of a collection (also in its common use) is referred to as ‘an archive.’ The term has lost its bearings. An example:

*“Zanele Muboli shows 66 new portraits in this ongoing series which offers an insider’s perspective on the lives of the black lesbians and transmen she has met on her journeys as an activist. Collectively, the portraits are at once a visual statement and an archive: marking, mapping and preserving an often invisible community for posterity”* (Stevenson 2010) (my emphasis).

In the South African landscape there are also exceptions. Siemon Allen is an artist-collector whose work displays an acute awareness of the aesthetic, cultural and political contestations around archiving, taking *‘count of tracks and titles, performers and producers, labels and liner notes, scratches and grooves, design and color. And while there is a lot of information on display, we are also entreated to appreciate the structuring of the whole, as well as the ready made beauty of individual objects’* (Schaffner 2011).



Figure 17. The artist-archivist Siemon Allen posing for the purpose of scale-comparison in front of one of his greatly enlarged high-resolution print reproductions of South African vintage LP records. Source: [http://www.siemonallen.org/image\\_pages/records/img\\_records\\_26.html](http://www.siemonallen.org/image_pages/records/img_records_26.html) [last accessed: 03.12.2011].

Archives play a key role in providing a critical variety of modes of access to thorough, educative information on any aspect of a given socio-cultural history, as well as its lines of connection with others on the globe. Nevertheless, in order to (re-)conceptualise and (de-)construct such archives in the first place, a differentiated discourse around the culturally specific languages of images, as well as the nature of technologically produced, and increasingly digital records in general is

required. Contemporary archival collections need to be more than ever selectively and professionally curated, so as to make digital audio and image content co-jointly accessible to a wider public without falling prey to political agendas on the one hand, or producing a repository of little value to either researchers or the wider public on the other.

In the course of this argument a set of criteria is developed in aid of making a representative and meaningful selection of photographic images at the intersection of chosen fields (photography, archive, visual history), genres (documentary photography) and sub-genres (jazz photography), as well as gathering relevant additional material (digital audio recordings of interviews), in order to initiate a process of giving such mute representations a publically accessible, authentic voice. The aim in gathering, preserving and making available photographic image material is to facilitate a broader spectrum of deciphering under the aspect of their social, historical, and political contexts.

Large-scale institutions such as the Shoah Foundation Institute *Visual History Archive* (USA)<sup>80</sup> and the British Library Sound Archive (GB)<sup>81</sup> – specifically with its special collection titled Oral History of British Photography<sup>82</sup> – present contemporary, multi-sectional popular-memory-projects. This paper touches on the far less developed local context in the form of a miniature mission statement. It has become clear that unless the highly complex cultural specificities of the South African context are taken into consideration from the outset – however selective and small-scale the given audio-visual, archival project may be – a mimicry of such institutions would most probably perpetuate the more worrying, nationalist trends currently at work in South Africa's current heritage industry.

What is suggested is a creatively pragmatic approach to working with a specialised milieu of photographic imagery, in view of having retained and developed further all the essential elements of any larger-scale project to do with knowledge creation through accession, migration and dissemination of popular memory items, such as jazz photographs from South Africa through contemporary audio-visual archives.

Social documentary photographs of Jazz culture present as wide a variety of approaches as there are photographers to capture aspects of the socially, historically and politically complex phenomena at play on and around the bandstand. However, the photographic medium presents a set of limitations on the projected narratives, which, as we have seen, require ongoing close

---

<sup>80</sup> See: <http://college.usc.edu/vhi/>

<sup>81</sup> See: <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/sound/ohist/ohcoll/ohart/arts.html>

<sup>82</sup> See: <http://cadensa.bl.uk/uhtbin/cgiisirs/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=CKEY5021468&library=ALL>

consideration. Once the silences and blind spots of images in general, and images of this nature in specific, have been acknowledged and to some degree identified, new questions can be developed in order to create links with further relevant material created in other media in order to augment and enrich such materials.

In creating a digital repository of material in the humanities, for instance, one needs to first of all acknowledge that digital information is vulnerable to a variety of risks, such as physical damage and technology obsolescence. Mitigating the risks and ensuring long-term access to and preservation of the digital material stands and falls with the successful development of a framework of policies and strategies around the physical management of the data, and standards around naming, cataloguing and presenting it.<sup>83</sup>

South Africa has no Centre of Photography, no central institution responsible for the curation of its photographic practice, past and present. Instead, there are some gallerists who hold immense power over the (non-)careers of contemporary artists working with photography. South Africa has no position analogous to the MoMA post of previously held by John Szarkowski.<sup>84</sup> However, there are also notable deficits in the archival praxis both in the USA and the UK when it comes to the contextual analysis of photographic records: autonomous cultural elements tend to be disregarded, and a presumed homogeneity of photographic iconography is favoured. Contrary to such an 'a-curatorial' approach, arguments are brought forward here to construct the local intertext as a central node in the web of references and links for any archival object.

*In both Britain and America, culture-contact or acculturation studies have suffered from a lack of theoretical clarity on the issue of the autonomy of culture' (Coplan 1982).*

Photographic materials are rarely created *for* the archive, in order to facilitate academic research for instance. More often, materials accumulate in a relatively uncontrolled way, as private collections, or individual professional image banks, which are not archives. Archives are created in terms of projected future uses, both from academic and public perspectives, and are actively involved in commissioning and acquiescing materials. A true public archive can have no nationalist or party-partisan agenda; it stands as a clear, independent service facility for civil

---

<sup>83</sup> See for instance: Nancy Y. McGovern, digital preservation officer at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) [Online]. Available: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/curation/preservation.jsp> [last accessed: 09.11.2011].

<sup>84</sup> 'John Szarkowski was one of the most culturally influential people you've never heard of (NYT obit). He was curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) from 1962 to 1991. In this period, photography went from being a primarily commercial and documentary medium, struggling for artistic status, to its current position as a primary, perhaps even the primary, medium for visual artistic expression.' ANON. 2010. John Szarkowski: Visionary and Tastemaker. The lithium press. [Online]. Available: [http://lithiumpress.blogspot.com/2010\\_07\\_01\\_archive.html](http://lithiumpress.blogspot.com/2010_07_01_archive.html) [last accessed: 2011/06/02]



society and the academic research community. Archives are conceived around considerations on public engagement with its materials as creators, participants and consumers. The public in turn acknowledge the important role materials can come to play in archives, and make use of research and technologies relating to and born out of considered, forward thinking uses of archival materials and collections.

A number of different factors motivate the systematic collection and accessioning of recorded information as data. Human memory is fallible due to its fluid nature. Whatever we re-member, we are always actively engaged in putting back together with whatever means and bits of data are at our disposal at the moment of remembering.

*'Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as collective memory ... But there is collective instruction. All memory is individual, irreproducible – it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds. Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings'* (Sontag 2003: 85-6).

The hope we invest in the act of recording and keeping information is to be able to create a reliable platform for law, trade and all other areas of human life that require the accumulation of specific knowledge. The oldest known artefacts relate to spiritual knowledge and there is little doubt that in many cases they were made with the hope of creating lasting evidence of a faith and its related teachings about the nature of the human universe – something which a single mind or memory would never be considered to reliably hold and pass on unchanged. Physical records are created to protect precious information from the destructive effects of individual perception and interpretation. Societies have always required stable sources of information over time because, as Assmann puts it, *'people do not develop an individual memory at all but are always included in memory communities. Memory is formed – like language – in communicative processes, i.e. through narrating, accepting and internalising remembrances. According to Halbwachs, a person who is completely alone cannot develop a memory at all'* (Assmann 2008).

## 2.9 Uses

Research into South African jazz culture has always formed part of a larger body of projects which aim to uncover and make accessible the hidden histories of those who were marginalised and ostracised by South Africa's past, unjust political system. Local jazz culture has been

theorised in a number of interesting ways, most notably by Michael Titlestad<sup>85</sup>, Gwen Ansell<sup>86</sup>, David Coplan<sup>87</sup>, Christopher Ballantine<sup>88</sup> and Carol Muller<sup>89</sup>. A number of other authors<sup>90</sup> have also made use of and added to extant archival materials of this subaltern cultural milieu. Nevertheless, beyond all the possible literary, historical, musicological, anthropological or ethnographic readings of the archive that have been performed so far, the innumerable (documentary) photographs contained therein have rarely received any critical engagement as (silent, still, technological, etc.) *images*. While writers like to make use of existing photographs, they rarely do so in more than the most conventionally indexical and symbolic<sup>91</sup> ways: as decoration (cover sleeve, title page), as illustration (quickly 'show' something rather than give it an unnecessarily lengthy or insufficient description), as mode of identification (recognising faces, putting together a milieu), as evidence of events (x and y were at A, doing 1). These uses of photographs (un-)consciously overlook the host of complications that underlie the practices and theories of photographic imaging. In effect, this conventional use of photographs as relatively benign and objective (enough) references, suppresses their 'life' as complex and dynamic surfaces, more or less loosely embedded within shifting aesthetic contexts of temporal and visual discourses: local and international visual histories, contemporary and historical trends, and the approaches of 'insiders' and 'outsiders.'

### 2.10 Envisaging Fragments

This thesis envisages the contact sheet fragments transported into public visibility in addressing three conventionally discreet discursive spaces: firstly, one of academic discursivity; secondly, one of specific historical data, gathered and meaningfully connected to the images; thirdly, one of autobiographical subjectivity on behalf of each and every observer. This approach, it is hoped, will enable a relevant, close reading. Any combination of these three discursive spaces is expected to productively contribute to new readings of Breakey's archive. The perceived absences in Breakey's archive themselves provide a relevant platform, a cause even, for

---

<sup>85</sup> Titlestad, M. 2004. *Making the Changes: Jazz in South African Literature and Reportage*. City: Brill Academic Publishers.

<sup>86</sup> Ansell, G. 2004. *Soweto Blues*. New York: Continuum.

<sup>87</sup> Coplan, D. (1985) *In Township Tonight!* South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre. Johannesburg: Longman.

<sup>88</sup> Ballantine, C. 1993. *Marabi Nights, Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

<sup>89</sup> Muller, C. & Bakan, M. B. (Ed.) 2004. *South African Music: A Century of Traditions in Transformation*. ABC-CLIO.

<sup>90</sup> Furthermore: 1.) Meintjes, L. 2003. *Sound of Africa! Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio*. Duke University Press. 2.) Hamm, C. 1979. *Afro-American Music, South Africa, and Apartheid; Veit Erlmann Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination*. New York: Norton. 3.) Rasmussen, L. 2001. *Cape Town Jazz 1959-1963*. Copenhagen: The Book Trader. 4.) Thompson, L. 2001. *A History of South Africa*. Yale University Press.

<sup>91</sup> This discourse will be dealt with in some detail further on in the text. An important current reference here: Lefebvre, M. 2007. *The Art of Pointing: On Peirce, Indexicality, and Photographic Images*. Elkins, J. (Ed.) 2007. *Photography Theory*. New York: Routledge.

deconstructing the conventional uses of photographic documents in South African archives, more specifically those on South African jazz culture.

*"In photography, you see a lot of quotation," he says. "Every photograph has traces of past photographers"* (Leong, as cited in Lamster 2008).

Breakey's oeuvre, even in its extended form (the entire archive of remnants and remains, repeats, failures and fragments, as opposed to just the printed and/or published works), remains suspended, unresolved, in a noteworthy tension. Musically, the response that follows the tension that a call creates, eases it again. If Breakey's newfound contact sheets present a 'call' to the viewer, what could be considered an adequate response? Breakey's contact sheets essentially present physical confirmation of real absences: not only of the negatives that are missing, or of the missing images that were cut out of them, but also of all the shots that were unsuccessful or not taken between others. From a perspective that desires clear genre conventions, such as 'documentary,' 'jazz' or 'family snapshot,' the archive shows unfinished business, broken promises, a life lived away. Breakey – away from family, friends, broken away from all that holds dignified human existence – is remembered by many eminent figures in the worlds of photography and jazz. Many old friends remember trying to help him. But he does not or hardly remembers them. Drug abuse and dealing, eventually leading to incarceration, destroyed the expectations placed on him.

The question arises as to how to bridge the gaps, how to deal with the emptiness of which his life is now full. There may be a desire to 'fix' this problem in view of a pragmatic application, such as an encyclopaedic visual history of South African Jazz Culture, for instance, by filling the gaps Breakey left with images by other photographers and a written, historical commentary to contextualise and stand in for what cannot be seen, because it was never visualised. Such a project would, however, silence the potential inherent in a fragmentary, broken, incomplete, and necessarily unfulfilling account such as Breakey's.

*'Stories about places are makeshift things. They are composed of the world's debris'* (De Certeau 1984: 156).

The fragmented contact sheet, re-presented, as an artwork – a new, 'complete' image in its own right becomes an illustrative placeholder for the process of photographing jazz culture in South Africa. It becomes a visual jazz discourse. Perusing several (missing) images in this manner becomes *like* the experience of shooting jazz. Formally, in the abstract, the fragments are *like* visual scores for jazz improvisations. At times they allude to 'trading fours,' or to a melodic

theme, a sound texture. At times they appear to lack beginning, middle or end, at times they appear to all too pedantically to include or overstate peripheral or obvious musical or contextual elements.

This reading and envisaging is performed less in order to uncover some form of hidden history of this specific set of as-yet unpublished – and therefore unseen – images,<sup>92</sup> but more in order to develop a broad platform for future, visually and conceptually fertile contributions to the overall project of ‘reappropriating’ extant photographic records of South African jazz culture. Within and beyond that, the greater questions arising here pertain to the multiple losses that such photographs represent. These losses are, firstly, on the side of historical ‘evidence’ and visual culture. The material evidence of dramatic disparities is made visible in the image. Secondly, there is the loss on the side of philosophical discourse on visibility, imaging and aesthetics. There is great need to carefully consider the varying degrees of representable moments in photography. In the light of both these points it appears that Basil Breakey’s<sup>93</sup> central subject is continually in danger of being displaced by a whole spectrum of interpretations on the part of the observer. Breakey’s failure to produce a significant oeuvre as a professional stands in contrast to the prominence of his subjects who were and are much acclaimed, remarkable jazz musicians. Their milieus present the historical intersection of particularly charged socio-political and cultural circumstances. Breakey’s overall ‘jazz photography’ project – in its haphazardness, discontinuity, lack of rigour and variation – makes one thing inescapably visible: the subjects (ostensibly the musicians, whatever that would mean) remain unrepresentable.

It may well be that this unrepresentable subject of Breakey’s photographs is as unrecoverable (or unrecoverable) as his dissolving, personal living memory. With the passing away of those people imaged in the photographs, and those who could name them, with every one of the countless opportunities passing by of attaching meaningful, textual information to the images: as *remains* they indeed become more visible.

In the form of prints in a gallery or reproductions in a book, external powers mediate Breakey’s photographs. Yet as contact sheet fragments – while they may still not mediate themselves entirely (an epistemological impossibility) – they do offer themselves up as image-objects that forever oscillate between these conditionalities: as aesthetic, author-centred, processual endeavour on the one hand and, on the other, as technically conditioned documentary traces of

---

<sup>92</sup> While some of the images discussed here have in fact made it into print, none of them have been seen in the particular formats discussed here as unique, handmade fragments of contact sheets.

<sup>93</sup> In this case his name stands for him both as historical member of a public, and as a maker of images that survive his lifetime.

particular space-time constellations in the past. This is why the fifteen fragments clipped out of and left over from larger, no longer intact or even extant contact sheets – however insignificant and incidental they may appear to be at first glance in their small original size – are constructed here as primary visual artefacts of noteworthy significance.

### 2.11 Walls

Since the early 1960s, the possibilities with regards to the placement, dissemination and use of photographs virtually exploded. This has effected irreversible changes in the specific qualities of these spaces, channels and modes of reception. Photographic artworks are not only simply displayed in museums, but they are now accompanied by a number of audio-visual aids for the viewer. As a consequence of these new modes of access our ways of seeing have undergone deep changes. Amongst other things, they have become democratised, and, hence moved within the reach of many more people at many more occasions and places. Yet all these changes have not dematerialised art works as objects.<sup>94</sup> On the other end of the spectrum of ‘high’ and ‘low’, ‘serious’ and ‘entertainment’, ‘Online’ media rebirthed ‘Print’ media as a new, heterogeneous context for images to be created and consumed globally, on a near immeasurable scale. Therefore, in envisaging Breakey’s contact sheet fragments beyond the archive and in public view, it becomes necessary to consider this plethora of spaces and audiences, and the implications for possible meanings and interpretations arising there. While the intention here cannot be to project and evaluate each and every use that the reproductions of these fragments could or should (not) be put to, it will however be necessary to at least outline some of the most obvious differences in context, scale, quality and quantity of reproductions. A specific constant between these aspects can be discerned, and is noteworthy for any further discussion on, or closer reading of the fragments: while the smallest and lowest-quality reproductions of photographs tend to occupy the internet in the greatest numbers, the largest and highest-quality reproductions tend to occupy museum walls in strictly limited numbers.

---

<sup>94</sup>See for instance: Ulmer, G.E. 2003. *Internet invention: from literacy to electracy*. New York: Longman.



Figure 18. Detail of *Contact sheet 20*, showing an image selected for publication, notably before editing.



Figure 19. *Contact sheet 20*, showing the only discernible instance of Breakey doing a staged 'photo shoot.' The image marked with red at bottom right was heavily edited and placed next to the introduction in *Beyond the Blues* (pg. vi).

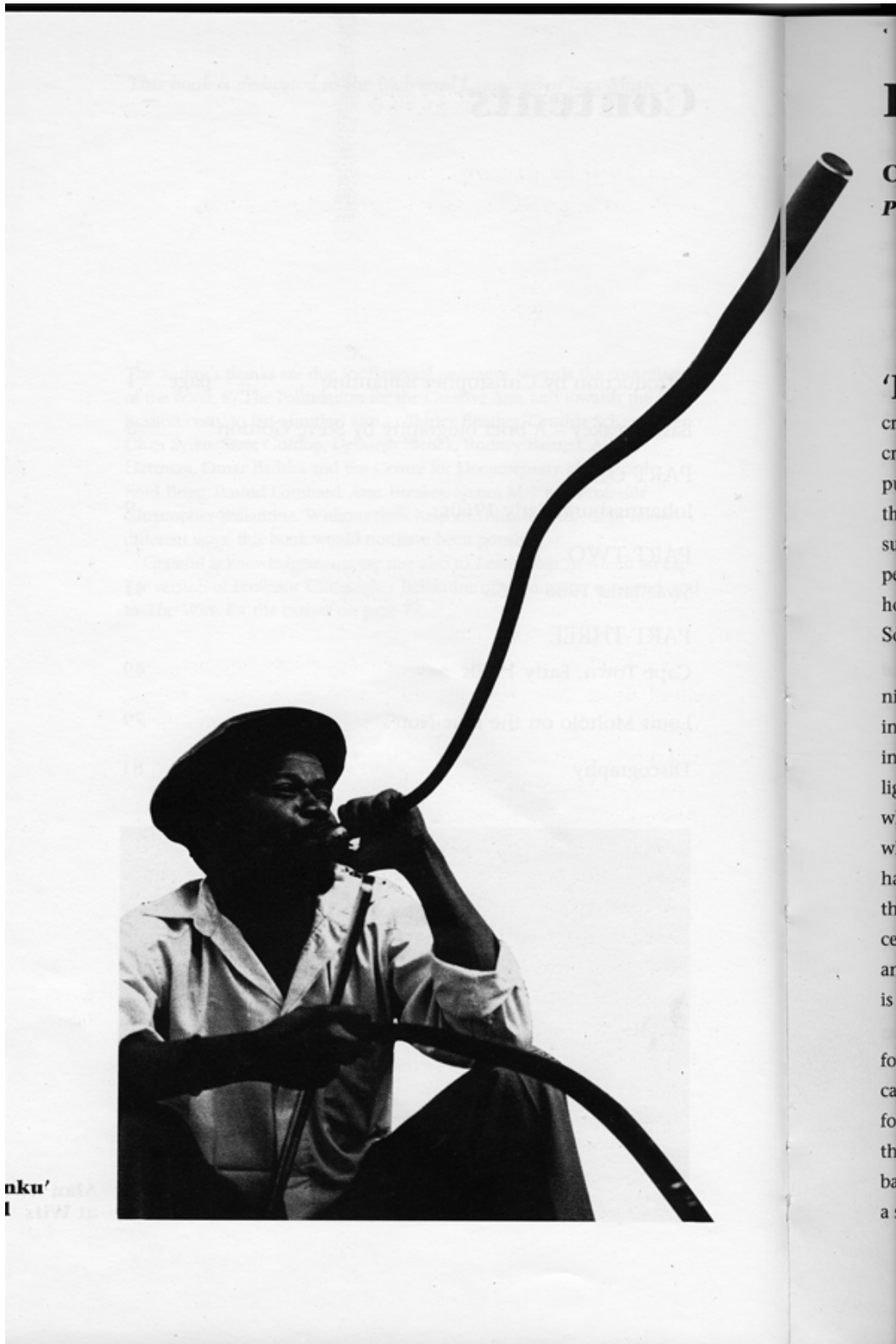


Figure 20. Page iv of *Beyond the Blues*. Note how the unknown woman next to Mankunku has been removed for this edit. The book shows almost exclusively Breakey's black subjects – the musicians. In the contact sheets we see many more white subjects: friends, other photographers and concertgoers.

### Chapter 3

#### Basil Breaky, Jazz culture and photography



Figure 21. Detail from *Contact Sheet 3*, showing a rare moment of eye contact in Breakey's photographs.



### 3.1 Basil Breakey's Biography

The progress of some personal lives over time can become emblematic of the dynamics within their society at large. Basil Breakey has been an intermittently public figure as a South African photographer. This is mainly due to the efforts of a small number of individuals to lift his work from relative obscurity. Via the platforms of photographic 'fine art' exhibitions and print publications, family, friends and colleagues have attempted to support Breakey. Particularly since his move to Cape Town in 1972 – he had as good as stopped working altogether and he relied on support from friends and family more than ever.

Basil Breakey was born in Johannesburg on 3rd November 1938 and shortly thereafter moved with his parents to Port Elizabeth where he went to High School. He had a great admiration for Elvis Presley as a teenager, and still remembers attending a rock concert dressed up as an impersonation of the King of Rock. Jazz music, however did not play a role in his formative years. After school he began training as a bank clerk, but shortly after was transferred to Johannesburg due to his undesired romantic relationship with the bank director's daughter. Beyond this point, biographical information is scarce and contradictory. Juergen Schadeberg, for instance, who was at the height of his career with DRUM magazine in the early sixties and whom Breakey befriended at that time, remembers Breakey working as a traffic policeman, which nobody else could confirm.

To go back to Breakey and ask directly about this and other facts would have been disrespectful. From the interview I did with him,<sup>95</sup> I gleaned quite clearly that apart from not being *able* to recall certain things in his life, Breakey also did not *wish* to recall them – at least not for any 'official' record. The more direct my questions were, in the attempt at creating a biographical overview of his life, the more evasive his answers became. Traffic cop or not, Breakey did pick up a camera around 1962 and started to learn the ropes of photojournalism in the darkrooms at DRUM. On the question of his chosen subject matter, 'jazz,' he referred to an important conversation with his mentor and friend, the photographer John Brett-Cohen, who advised him to find and focus "[his] *own, special subject.*"

For a number of years, he worked as a freelance photojournalist for a variety of newspapers, and then appears to have dropped out of any formal employment or paid work altogether, at least until the early 1970s, when he worked at the *Cape Times* newspaper for a while.

---

<sup>95</sup>Basil Breakey interviewed by Niklas Zimmer (Cat no. Avi6.06), 25.02.2011. Centre for Popular Memory Archive, UCT.

Various interviewees have hinted at one or two prison sentences for possession of and dealing with dagga,<sup>96</sup> but when, where or for how long Breakey served these nobody could or would say. I decided not to pursue these and other biographical gaps, sensing the delimitations of the kind of study undertaken and expected in the given institutional framework.

However, what certainly is true is that in the early 1960s, Breakey met and made friends with a circle of jazz musicians whom he proceeded to photograph on a number of occasions, performing or practising or just ‘hanging out’ together. Some of his stage rehearsal shots of the Castle Lager Big Band were used for a 1963 LP record, which is now one of the rarest collector’s items of South African jazz to date (see Figure 22).



Figure 22. LP Cover of *CHRIS MCGREGOR AND THE CASTLE LAGER BIG BAND. JAZZ – THE AFRICAN SOUND* (1963) with cover photographs by Basil Breakey. Image courtesy of flatinternational. [Online]. Available: [http://www.flatinternational.org/template\\_volume.php?volume\\_id=117](http://www.flatinternational.org/template_volume.php?volume_id=117) [last accessed 03.01.2012].

---

<sup>96</sup> Colloquial South African term for marijuana or cannabis. ‘South Africa is probably the world’s leading producer of marijuana, but most of it is consumed on the domestic market, which also absorbs the output of neighbouring countries ...’ (Geopolitical Drug Watch, as cited by The UK Cannabis Internet Activist, 1999).

The core group of this circle would soon, in 1964, go into exile as the Blue Notes – undoubtedly one of the most significant jazz combos in South Africa’s musical history. From that point onwards, Breakey had less to photograph, and only sporadically picked up the camera – for instance, upon concert tour visits by one or other of the Blue Notes members, or other significant players who had stayed in South Africa.

After a short period spent in Swaziland (1966–1968), Breakey moved to Cape Town, and started a family with a local woman, with whom he had four children. He remembers meeting his future wife at Greenmarket square, selling tie-dye T-shirts, but he does not remember the year. He also does not remember when or in what order his children were born, and when he got divorced. When I was interviewing him, he would, often after a searching pause, answer most factual questions with, “*You must ask Steve [Gordon] that.*”<sup>97</sup> His former wife and three sons live in England now, and his daughter in the USA. Struggling to recollect their names, he also could not tell me in any detail what they did professionally, for instance. Steve Gordon is in written correspondence with them and acts as a kind of custodian or guardian, passing on the small amounts of cash that they post quite regularly.

The ‘70s and ‘80s are very sketchily accounted for, but it seems that after years of intermittently finding shelter at friends’ homes, he eventually ended up completely homeless. In the eighties, two retrospective exhibitions of his work were held, one in Cape Town (1988, The Jazz Den at The Bass), and one in Johannesburg (1989, Market Theatre). In this last decade of political struggle and the first decade of democracy, he found ad hoc employment and access to food and photographic materials through friends and benevolent colleagues, such as the well-known ‘struggle photographer’ and director of South African History Online (SAHO), Omar Badsha.

In a conversation I had in June 2011 with Badsha, he reminisced about the experience of employing Breakey as a darkroom assistant for about a year. Breakey proved not to be sustainably employable, because he would do unpredictable things, such as forgetting to close the front door of the house, which led to a theft. Nevertheless, Badsha, like many others who know Breakey, speaks of him with a kind of forgiving fondness: “*He was a hustler, but I was also a hustler, for years! In those days we would all help each other out. We would make soup, and whoever didn’t have food would come over to eat.*”<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Basil Breakey interviewed by Niklas Zimmer (Cat no. Avi6.06), 25.02.2011. Centre for Popular Memory Archive, UCT.

<sup>98</sup> Unrecorded conversation with Omar Badsha at his home in Woodstock, June 2011.

In a 1993 copy of ADA magazine, I found a short write up on Breakey, accompanied by a portrait photograph by Rashid Lombard (see Figure 23), who would a few years from then inaugurate the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, which he still directs to this day.

able of  
as easi-  
bers;  
acoustic  
bass  
k-a-billy  
e into a  
th to

unt of  
a person-  
me of the  
more  
st Rob  
ers was  
rock out-  
rist  
ralia) used  
fore set-  
while  
ings eager  
es form.  
ect for the  
nd  
(Cray) and  
olling.  
remely  
e pool-  
th the  
is drunk  
shot. For  
ain't  
en you're

aren Rutter



### BRINCAT, BRUNO

His mission – to make fine-art accessible to the person-on-the-street – his means – a travelling gallery cum shop in the form of a somewhat bizarrely customised car. Brincat, an art graduate from Durban arrived in the city four years ago, but is forced through circumstance to lead a nomadic, bohemian life travelling throughout the country performing magic shows and selling post-cards and T-shirts. He is also founder of a 10 member silk-screening co-operative called **Fellow Fields** who run **On the Wild Side**, a shop in Observatory promoting the positive value of ethnic, esoteric images. And yes, the car is legal and road-worthy – supported by a letter from the local traffic officer.

**Below:**  
**Basil Breakey, a self-taught photographer who has kept a visual record of the emergence and development of township jazz. His photographs from the mid '60s through to the '80s document the struggle of many now world famous South African jazz musicians. His long-awaited book is soon to be published by David Philip.**



Alex Boras



**BRINCAT, BRUNO**

Below: Basil Breakey, a self-taught photographer who has kept a visual record of the emergence and development of township jazz. His photographs from the mid '60s through to the '80s document the struggle of many now world famous South African jazz musicians. His long-awaited book is soon to be published by David Philip.

**BO-KAAP**

Between the Buitengragt Street border and Signal Hill lies a touch

Rashid Lombard



**BOYTIQUE**

Boytique was founded 40 years ago by 'Aunty' Leah Todres, who still checks in every day and has seen at least three generations get fitted

**André Brink, acclaimed novelist.**

South Africa, the Afrikaans language and local cuisine, can be found at 71 Wale Street, (open Tues-Sat.) It was here that the first book in Afrikaans was written, while the language is also claimed to have been taught for the first time, at the Auwal Mosque in Dorp Street. The building, dating to 1804, is one of the oldest mosques in Cape Town.

**Rumours of Season, Star** made him in and infamous Brink was the to have world **Looking on** quent novels ous honour. / the accolades CNA Award th Luther King Legion of Ho government a 1991 Nobel P weighed the stylistically Afrikaans lit

Figure 23. Photograph and short blurb on Basil Breakey in 'Cape Town A to Z' issue of *Art Design Architecture*. 1993. No.11, p.64.

In 1997, *Beyond the Blues* was published – four years after its announcement in ADA magazine – and launched in conjunction with an exhibition at the Michaelis Gallery on Greenmarket Square, Cape Town (see Figure 24).

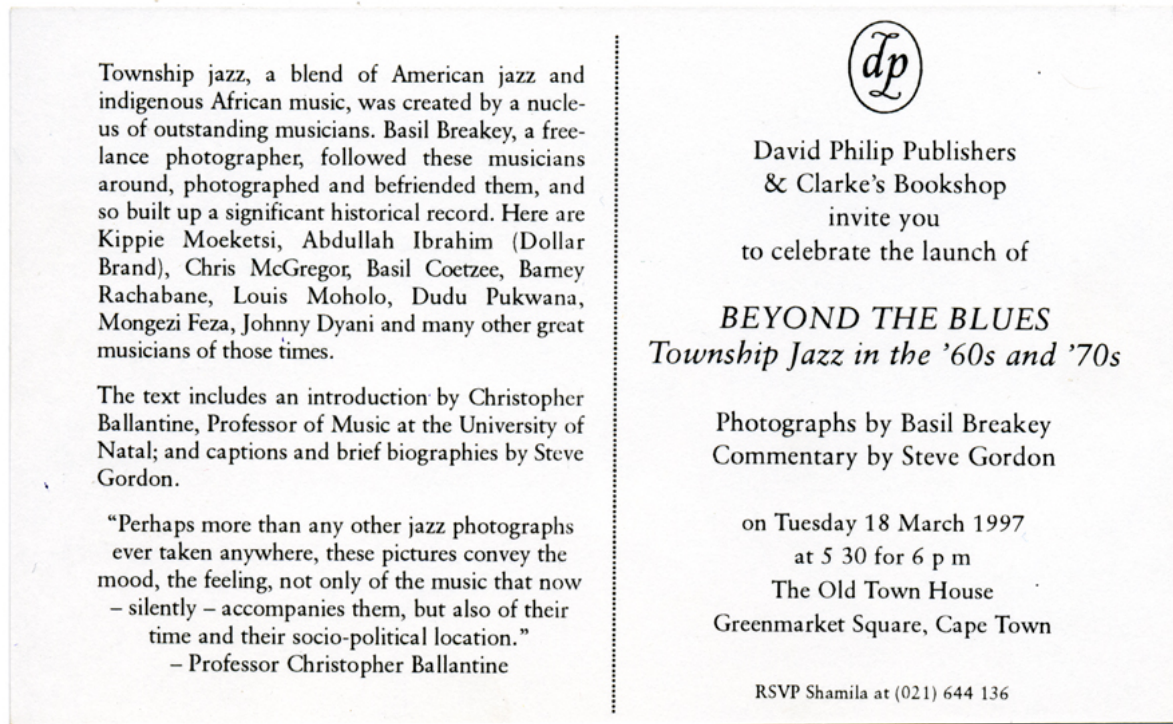


Figure 24. Invitation card to the launch of *Beyond the Blues*.

The acknowledgements in the front matter of the book reveal a philanthropic aspect to it that is entirely separate from its contents: the hope must have been to secure some kind of living for Breakey through the sale of copies. One can vividly imagine personal and professional friends and family (ex-wife and son) corresponding and gathering funds towards the production of this book, prepared to take a small knock if it does not sell, or perhaps looking forward to making a bit of money back if it does, but most of all wanting to help down-and-out Basil along in the process:

*'The author's thanks are due for financial assistance towards the compilation of the book, to the Foundation for the Creative Arts, and towards the publication costs to Ian Huntley; also to Shirley Breakey, Cynthia Schumacher, Chris Syren, Steve Gordon, Deborah Patrick, Rodney Barnett, Alison Hartman, Omar Badsha and the Centre for Documentary Photography, Enid Brigg, Rashid Lombard, Azar Breakey, Shaun May and Professor Christopher Ballantine' (Breakey & Gordon 1997: iv).*

Fifteen years later the book is now out of print and Breakey, a softly spoken, gentle old man, spends his days at a local pub, without a home, and without clear memories of what would be cornerstone dates and events in the biography of most people.

He can be spotted at local book launches, carefully paging through art books, which still hold his interest. Sometimes, if he has been given some film and his old Pentax is not at the pawnshop, he will walk along the railway by the sea, snapping pictures of water-reflections, sea gulls or passers-by. These he sometimes has developed and printed on good grace in town. He always carries a few envelopes with these prints in plastic packets that contain his clothes and, if asked, will respectfully offer them for sale (ten Rand per signed Jumbo print). Among all these prints are always also some of his old jazz photographs.

It is midday, on the sticky bar counter lays a black and white picture of a saxophonist (Figures 24 and 25), and there are no words for the estrangement from time I am suddenly feeling.



Figure 25. One of Breakey's Jumbo prints, selling for R 10 (front). Photo: Basil Breakey.

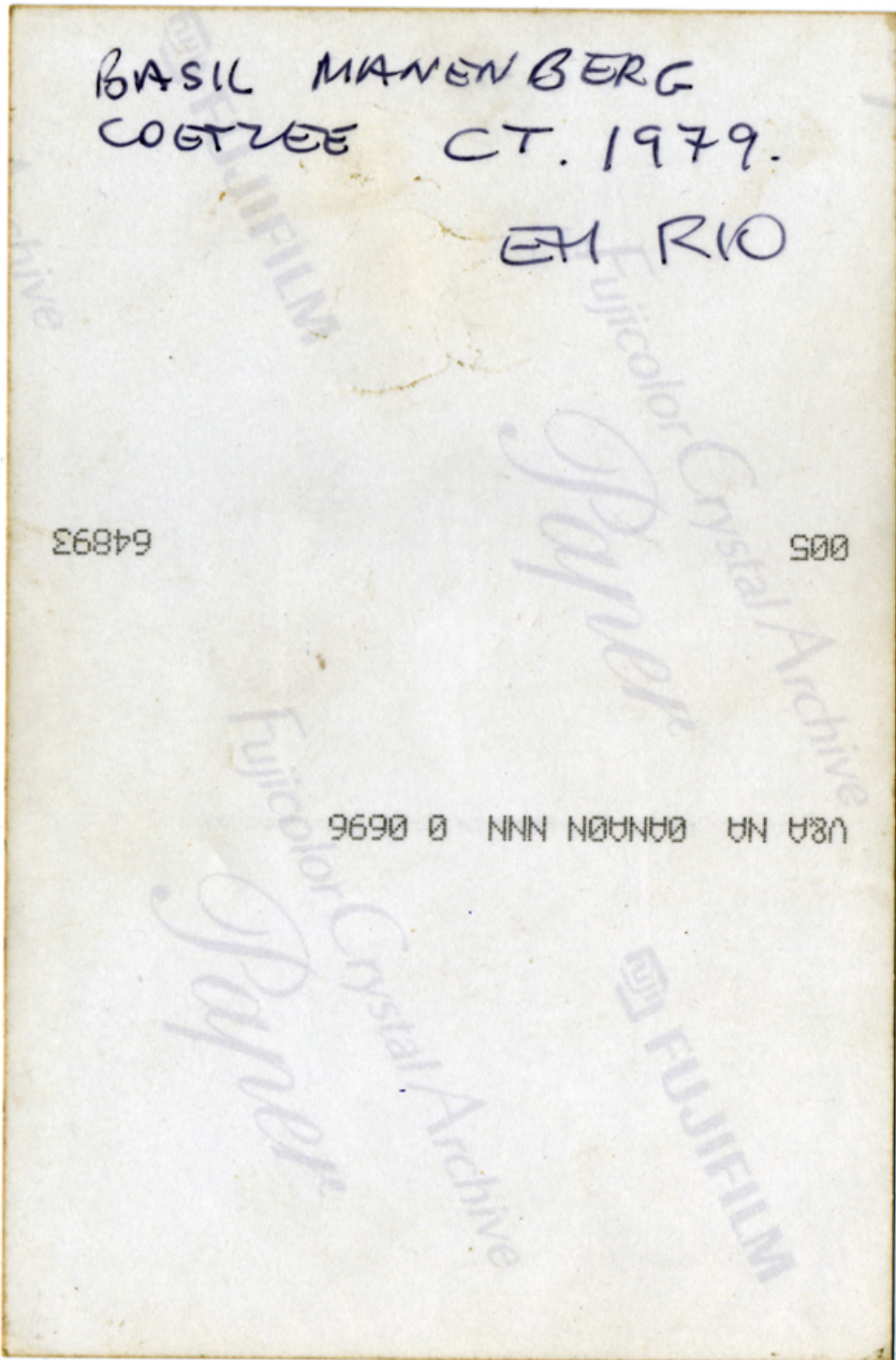


Figure 26. Jumbo print (reverse side) Note that the date '1979' here is most probably incorrect. Looking at *Beyond the Blues* as well as the contact sheets, this photo was taken during a early 1970s concert of the Dollar Brand trio (Dollar Brand, Basil Coetzee, Johnny Gertze) in Strandfotein.

### 3.2 Basil Breakey's jazz photographs

Basil Breakey produced some of the most directly aesthetic photographs that I know of a 'lost' generation of South Africa's jazz. Beyond that, his photographs also present rare visual documents of live jazz in small venues in downtown Johannesburg in the early '60s, at a festival in Swaziland in the late '60s, and stadiums and small bars in Cape Town in the early '70s. He was one of very few photographers, sometimes the only one, present at these events. With the few frames he would shoot on such occasions – he contributed not only to an historical record relevant to musicologists and a marginal public interested in local jazz legends, but also to the local archive of aesthetic and conceptual repertoires of the genre of jazz photography. Although jazz was no longer in its 'roaring' (1920s) or 'golden' (1950s) days as it was in the USA. In South Africa however, jazz was not yet indulging in a retrospective aesthetic, with a sentimentalist sound and 'look.' Here it was about finding an authentic musical language for the expression of daily grievances.

We have considered the personal reasons for Breakey's interrupted and discontinued oeuvre. While most of his individual photographs do not appear to necessitate a biographical reading, their particular constitution as an archival collection in fact does. Considering the very particular scene of which Breakey was part, and what the activities of that fringe stood for in the repressive socio-political context of South Africa, a close look at his images has the potential to stimulate a deeper understanding for the period he lived in.

Breakey is one of the few visual chroniclers of this historical period who – however inadvertently, reluctantly or unsuccessfully so – engaged in documenting jazz culture “*in that post-Sharpeville silence*” (CTIJF workshop 2011), while many important players were going into exile. From a contemporary perspective, it is interesting to note that at the time that Breakey was taking some of the images of jazz musicians rehearsing at Dorkay House in Johannesburg<sup>99</sup> the now internationally-acclaimed, South African photographer David Goldblatt was also there, on his very first professional assignment, in September 1963. While photographing some of the same subjects in the same location at the same time, the young Goldblatt looked up to the young Breakey, not only because the latter had an insider status as an intimate friend of many musicians there, but also because “*Basil had this unrestrained use of the camera, he was much less uptight than I was*” (Goldblatt 2011).

---

<sup>99</sup> ‘Dorkay House, acquired to serve as an operating base for the Union of South African Artists, a non-racial body geared to facilitating the development of black arts, saw the cream of South African jazz talent pass through it’ (Khoza 2005).



Breakey's photography tends rather to open up questions than provide a conclusive, historical narrative. In that sense, it is 'unprofessional.' It is largely marked by gaps, absences and elisions. It runs out of time with its subjects (the Blue Notes go into exile), out of money (photography is expensive and Breakey was neither a wealthy enthusiast nor a full-time professional), out of motivation (Breakey makes jazz 'his' subject for about a decade, but later does not even go to listen to it much).<sup>100</sup> Breakey's work presents a relatively small collection of frames from that historical period and place: images that show how Breakey and his peers defied the massive socio-political complications at the fringe. Muller corroborates this notion in his suggestion that:

*'[R]epresentations of the past in jazz might benefit...by introducing the notion of a usable past or living history – a way of thinking about jazz performance that characterizes a new African diasporic sensibility in jazz performance'* (Muller 2006: 70).

The first, overall impression Breakey's photographs leave on the viewer in relation to Breakey's subjectivity is that of intimacy with his subjects. Despite his working with a reporter's camera in the Bressonian tradition of capturing 'decisive moments,' it is Breakey's particular subjectivity that makes him as much part of his surviving photographic documents as whoever was in front of his lens at the time of exposure. Two aspects contribute to enabling in the viewer a sensation of bearing witness to a plausibly truthful record of a milieu, of personalities, of a life on and off stages. Firstly, there is Breakey's 'naïve' honesty<sup>101</sup> in relation to this very personal subjectivity, in which he was present while photographing. Secondly, there is a consistently non-invasive, essentially non-voyeuristic positioning of his point-of-view. Rather too incompletely encompassed in his own term 'naïve', this approach unselfconsciously subverts hackneyed notions put forward by other documentary photographers as a methodological programme: either enabling the subject to ignore the photographer (as if that were possible), or engaging the subject in the staging of 'their' (own) camera-image (again, highly unlikely).

---

<sup>100</sup> Between 2002 and 2003 Steve Gordon, in one of the countless humanitarian gestures towards Breakey, provided him with some film, a camera and many lifts in his car to get to various venues, concerts and musicians, so that he may pick up photography again and perhaps sell some images. The resultant, generally less than mediocre images are documented on the 'Making Music' website as Basil Breakey's 'current work,' here: [Online]. Available: <http://www.music.org.za/Gallery.asp?GalleryID=16> [last accessed 03.10.2010].

<sup>101</sup> Whether naïveté and honesty are interdependent or in fact mutually exclusive is a philosophical question for which there is no room in this thesis – it must suffice to say that the photographs appear to have been created without motives ulterior to their subjects' perception of their creator.



Figure 27. Detail of *Contact sheet 42*. Breakey also went in close sometimes, but was never invasive.

In contrast to such complicated complicities, Breakey managed ‘artlessly’ to avoid two typical pitfalls of ‘people photography’: de-personalisation and exploitation of the subject, and the objectification of an observer-self (photographer and viewer alike) as voyeur. As an example of this, see Figure 27. While every viewer is, in the strict linguistic sense, *nothing but* a ‘voyeur’, this term has developed to differentiate between two very different types of viewing: overt and covert, permitted and not permitted, harmless and harmful, acceptable and unacceptable, ‘normal’ and perverse.

Breakey operated with permission from his subjects. Had he chosen to fully exploit this situation, he may have produced fewer immediately ‘accessible’ images – in the conventions of photo-documentary. This would have required a more self-consciously engaged, (self-) critical viewing. Therefore it is very difficult to resurrect his overall body of work as an oeuvre of artworks – incidental, naïve, brut, outsider or not. On the contrary, his continually obvious attempts at creating ‘jazz photographs’ in the particular iconic tradition of the modernist 1960s preclude such a reading.

Breakey’s work, neither ‘straight’ documentary, nor ‘high’ art photography, falls between the stools of two possible modes of resurrection or reappraisal. Breakey cannot be *rediscovered* in the

way in which, for instance, Billy Monk has been in recent years.<sup>102</sup> Neither have the attempts been particularly successful to *resurrect* Breakey as an important contributor to the hidden history of South African jazz culture: *Beyond the Blues* has been out of print for a number of years, and, former chief curator at UCT's Centre for Curating the Archive, Paul Weinberg's exhibition *Underexposed*, of which a few of Breakey's prints formed part, has not found any noteworthy public or critical resonance. In his 1997 review of *Beyond the Blues*, arts journalist Peter Honey writes:

*'...the whole is ultimately an incomplete and narrow portrayal. The photographer mostly fails to penetrate beyond the idealistic, clichéd depiction of jazz performers as doomed denizens of smoke filled, dingy session rooms and grimy passageways.'*

According to such a logic Breakey was neither unselfconscious enough to take photographs without evidently worrying about their formal qualities as 'art,' nor was he self-critical enough to develop his art as far as it takes to receive noteworthy public or critical acclaim. On many levels, his work is, brutally speaking, neither here nor there – as jazz photography. It is, however, all the more compelling to envisage his contact sheet remains as working in a number of unanticipated ways towards alluding to the stories he did not thus far manage to bring to public attention, in spite of the help of so many others.

Breakey's overall output appears at first quite homogenous, however small the variations in approach to and choice of subject matter appear to be. The fragments, re-envisaged as traces of unique instances of an engagement over time, become emblematic of an overall struggle, a motivational condition, on behalf of his black subjects. The visibility of the self and the definition of one's identity through conflicting media, modalities and motivations has been the subject of much debate, specifically in post-colonial studies. It appears at first remarkable that Breakey, as a white South African during this particular period in South African history, engendered and maintained enough trust in his black musician 'friends' (as he always asserts) to allow him to photograph them repeatedly in a number of different contexts. Nevertheless, as one engages further with his archive, the question arises why Breakey did not manage to develop these relationships and situations into anything like a coherent reportage or narrative.

Breakey appears to have been continually aiming at getting individual, good performance shots – an approach that may lend itself to nothing less and, indeed, no more than a coffee table book

---

<sup>102</sup> First exhibited solo at the Market Gallery in Johannesburg in 1982, then as part of a group show entitled 'Jol' at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town in 2009, and in 2010 at Stevenson Gallery, Woodstock.

on jazz in a very generic sense. Beyond that, the individual images do not enable the viewer to navigate through a significant narrative. At best, they *allude* to circumstances occurring beyond the frame. Breakey – trained (however cursorily) in the context of print media – must have understood well that to press the shutter release is only one of a plethora of decisions that a photographer makes in the development of a body of work. Yet his photographs present no more than glances and glimpses of scattered, ‘underground’ realities. They do not offer interconnected views, which would describe a context in full.

In the 1960s in South Africa, there were more limitations to be overcome for a jazz photographer than low lighting:

*‘The unfettered power of the police in what was essentially a police state gave rise to a security culture where torture, bribery and intimidation were the order of the day. As a democrat or activist, you simply could not trust anybody, and in such a climate both journalism in general and documentary photography in particular came to be pursued essentially as guerrilla activities’* (O’Toole 2011).

It was a period marked by political oppression through a variety of terror mechanisms, such as, amongst many others, the system of ‘separate development’.

*‘In 1955 [Sophiatown] was destroyed by the white racist government, an event that led to the radicalization of South African jazz music’* (Scaruffi 2002-3).

Particularly for artists and musicians, it was a time of extreme financial hardship – resulting in many Jazz musicians choosing to go into exile rather than to severely compromise, or altogether give up on, their careers. Breakey captured some of the hardships these people underwent during this ‘jazz in exile’ period in photographs that clearly (and arguably self-consciously) break with the by then well-established visual idioms of the relatively young photographic genre of ‘jazz photography.’ Breakey’s images show musicians, many of whom were his friends, resting on a mat on the floor of his flat, practising in the run-down rooms of Dorkay house, socialising backstage at minuscule, short-lived venues, or playing on stage to small or non-existent audiences. They appear as figures drifting through an entirely insular world. While they do project a sense of ‘cool’ in their dress and demeanour – for instance Dudu Pukwana generally wearing big sunglasses at night – Breakey’s images of them are close-up, direct and alive with empathy. What comes across is that they are isolated, downbeat, up against an environment far too hostile for making it through, even somehow. Lombard describes this contextual dimension very directly:

*We have all these great documentary photographers, but we don't have a culture of photography. What we do captures history. Music played an important role in the struggle. When we were banned during the state of emergency, how did we get things going? We had a jol, we had a gumba – that was our rally'* (Lombard 2011).

Breakey's photographs are essentially anti-typological and anti-topographical. They resist offering up general meanings. Much like their subjects, in their living and dying, in their ebbing and flowing into and out of the archive, they embody resistance and reluctance, defiance and denial. The fact that most of the musicians Breakey photographed passed away relatively young, and that Breakey himself has hardly any memory left, highlights this fact.

### 3.3 Beyond the Blues

The book *Beyond the Blues* can be viewed as an attempt to present Breakey's photographs stably as iconic or classic<sup>103</sup> 'Jazz Photos', in direct relationship to the aesthetic forms, traditionalist formalities and technical formalisms involved in the practices of an identifiable, universal genre of 'Jazz Photography.' While the history of Jazz is always, in the first instance, an American story of socio-political resistance and liberation on behalf of repressed and dispossessed Afro-Americans, the history of jazz photography tends to be less discontinuous, less visibly contentious. Most jazz photography has, perhaps inadvertently, been at some point or other co-opted into the marketing schemes of the music industry, feeding into public and popular perceptions and prejudices around what 'jazz' was, is, and should be. For many musicians, the idea of a 'golden age' of jazz (1959 being its final peak) to be continued indefinitely by faithful classicists of the genre is seen as a shamelessly manipulative marketing ploy by the music industry. The contemporary 'post-jazz' trumpeter Nicholas Payton puts it this way:

*Jazz is a marketing ploy that serves an elite few. The elite make all the money while they tell the true artists it's cool to be broke'* (Payton 2011).

The title of Breakey's book, taken from a poster fragment visible in the background of one of the photographs<sup>104</sup> – as Basil wistfully pointed out during our interview – becomes strangely ambiguous when one peruses the book. While the title would seem to suggest a cathartic

---

<sup>103</sup>In common usage, the terms 'iconic' and 'classic' are used synonymously to describe photographs that depict or themselves come to embody a symbolic significance – a representation of something of great significance to larger groups of people: subcultures, nations, even mankind.

<sup>104</sup>*Beyond the Blues* pg. 15.

overcoming of sorts, a rising from the ashes and a hopeful horizon of change, something quite easily contextualised by the date of publication, 1997, the ‘rainbow nation’ years, the pictures themselves certainly do not carry any such message – neither individually, nor in their arrangement over three biographically chronological chapters (Pretoria, Swaziland, Cape Town). In a brief online text on this history, probably designed to point the reader to *Beyond the Blues*, Steve Gordon writes:

*‘As Breakey explains, there was not yet an audience for the music. The guys were struggling, and recognition was only to come later – first abroad, and later still, in South Africa. Breakey therefore, was not a photographer on a brief to cover a "happening" jazz scene, bounded by the constraints of news deadlines or the directive of picture editors. He documented a world which he shared, and which he captured in what he describes as "almost naive" style. The photographer's only earnings came when some of his photographs were used for the cover and liner illustrations when the Castle Lager Big Band recorded in September 1963’ (Gordon 2003).*

Breakey, who never wrote a single by-line, has often referred to his own approach as ‘naïve’. This may well have been a personal response he developed in relation to general formal and technical questions directed at him as somebody without any formal (academic) training in the visual arts. He may have more-or-less actively incorporated such formal and technical naïveté in his personal *modus operandi*.

### 3.4 Steve Gordon’s ‘archive’

Basil Breakey’s photographs reside in a small house in Carstens street, Cape Town – Steve Gordon’s office at Musicpics cc. Steve Gordon (born 1961) is a writer, sound engineer, road manager and photographer of South African popular music with a degree in social anthropology from UCT. Gordon is also the custodian of Breakey’s practical and financial affairs, a fact that engages the complex historical meanings of the term ‘archive’ outlined in the previous chapter. It is precisely because there is a professional understanding of Breakey’s work that Gordon took on a quasi-guardianship role for Breakey’s private affairs for a number of years<sup>105</sup>. Gordon, initially approached by the publisher David Philip to write the commentary for *Beyond the Blues* as a writer and researcher, moved on from there into the ancient role of archivist: he now not only holds

---

<sup>105</sup> This phenomenon of a conflation of the professional and the private in circumstances of financial hardship, political side-lining and cultural fringes is well known, and cannot be explored at any length here.

Breakey's negatives, saleable hand prints and ephemerae, but also his financial and personal records, and keeps up correspondence around legal and financial matters with Breakey's family.

Essentially, the 'archive' consists of a standard office folder with all of Breakey's negatives,<sup>106</sup> the scans thereof stored on a computer hard drive in the same office, and a box of ephemera: invitation cards and letters, the mock-up of the book Gordon and Breakey produced and published with David Philips, and a small number of contact sheets in a large old envelope. There are also a few hand printed enlargements (signed, but not editioned) in a folder by the shelf.<sup>107</sup>

The old envelope, in particular, presents visual and textual fragments that do not stick together as coherently as the texts and contexts around the lives of the photographs mentioned above. The contact sheets inside it are not ordered or accessioned in any way. According to Steve Gordon, they are leftovers from an unspecified, but reportedly drawn-out, period of successive attempts by Breakey to order, select and present his work to potential publishers, editors and buyers. Most retired or deceased professional photographers from the pre-digital age typically leave behind tens or even hundreds of thousands of negatives (depending on their respective specialisations) and hundreds or even thousands of contact sheets (even more relative to their particular mode of working). In stark contrast to such archival wealth, Breakey's archival objects communicate a sense of fracture and confusion and, in so doing, they seem to express the snapping and hacking away that is both at the heart of the universal business of professional photography, and the heart of the contemporary, post-colonial South African business of cultural reconstitution, reappraisal and reconstruction, at times characterised as a 'heritage craze.'<sup>108</sup>

History is written, rewritten and unwritten by interested parties. For many photographers and musicians who were active during South Africa's 1960s, it appears that the historical present is marked by "*a deep sense that it didn't happen for the guys, whatever the dream was. All we have is history, but no future*" (Gordon 2011).

---

<sup>106</sup> This batch of loosely accessioned negative strips may be approximated to have come from about one hundred rolls of film – a less-than-average amount of material even for a hobby photographer, let alone photo enthusiast from this time.

<sup>107</sup> Exhibition prints were first exhibited at: The Jazz Den, Cape Town (1988); The Market Gallery, Johannesburg (1989); The Michaelis Gallery (exhibition in conjunction with the book launch of *Beyond the Blues*, 1997); Duotone Gallery, North Sea International Jazz Festival, Cape Town (2004). Now variously visible in private collections, and in a folder of as yet unsold, signed (but not editioned) handprints at Musicpics cc.

<sup>108</sup> Notes from Professor Daniel Herwitz' presentation at Archives and Public Culture conference March 2011.

Gordon calls Musicpics cc an ‘archive,’ but it needs to be noted that, as a private business defined by an interest to generate revenue through the licensing of image rights, it could be more appropriately termed an agency. It does not meet any international standards for photographic archives in terms of accessioning, preservation or access. It also does not address any programmatic concerns around visibility in archives or the role of archives in contemporary society. Archival images can become iconicised by historical developments, *if* they are accessible to the public. Effectively, it seems that Musicpics cc does not address ‘*the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow*’ (Derrida 1996: 12). Rather, it seems that Gordon follows the root conception of ‘archive’ as relating to ruling and governance in a gate-keeping role. Put differently, if archival objects are sequestered or obscured with interest, they are being handled as capital, which ‘*can be generally defined as assets invested with the expectation that their value will increase*’ (Matich 2007).

### 3.5 Basil Breakey’s subjectivity

In any local jazz environment there are active ‘jazz personalities’ who are not musicians themselves. Most audience members on any given night may just be fans of the music, but some regulars take what they experience in response to the music into their life and work<sup>109</sup>, and vice versa. They may be historians, journalists, artists – or photographers. A collective history of their work, an anthology of – also visual – engagements with jazz in South Africa, forms the larger, projected frame of reference for this thesis.<sup>110</sup>

Basil Breakey was one of those jazz personalities: a regular and an insider. Everyone I interviewed confirmed that Breakey was friends with the musicians he photographed, a fact which was verified by Louis Moholo-Moholo, the drummer and last surviving member of the ‘Blue Notes’ in my interview with him. Moholo-Moholo spoke of Breakey as being “*very quiet, very cool...you see in those days it was hip to be quiet*” (Moholo-Moholo 2011). The nature of Breakey’s friendships, however, is left unclear in such an account, and even more so in the photographs. Nothing can enable us to fully grasp what the exchange was like in retrospect. Breakey’s photographs allow glimpses, invite empathetic guesswork: his subjects appear to be aware of him, but tolerantly, comfortably so. In fact, they often appear quite disengaged. This could be

---

<sup>109</sup> Michael Titlestad (2004) has theorised on the creative and journalistic writing that happened in response to jazz in the apartheid era.

<sup>110</sup> During my research I have started a collection of names, which can become headings or keywords for future investigations into an archival network of data: genres, musicians, photographers and venues. The lists can be found in the appendix.



owing to Breakey having asked them to pretend he wasn't there – a common directive, given by many photographers – but it could also indicate more generally that his presence was a quiet one; maybe he simply didn't ask for much.

Many music or events photographers are attracted by proximity to fame and glamour. Being part of a currently famous in-group, a fashionable, hip collection of brilliant individuals is something exhilarating – it can feel like being present at the time and place where history is made. In the segregated world of 1960s South Africa, jazz history was being made by these young stars in front of Breakey's lens, shining brightly in the hidden-away havens of smaller, more illicit venues and private functions. There is a phenomenon of 'deferred genius' at work, an at times symbiotic, at times parasitic relationship between the photographer and the musician. The photographer believes that by participating in the musician's lifestyle, they are also somehow being a genius. In the terminology of professional photojournalism, this is called 'getting too close.' Famously, it happened to American celebrity photographer Annie Leibovitz on tour with the Rolling Stones in 1975:

*I did everything you're supposed to do when you go on tour with the Rolling Stones. It was the first time in my life that something took me over...Mick and Keith had tremendous power both on and offstage. They would walk into a room like young gods. I found that my proximity to them lent me power also. A new kind of status. It didn't have anything to do with my work. It was power by association' (Leibovitz 2008).*

What remains of Breakey's photography are almost exclusively 'work' images, which leaves the viewer in a paradoxical position as to how to assess them, what weight to assign to them. With regard to their near-exclusivity vis-à-vis their subject matter, they speak of passionate, focussed dedication, yet with regard to their small number, they speak of a haphazard, unfocussed lack of commitment towards just that subject matter. Every family album engages the imagination, even in the case of its absence. It seems that in Breakey's life, taking jazz photographs took precedence over, or stood in for, taking conventional family photographs. The question arises as to whose family album this is? It is not that of Breakey's (bloodline) family, but rather that of his brotherhood, in an African sense – that much benefit of the doubt his documentary images do beg. Given that notion of brotherhood or kinship – a concept that would then extend out to include the viewer – the role Breakey had to play in the community and the milieu he depicted remains quite impossible to conclusively decipher and reconstruct.

This, one could say, is as much the result of his lack of technical sophistication as it is the result of a very personal approach. Rather than construing a grand ‘Family of Man’<sup>111</sup> narrative, Breakey’s pictures inhabit the homes of those immediately, that is familiarly, connected with those depicted. Envisaging their process work, the contact sheets, on the walls of the cities that are home to those who come after does not construe ‘us’ as one metaphorical family unit in the sense of an integer community of like-minded or similarly interested individuals in a nation, a societal stratum or the like. On the contrary, it visualises the work of construction that is the self of infinite observers. It is rather an imagined album, an imaginary home in the mind of those who attain their sense of citizenship to a particular home-place and mother-tongue through looking at a wider frame; an album that allows breaches and discontinuities, contradictions, pauses and silences to become visible and, metaphorically, at least in relation to jazz, audible.

All this does not conclusively point to a contained chronicler-subjectivity. One example for such a chronicler of local jazz culture in present day Cape Town is the photographer Gregory Franz. Here is the message I wrote to him in February 2011:

*Hi Gregory, I'd like to please interview you for my MA (FA) thesis on Jazz Photography in Cape Town. Would you be prepared to? I really admire your commitment and knowledge, and I'd like to make this part of my contribution to new discussions around local Jazz culture as it is visually documented and interpreted in photographs. Please let me know, and if yes, give me a time when we could meet. Warm regards, Niklas'*

Curiously, even though we know each other quite well ‘from around,’ he did not reply. Franz is out photographing jazz almost every night, and very actively shares his images together with write-ups via his blog<sup>112</sup> and on his Facebook profile. Nevertheless, he did not want to be interviewed, because, as he humbly claimed when I called him a little while later on the ‘phone: “I am not really in that league.”

It often appears that photographers operate from two quite distinct personalities, either extrovert or introvert. Much less than Franz, who fastidiously attaches by-lines to all his images, acknowledging the subjects in terms of name, instrument, concert (venue, date) and relation to one another, Breakey never appears to represent his subjects with a specific authority of any sort. Quite the contrary: the more one looks across his images, the more there is an almost

---

<sup>111</sup> Edward Steichen’s monumental ‘Family of Man’ exhibition opened at MoMA in New York in 1955, and – while never out of print as a book and universally hailed as one of the most important collections of photographs of the century – has also been criticised for its generalising claims of universality, and abrogation of responsibilities inherent in the gathering and exhibiting of images of deep inequalities in the world under the given title.

<sup>112</sup><http://capetownnatural.blogspot.com/> [last accessed 13.01.2012].

compulsive shyness at work, which leaves an empathetic distance for the viewer to fill in and feel out.

While every process of representation is en-cultured and, therefore, historically bound up in contingencies and contestations, some of the more 'artless' or 'naïve' representations appear to create a more interpretative, ruminative space than others. The latter typically adhere more clearly to a brief, and are thus professionally successful in terms of communicating a clear, specific message. Perhaps such archetypal and advertorial photography becomes embalmed in the historical embrace of a particular 'cultural' discourse<sup>113</sup> and perhaps, conversely, the less easily co-optable, 'free' photography of someone like Breakey lies in wait in the archive to contradict or, at least, complicate and round out contemporary prejudices of a given period of history.

### 3.6 Jazz culture

*It's like real poor people in the country, on a Sunday, would get dressed up and they wouldn't have any money but just that little hat with the flower on it... just a little something to make you special and make you sweet. That's jazz music' (Ward & Burns 2000: 121).*

A discussion of jazz as a musical expression does not lie within the scope of this paper. But a few basic historical markers are necessary here. Those musical formations that are today acknowledged as the roots of jazz developed in the late 1800s in the United States of America. There, musical imports by slaves from Africa encounter for the first time European and eastern European musical traditions of the early settlers. The formal aspects of jazz evolved – and continue to evolve – out of a *melange* (a mix or fusion) of African and European music beyond their respective traditional circles. Essentially, jazz has to be seen as a cultural dialogue, which takes place or is invoked musically, but importantly also happens in a number of other ways in and around the environments in which the music is performed and heard.<sup>114</sup> A discreet 'jazz culture' is born. Investigations into this jazz culture go far beyond the history of music, addressing central, 20<sup>th</sup> century questions around 'race and class, art and commerce, virtuosity and collaboration, the individual and the community, the confluence of cultures and the universality of experience' (Burns 2000).

---

<sup>113</sup> See for instance: Clifford, J. & Marcus, G. E. (Eds.). 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (A School of American Research Advanced Seminar). City: University of California Press.

<sup>114</sup> See for instance: Muller, C. A. 2002. *Voice/Over? Twentieth Century American Music in Diaspora*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/ConferenceArchive/voiceover/diaspora.html> [last accessed: 04.02.2011].

The 'subject' of jazz music in the context of jazz culture, as it were, is an array of abstract forms that are dramatically expressive of a tension between extreme emotional and intellectual states: on the one side the Afro-American slaves' irreparable diasporic loss, their disenfranchised social status and familial tragedy and on the other a self-assured, creative celebration of humanitarian community, newfound identities and optimistic struggle for a better future. When much later, at around the end of World War I, these musical amalgams of Western and African music were re-imported into the continent of their origin they engendered very different kinds of resonance: in central Europe the experience of something new and never heard of, in predominantly (but not exclusively) intellectual circles, and in Southern Africa, for instance a sense of irrepressible, communal flamboyance. Gridley and Rave support this observation:

*'[T]he jazz performance often is marked by an informality that contrasts with the typically formal European performance... Informality also is illustrated by the fact that non-members often are welcome to join the jazz ensemble in the performance. Amateurs and professionals sometimes sit side-by-side with the goal of having fun while making the music... the communal spirit that governs jazz and African-music performance often blurs distinctions between performer and listener. Hand clapping and shouting from the crowd are encouraged, for example. It should be observed, however, that in Africa the social function of the music or the occasion for which it is used will ultimately determine the extent and nature of its informality or formality'* (Gridley & Rave 1984: 46).

### 3.7 Jazz in South Africa

'Jazz,' it must be noted, is a contentious term. It can be used in a derogatory sense, invoking associations with shebeens<sup>115</sup> and noise and, of course, blackness in a time where that denoted inferiority towards whiteness. To say 'South African jazz' in that sense not only means to invoke an inherent racism, but also other problematic connotations: such a term potentially denies the originality, indigeneity and unique cultural heritage of the South African music that is herewith being associated under one, foreign umbrella term. It can be seen to suggest a lack of originality, since jazz, as is often generally assumed, is American music and any other nationality that plays jazz is thereby building on the foundations of American culture. I wish to clearly distance myself from such views, as they would negatively affect the essence of this thesis. Without value judgements attached, it can be said that the history of South African jazz is marked by adaptations and (re-)appropriations. Michael Nixon clarifies this here:

---

<sup>115</sup> Once illegal drinking houses, almost exclusively located in townships.

*It is from the ranks of the dance ensembles that the jazz musicians emerged. As young people they revolted against the music they were required to play in the dance bands, which they came to perceive as old-fashioned and even crude. They were interested in playing American music'* (Nixon 1995: 19).

Adaptation means change, emancipation, affirmation of new structures and societies.<sup>116</sup> This adaptation is structured around the unique local, historical context. As we are merely dealing with an Afro-American re-import of those musical figures which once forcibly left African shores on slave ships, the changes endured during the century long exile become relevant for its perceived originality. Initially, Afro-American Jazz had been considered only 'Afro'. Now it has emancipated itself into an independent, virtually global musical mode of expression, in conglomeration with a specific, universally recognisable 'image' and 'style'. Coplan develops this notion in the following:

*'[Adaptation] is more than a reactive adjustment to intractable external conditions, involving positive attempts to create frameworks within which to resolve the dilemmas of urban life'* (Coplan 1982: 114).

Considering the rich intertext, the socio-political conditions of non-American Jazz culture, past and present, desire and require a different reading. The wealth of parallels between the politically charged histories of Jazz in the USA and in South Africa tempts reductionist comparisons: the self-conscious referencing of the respective other – Americans searching for their roots in African cultures, Africans searching for a contemporary identity in American culture – goes back at least as far as the 1920s. Peretti writes:

*'Since the 1920s, fans, critics, and other members of the self-styled jazz community have promoted the music as America's home grown art form'* (Peretti 2001: 588).

Furthermore, Coplan stresses how local Jazz styles did by no means develop merely in slavish imitation of North-American influences:

*'Since the urbanization of African music in the late 1920s...black South African jazz musicians have identified with the international popular musical community, often performing entirely within the black American musical idiom for fully urbanised, Western-educated concert audiences. The same musicians, however, could readily adapt American arrangements to indigenous rhythms, phrase structure and harmony, thus creating unique forms of African jazz including marabi in the 1920S and 30s, tsaba-tsaba in the 1940S and kwela and mbaganga in the 1950S and 60s. They did so primarily for*

---

<sup>116</sup> see for instance: Kuper, L. & Duster, T. 2005. *Race, class, & power: ideology and revolutionary change in plural societies*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

*working-class Africans who sought to express an urban self-identification and to achieve urban status through music that reworked American materials within the familiar, culturally resonant framework of African principles of composition and performance' (1982: 114).*

What becomes important here in terms of a discussion of 'culture' beyond 'music' is that the lines of connection between the politically charged race-histories of jazz in the USA and South Africa constitute a new discursive formation. Titlestad has written extensively on this, and the following quote captures some of the depth of the breadth of his approach:

*Jazz discourse travelled across the Atlantic and provided a repertoire for the improvisation of urban black culture in South African townships. Through constructing relational pathways of meaning (often by weaving together the narrative "licks" of African American jazz narrative and the contingencies of apartheid experience), South Africans assembled identities that, in certain respects at least, eluded both the definitions and the panoptical technologies of the apartheid ideologues... jazz was, in a variety of ways, a subversive alternative to the machinery of the apartheid state, a notion commonly expressed in terms of its carnivalesque or ludic musical production in the face of colonial oppression' (Titlestad 2008: 211- 212).*

Local jazz is a cultural practice through which at least four generations of South Africans have reflected on and also fought for their place here and in the world. It is an American echo to the African colonial Diaspora – all the aspects beyond its multitudes of musical permutations – dress, dance, language, life style, and so on – is about re-shaping identity, anti-authoritarianism, individual and collective creativity, and a certain bitter-sweet *joie de vivre*, the indomitability of the individual human spirit in the face of oppression and hardship. The parallels between American and South African Jazz culture are abundant and striking, but at times also deceptive. The photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries on both sides of the Atlantic captured stories of segregation and identity politics. In a widely quoted article from 1966, jazz journalist Lewis Nkosi writes:

*Jazz is a music which has its roots in a life of insecurity, in which a single moment of self-realisation, of love, light and movement, is extraordinarily more important than a whole lifetime. From a situation in which violence is endemic, where a man escapes a police bullet only to be cut down by a knife-happy African thug, has come an ebullient sound more intuitive than any outside the US of what jazz is supposed to celebrate – the moment of love, lust, bravery, incense, fruition, and all those vivid dancing good times of the body when the now is maybe all there is' (Nkosi 1966: 34).*

Of all those scholarly and popular authors on the subject of South African jazz, some have been deeply informative to this text as historical reference, and also because they make use of photographic documents. Notably, Lars Rasmussen<sup>117</sup>, Michael Titlestad<sup>118</sup>, Gwen Ansell<sup>119</sup>, Christopher Ballantine<sup>120</sup>, Steve Gordon & Basil Breakey<sup>121</sup>, David Coplan<sup>122</sup>, Chatradari Devroop & Chris Walton<sup>123</sup>, Bernth Lindfors<sup>124</sup>, Z.B. Molefe & Mike Mzileni<sup>125</sup>, Lewis Nkosi & John Goldblatt<sup>126</sup> and Veit Erlman<sup>127</sup> have not only written about South African Jazz, but also placed a more or less strong emphasis on its visual representation via photography.

Jazz discourse necessarily engages modernism and, in South Africa, particularly from the perspective of black citizens during the Apartheid era. Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, particularly Allen (2000), Ballantine (1993, 1999), Coplan (1985) Erlmann (1991, 1999) and Titlestad (2004, 2008) have written about South African jazz as a hybrid form combining aspects of African American music and indigenous performance practices. In this combination, black South Africans have both mediated historical change and developed an acoustics of resilience and resistance. Titlestad, in forceful prose, puts it like this:

---

<sup>117</sup> Most notably:

Rasmussen, L. (Ed.) 1998. *Abdullah Ibrahim, A Discography*. Copenhagen: The Booktrader.

Rasmussen, L. (Ed.) 2000. *Sathima Bea Benjamin - Embracing Jazz* (Booktrader's Jazz Profiles, Volume 1). Copenhagen: The Booktrader.

Rasmussen, L. (Ed.) 2001. *Cape Town Jazz, 1959 – 1963; The Photographs Of Hardy Stockmann* (Booktrader's Jazz Profiles, Volume 2). Copenhagen: The Booktrader.

Rasmussen, L. (Ed.) 2001. *Joe Mogosi and Pearl Conner; Mantindane 'He Who Survives' – My Life With The Manhattan Brothers* (Booktrader's Jazz Profiles, Volume 3). Copenhagen: The Booktrader.

Rasmussen, L. (Ed.) 2003. *Jazz People Of Cape Town* (Booktrader's Jazz Profiles, Volume 5). Copenhagen: The Booktrader.

Rasmussen, L. (Ed.) 2003. *Mbizo: A Book About Johnny Dyani* (Booktrader's Jazz Profiles, Volume 6). Copenhagen: The Booktrader.

<sup>118</sup> Titlestad, M. 2004. *Making The Changes: Jazz in South African Literature And Reportage*. Cape Town: University of South Africa (UNISA) Press.

<sup>119</sup> Ansell, G. 2005. *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular Music & Politics In South Africa*. New York: Continuum International.

<sup>120</sup> Most notably:

Ballantine, C. 1993. *Marabi Nights, Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Ballantine, C. 2002. Music, Masculinity & Migrancy Under Early Apartheid: Gender & Popular Song in South Africa, C 1948 – 1960. Hesmondhalgh, D., & Negus, K. (Eds.) *Popular Music Studies*. London: Headline.

<sup>121</sup> Breakey, B. & Gordon, S. 1997. *Beyond The Blues, Township Jazz in The '60s And '70s*. Cape Town: David Philip.

<sup>122</sup> Coplan, D. 1985. *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*. London: Longman.

<sup>123</sup> Devroop, C. & Walton, C. (Eds.) 2007. *Unsung, South African Jazz Musicians Under Apartheid*. Stellenbosch: SUN Press

<sup>124</sup> Lindfors, B. (Ed.) 1999. *Africans on Stage, Studies in Ethnological Show Business*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

<sup>125</sup> Molefe, Z. B. & Mzileni, M. 1997. *A Common Hunger to Sing: A Tribute To South Africa's Women of Song, 1950 to 1990*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.

<sup>126</sup> Nkosi, L. & Goldblatt, J. 1996. Jazz in Exile. *Transition*, 24: 34-37. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

<sup>127</sup> Most notably:

Erlmann, V. 1996. *Nightsong: Performance, Power and Practice in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Erlmann, V. 1999. *Music, Modernity, and The Global Imagination: South Africa and The West*. New York: Oxford University Press.

*'This jazz band of the mind appropriates and manipulates a black Atlantic repertoire of possibility to express South African subaltern suffering; it takes "American Negro jazz and [hammers it] out on the anvil of South African experience' (Titlestad 2008: 115).*

Various studies have traced the arrival of jazz and its precursors in South Africa, the politics of their adoption, particularly by urbanized black communities, and the emergence of a rich hybrid performance tradition (see, among others, Ballantine 1993, 1999; Coplan 1985; and Erlmann 1991). What has remained largely unexamined, though, is the textual scaffolding of these musical transactions. Not only did jazz itself journey across the Atlantic (embodied by performers, printed on scores, and impressed on records played on imported gramophones) but it also arrived embedded in a discourse of identity, history, and politics. Mahlaba informs us that:

*'Musicians living in coastal towns were the first to have contact with visiting black American sailors who played jazz or sold them jazz records. These towns were therefore a hub of inspiration for the resident jazz communities' (Mahlaba 2008: 18).*

Jazz culture in South African cities began to comprise stages, birthplaces and melting pots for – at least temporary – de-separation and un-division of citizens across the colour bar. From the 1950s onwards, some jazz clubs began to present 'grey areas, not so dominated by coloured culture' (Nixon 1995: 23). Mason, in writing about a key figure in this context, Vincent Kolbe, describes:

*'During the 1950s and into the '60s, [Vincent Kolbe] was a vital part of Cape Town's multi-racial jazz scene, which flourished brightly and briefly, bringing together musicians and fans who happily ignored South Africa's culture of segregation and white supremacy' (Mason 2010).*

Various indigenous musical forms, some of which were themselves imported not too long ago historically, mixed with American idioms, themselves evolving, never far away from or free of political life. Online, in Roddy Bray's *Guide to Cape Town*, we read:

*'During the 1950s and '60s two traditions of jazz developed from the popular dance-bands of Cape Town. One was influenced by American musical styles; others practised what was to become known as 'Cape Jazz'. The latter maintained that local jazz should be based in working class dance music, whether it was 'African' marabi and kwela, or it was 'coloured' vastrap and klopse' (ANON 2008).*

A turnaround time was of course the 1960s. Pianist and composer Merton Barrow remembers in an interview with Colin Miller:



*“...in that period, that very bad period. I think when I really had an opportunity of listening to Winston play saxophone from deep inside of him. And he would play to the limits of his abilities to...it was an enormous experience just to listen to him play. To experience the pain he was obviously feeling that time because there was very little freedom that time. And it must have affected a lot of people around about that time. Certainly with their music. I'm talking about people that improvised, that were able to speak with their music”* (Barrow 1998).

Notably, at present, we see a wider, publicly shared engagement with what once was a sidelined milieu. Yet often still, this comes to the fore when it's too late, as it were. Between sales pitches advertising a discounted meal for two with free live music and the obituaries of unsung heroes, there is very little public discourse around the rich musical practice of jazz in South Africa.

Peters corroborates this:

*‘It's been a rough year or two for the Cape Town jazz scene. The city has lost some its favourite musicians and many others who contributed to its distinctive jazz history have fallen on hard times...To keep the jazz flame alive in the city, it's essential music legends become part of the country's national heritage and a resource for generations to come, say musicians and teachers in the industry’* (Peters 2010).

Jazz culture has a particular sociological makeup, which has been of great significance in the underground, resistance and other ‘alternative’ movements in South Africa throughout the Apartheid years. Perhaps as its highest achievement, Jazz music provides an artistic medium for the musicians and their audiences with which to build their identities – give thoughts to their minds, feelings to their hearts and dance to their bodies. Furthermore, the venues in which this culture thrived – often in the side-alleys, on the outskirts, the docks, the ‘locations’ – offered release and escape from the oppressive abnormality of daily life in those times. These were places where races did actually mix (a bit), where difference and togetherness could be celebrated rather than having to be fought for. While Jazz culture has always been about black resistance and identity, it has also always been open to cultural confluences far richer than stereotypical black/white or east/west dichotomies. In South Africa, as in black America, popular music, of which Jazz is the most complex, has provided an incommensurable field of expression for the values and meanings on which new community structures are based. Coplan sums it up here:

*‘Popular music thus provides a multiplicity of meanings accommodating a range of manipulation, interpretation and choice, and supplies a measure of solidarity in an environment characterised by social insecurity, dislocation and differentiation’* (Coplan 1982: 116).

The audiences for live performances of South African jazz music are as heterogeneous as its broad range of stylistic influences and, therefore, highly representative of the demographic realities independent of Apartheid ideology: many so-called ‘African’ (or ‘black’) players and members of audience, some so-called ‘coloured’ players and members of audience, and a few so-called ‘white’ players and members of audience. Variations obviously depended on the location of the venue, but as long as one is looking at audiences listening to what can still within reason be called ‘jazz music’<sup>128</sup>, this melange remains stubbornly ever-present across the historical periods and urban spaces of South Africa. Nixon describes this in the following:

*In the clubs there was mixing to the point of contravening the Immorality Act! Not only was mixed clubbing a problem for the apartheid government, but individuals’ relationships were targeted for legal harassment...Had it been left to itself, the jazz scene could have developed into something remarkable...It was an apartheid casualty’ (Nixon 1995: 23).*

The fact that the early 1960s are the beginning of a drawn-out period of cultural stagnation and decline in South African cultural life has been the topic of many investigations, academic and popular. The post-Sharpeville (1960), pre-Soweto Uprising (1976) ‘emptiness’ can be read as the dark backdrop to the elegiac work of visual artists, poets, dramatists and musicians of that time. It remains difficult to appropriately trace all of this work historically, not only because it has not yet been exhaustively researched and documented, but because so much of it was never locally exhibited, published or performed (let alone recorded), and literally never became part of popular memory. Jazz culture, however, has always provided a sense of possibility and agency in this regard. Peretti clarifies this in reference to an emerging culture of popular memory work:

*Well before the 1960s, jazz interviewers held a populist and racially progressive desire to “let the musicians tell their own stories.” Like oral historians, jazz interviewers sought to question aging subjects while they were still able to share their memories’ (Peretti 2001: 590).*

Many texts in the arts and humanities tend to either focus on the pre-1960s or the post-1976 periods, although in the years 1960 – 1976 twenty thousand activists were arrested<sup>129</sup>, political parties were banned and resisters began to form armed units. Nkosi sets this scene here:

*[T]he attitude of the South African government has been stiffening toward racially mixed audiences and bands. This hostility toward jazz should surprise no one conversant with the history of the music since*

---

<sup>128</sup> As opposed to more specifically ‘black’, ‘coloured’ or ‘white’ popular musics with their more exclusively grouped audiences, for instance (in that order again): Marabi, Klopse and Boeremusiek.

<sup>129</sup> For these statistical figures, see: <http://analepsis.wordpress.com/2010/02/05/1330/> [last accessed: 2011/06/02]

*jaꝛꝛ has always been the music of the outlaw, the anarchic and the subversive. Since the early fifties jaꝛꝛ in South Africa has been threatening to burst the very seams of apartheid. In the affluent white Johannesburg suburbs of Park Town and Houghton daughters of wealthy Jewish families hosted African musicians, often providing a relaxed friendly atmosphere in which integrated groups could 'jam' together. In this milieu of social ambiguity and underground revolt even interracial love affairs were not unheard of despite the fact that under strict South Africa's sex laws stiff penalties are laid down against all black and white shenanigans' (Nkosi 1966).*

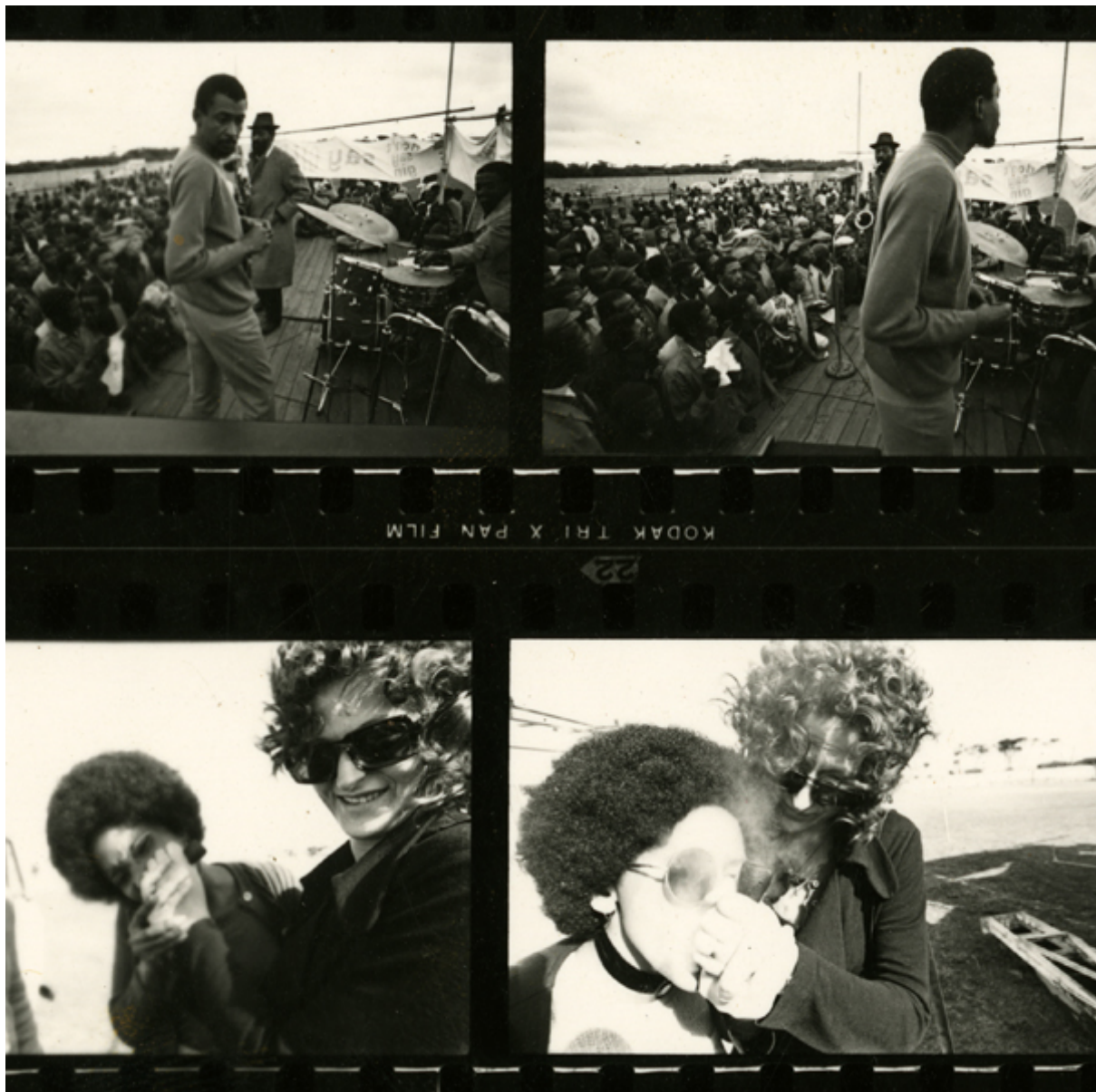


Figure 28. Detail from *Contact sheet 18*, showing how Breakey moved from side-stage to backstage, documenting both the performance (Dollar Brand at Langa Stadium), as well as audience members having a good time together.

### 3.8 Genre and context: 'jazz photography'

*'Happily jazz exists. Everyone hates 'jazz' but it's the only word to describe a musician who wants to say something fresh and react to what others are doing around him'* (Bruford 2011).

The oldest, most extensive and well-developed archives of Jazz photography in the world today exist in the USA. They aid not only in documenting the history of a vast musical evolution, but also that of urban (sub-)cultures, who share a set of characteristics that seem closely linked to what jazz music means and aids for its performers and audiences: a deep desire for gaining freedom from oppressive rule, and for expressing one's individual voice in the context of a meaningful community of human beings. South Africa does not have such institutions. Instead, there is a rather barren landscape of scattered, only partly institutionalised silos of jazz related materials, of which photographs form the smallest quantity. For a variety of reasons, there is a firmly entrenched gate-keeping mentality in place, particularly around photographs. There is no doubt that 'jazz photographs' hold great potential for sparking socio-historical discovery and debate, but to find them in this landscape is currently very difficult. A character in Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* speaks of the rarity of this ability to renegotiate images in a context:

*'The only people who see the whole picture,' he murmured, 'are the ones who step out of the frame'* (Rushdie 2000: 146).

General observations have already been made on the uses of 'documentary' and 'art' photography as established but contested genres. This was done to explicate the importance of asking contextual questions *over and above* technical questions about photographic production. With this in mind, the most relevant aspects of 'jazz photography' towards a definition of it as a hybrid of several sub-genres from within the separate categories 'documentary' and 'art' respectively are elaborated. We will ask firstly who produces photographs of jazz or 'jazz photographs' and for what purpose and, secondly, how and where these images are encountered, experienced and used by others.

First of all it needs to be mentioned that strangely enough there is no dictionary or encyclopaedia definition of 'jazz photography,' in spite of innumerable publications and exhibitions of jazz photographs to date, and even more, the mass of photographers known as 'jazz photographers' who mention 'jazz photography' as one of their main subjects. This already indicates that photographs of jazz emanate from several different contexts, where they are created with very

different motivations and projected usages in mind. Deduced from this, four different types of photographer make images of jazz appear:

Firstly, there is the *photojournalist*, commissioned to take either editorial pictures of jazz musicians or of jazz related news, mostly events. Depending on his brief, the publication for which he is working and his personal background, this type of photographer will aim to do their job well by illustrating or augmenting the written feature or news story with a visual account of a concert or a good personality portrait. He is generally quite unconscious of any conceptual tradition of picturing jazz. Usually, he has one or two pictures to file for printing, and perhaps ten to twenty for the database. Then he moves on to his next assignment: a car crash, a robbery or a court case, for instance. This does not make him a ‘jazz photographer’, nor what he does ‘jazz photography.’ Typically his photographs of jazz events or musicians disappear in the newspaper’s ‘archive,’ which in South Africa is more often than not a storeroom full of unaccessioned prints and negatives, or a badly managed filing system.<sup>130</sup> These isolated images might regain relevance years later: not for their possible visual qualities, but due to factors outside of them: they happen to depict Mr X, who has now died, and a writer needs images of him for a monograph.

Secondly, there is the *commercial photographer*, who makes most of his income in the advertising industry, but typically takes on editorial work as well. Nowadays, professionals from the music industry (musicians, record producers, events managers) will commission him to create a range of different types of promotional images for them (online portfolios, CD covers, posters). These images are generally classified into different categories (portrait, action shot, abstract) *before* being tagged with the keyword ‘jazz.’ Importantly, the specific brief for the photographer will ask for a particular ‘jazz look’. This is the moment at which ‘jazz photography’ as a primary category emerges. The jazz aesthetic is largely constituted by a set of visual references from post-war American popular culture, roughly up until the late 1960s. Important here is that the contemporary commercial photographer will be given ‘tear sheets’ or other references in order to *recreate* that recognisable look from elements of a bygone popular visual culture. In other words: he is briefed to work within the genre of jazz photography. The term ‘jazz,’ conjures up a fairly defined visual style. Even contemporary stylistic influences for layout, graphic design and typography in the case of *jazz* are executed in an aesthetic convention that is over half a century old. The conditions for the production of jazz photographs in the first half of the last century were so totally different from now, that it is surprising that the style or ‘look’ of jazz photographs

---

<sup>130</sup> I speak not only from the perspective of a disgruntled researcher, but also from a month of experience working as an intern/freelancer at Independent Newspapers in Cape Town (*Cape Argus*, *Cape Times*).

has not much changed since. The music industry was less professionalized, and many of the now 'classic' jazz photographs were created without a brief. Lastly, it is important to mention that due to the fact that commercial photographs are treated and paid like marketed goods, they are however distributed, stored and retrieved very differently from newspaper photographs. They become more visible through a number of different channels, they last longer in the public imagination – contributing to defining the public image of a band, musician, location or even a city.

Thirdly, there is the *professional photographer* working 'on his own steam:' shooting jazz would not be his bread-and-butter. In fact, it is usually costing him to take these pictures, but he does it anyway. This type of photographer is present in the scene – in journo-speak 'embedded' – for the sake of his own enjoyment and his own project, however consciously he may be driving it. He might be hanging out with the musicians before and after the concert, taking pictures according to his own agenda, typically with a social documentary aspect to it. Perhaps he is also just snapping pictures for the sake of remembering. This visual chronicler typically loves jazz music, or is fascinated by an aspect of jazz culture, and is usually quite conscious of the visual history of the jazz aesthetic. His independent project may be in view of an exhibition of fine art prints, a book publication, or simply to expand his portfolio. The project is typically conceived of as a visual document of times and places, significant events and people gathering there, around jazz music. He wants more than one picture in a newspaper, or five to ten in a magazine. He wants to tell a more personal story perhaps, to develop a new aesthetic, to be as free as possible to be expressive with his photography. Beyond all this, such projects are also always driven by a personal, philosophical engagement with the temporal paradox of photography: a look through the viewfinder becomes a look into the past, and last night's shots already contribute to the conceptual archive, and may in fact one day become publically accessible within an actual archival collection, perhaps even a curated retrospective. The American jazz photographer Herman Leonard, who made a huge contribution to the photographic 'look' of jazz, points out the conditions enabling his approach:

*'You can't do today what I did then. You can go to a studio, you can go to a club, you can go to a concert, but what do you end up with? A guy standing in front of a microphone with a spotlight, and no matter what kind of photographer you are, you're going to get the same shot... You see, the things I got were shot in little clubs with great audiences, with moody atmosphere, or in recording sessions with everybody together being inspired... That to me is the tragedy of the electronic age: You lose that cohesiveness, you lose that inspiration'* (ya Salaam & Leonard 1995: 2).

A recent example of a curated retrospective is the *Jazz Loft Project*, a book publication and multimedia exhibition of the photographs and tapes of American photojournalist W. Eugene Smith, taken at 821 Sixth Avenue, New York between 1957 and 1965.<sup>131</sup> Smith, a world-famous Life magazine photographer, had ‘dropped out’ in 1957: he had left Magnum photo agency, abandoned his massive Pittsburgh project, and finally even his wife and children, and moved into a Manhattan loft apartment, which became the hub of New York’s jazz scene, synonymous with ‘underground.’ In the loft, he recorded approximately 3,000 hours of audio and shot about 40,000 photographs. As a professional, he was not making much money from this at the time but some of the images became cover art for LPs. Smith was passionately driven by a sense of relevance to make such large amounts of sound recordings of music and conversations, and photographs, capturing the countenances and activities of the jazz scene (not only musicians) of that era in New York. Smith, in that sense, became a definitive ‘jazz photographer,’ and his images, rather than presenting occasional, isolated photographs of an event, person or thing relating to jazz, are true ‘jazz photographs.’ In this way, Smith’s photographs from that time and place – due of course also to factors extrinsic to them, namely the careers of their subjects – came to co-define the visual aesthetic of jazz photography henceforth.



---

<sup>131</sup> Curated by Sam Stephenson and Courtney Reid-Eaton of the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. On tour in the USA since early 2010, currently looking for exhibition venues in Asia and Europe for 2012 and 2013.

Figure 29. Installation photograph of 'The Jazz Loft Project Exhibition.' Photo: Courtney Reid-Eaton. [Online]. Available: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=414334148282&set=pu.49444658282&type=1&theater> [last accessed: 03.12.2011].

Last in the list of types of photographers who take jazz-related pictures is the *amateur*, who is motivated mainly by the desire to record a pleasurable or significant moment. He normally is not aiming to sell or 'do anything' with the photographs he takes. He takes snaps to remember a special occasion, driven by his own personal interest. The prints or digital files rarely go beyond the confines of the proverbial suitcase under the bed, or his personal Facebook page. At most, he is a photo-enthusiast, in which case his jazz photographs may find discussion at a camera club, or be posted on a jazz- or photography-related blog. Incidentally, his photographs float deliberately on the traditional aesthetic platform of old classics. In his sort of visual "Karaoke" typically his pictures stick out by the absence of innovative, explorative realisation. The amateur's personal collection of photographs of jazz culture may indeed much later become published or exhibited if incidentally they constitute the only record of a specific event. However, due to the fact that the images may in fact not be very well crafted and that their primary motivation did not engage aesthetic considerations, this is quite rare. The amateur's photographs rarely achieve more – and often in fact less – than a deictic account of who was where when – the 'how' and 'why' are typically well beyond this.

None of the typologies presented above are complete, exclusive or exhaustive. They rather serve as general, relevant subject-positions from which to work further. Basil Breakey, for instance, falls quite squarely between the classic jazz photographer and the amateur. He produced very few other photographs than those negatives, which are now in the Musicpics cc archive and most of which we can see spread across the contact sheets. Therefore he cannot be considered a full-time, working professional. Corroborating this is that he gave up freelancing for newspapers after two or three years, and Juergen Schadeberg's Tropix photo agency, for which he worked afterwards, was itself '*short-lived*' (Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage 2011). Indeed, how Breakey sustained himself I could never fully ascertain.

Breakey had a good technical foundation, and an awareness and admiration of other photographers' work. He had his own SLR camera, and access to film stock and a darkroom. He was also good friends with the musicians he photographed, and met them wherever possible to photograph them performing, rehearsing and relaxing – something that was not easy in the racially segregated apartheid period. Beyond that, many of his photographs have a playfulness that suggests an amateurish desire to just take 'family' snaps, without further ambitions, just for



memory's sake. This in-between-ness of Breakey's oeuvre makes it at once confounding and compelling. His body of work resists classification, since the individual photographs range from technically accomplished, yet artlessly banal 'snaps' to highly expressive photographs, which communicate an intense engagement with their subject. Breakey documented musicians whom he admired and took snapshots of them as his friends. This is the mix of photographic genres and types of photographer in Breakey's images and subject-position respectively: for himself, he records the musicians as his friends, and to his audience he presents them as noteworthy professional artists – he works in between the roles of amateur and aesthetic chronicler.

The kind of photography that warrants distinction within a discreet category called 'jazz photography' is an aesthetically self-reflexive social documentary photography with jazz culture as its main subject. As a stand alone profession it bears a number of risks and obstacles: firstly, because there is little money to be earned with it and, secondly, because it almost inevitably involves contestations around ethics and rights (who is picturing who, and in what capacity?), relevance (why should we care to look?) and platform (where and how do we get to see the work?). Visual and musical fringes meet as one social fringe in rehearsal rooms and jazz bars. In effect, jazz photographers – as visually artful social documenters – share many life skills and aesthetic approaches with the jazz musicians they photograph: survival skills, shrewdness, and the ability to adapt to different contexts on the one hand and, on the other, a well-trained, creative alertness to shared moments, where listening and seeing become active response-abilities of the trade. In jazz photography, the relationship between the two kinds of artist – photographer and musician – ideally transcends the rapaciousness of hard news journalism, the artificiality of commercial photography, and the absence of commitment of amateurism. The relationship is, at least symbolically an equal one. In this moment, jazz photography can become a genre of his own: where art is created and amalgamated with the other art, music.

*'At our best and most fortunate we make pictures because of what stands in front of the camera, to honour what is greater and more interesting than we are. We never accomplish this perfectly, though in return we are given something perfect – a sense of inclusion. Our subject thus redefines us, and is part of the biography by which we want to be known'* (Adams 1996: 179).

The term 'Jazz Photography', as any other photographic genre (for example: 'Landscape Photography', or: 'Still Life Photography'), conjures up a few prominent figures that have contributed to its standard feature set. For two main reasons, these are predominately from the USA: firstly, jazz is originally an American art form, and secondly, after its internationalisation, it continued and continues to be popularised as an American thing. Therefore, the first 'Jazz

Photographers' from before World War II are Americans, simply due to the fact that they were present at the time, making this aspect of their indigenous culture one of their subjects. The next generation of now more professionalised 'Jazz photographers' are also American, due to the fact that they were commissioned to contribute visually to the international popularisation of Jazz, emanating from the USA outwards via popular mass media.

In an essay examining Roy DeCarava's collection of jazz photographs *The Sound I Saw – improvisation on a jazz theme*, Richard Ings explores the complicated relationships that link African-American visual art to the practices, patterns, and aesthetics of jazz and blues music and claims that DeCarava's images 'add a new dimension to the intertextuality of art and music... [they] not only focus attention on a different visual medium, but also reveal how African American music and visual art alike emerged from a complex social world where different forms of dance, display, style, and speech served as sites of struggle and self-affirmation, as repositories of collective memory, and as ways of calling communities into being through performance' (2010: 20).

Over the course of the 1950s, jazz culture in the broader, commercial sense, became internationalised, and began to merge with other indigenous popular cultures all over the world, which profoundly affected its visual representation. While Jazz was now being performed outside the USA by non-Americans to non-American audiences in a large variety of cultural contexts, the very notion of it as something specifically recognisable, unified (and unifying) began to change. Its 'golden age' was over, and 'Jazz', theoretically and ideally at least, became whatever musicians and listeners could make of it. It is important, however, to keep in mind that there is a crucial difference in reception between a local, live audience, and the 'market' that buys commercially available recording-products, such as online mp3s and CDs in stores, or 'requires' certain types of (jazz) music to be played on radio.

Similarly, the role played by the necessarily different aesthetic intentionalities in creating 'jazz' for a local (live) listenership, or an international one (via publications of recordings) cannot be underestimated. Clearly, Jazz music and the image of Jazz, are subject to an immense amount of re-interpretations and re-presentations once all those records have gone out into the world from the United States. It is notable, however, how stable this quintessentially hybrid musical complex of forms has remained. It can be observed in countless instances to the present day, how conservative – perhaps 'conservationist' would be the better term here – musicians and audiences have remained with regard to certain melodic, harmonic and rhythmic stylistic characteristics.

Some of the American photographers that essentially created the genre of 'Jazz Photography' are Herman Leonard, Rico D'Rozaro, Roy DeCarava and William Ellis, as well as all those that photographed for the *Blue Note* record covers: Francis Wolff, Bill Hughes, Buck Hoefler, Charles Keddie, Herb Snitzer and Reid Miles. The photographic 'look' of Jazz was imported to South Africa by sailors<sup>132</sup> in the form of vinyl records (labels such as *Blue Note*, *Impulse!*, *Verve*, *Prestige* and others) dedicated Jazz magazines (*Down Beat*, *Metronome*), as well as lifestyle and news magazines (*Life*, *Time*). Alan outlines the formalisation of this image-culture in the following:

*In the early years the choices were three – a formal band pose, a formal portrait, or the "jazzed-up" picture in which the musicians are stiffly posed in attitudes of not-so-wild abandon with half the band sitting on the piano. Somehow, it took the photographer a long, long time to understand what jazz is, and it was not really until the early 1940s that there began to be caught something of that relaxed, disordered, and very special world of the jazz musician. The "artistic" side of jazz photography did not appear until after World War II, and it has only been in the past few years indeed that a jazz photographer has tried to indicate moods or thoughts or concepts in a picture. I think that the world as a jazz musician sees it is probably in this book only sporadically; what is here is the world of jazz as the layman sees it. There is a great deal of history here, too, and once in a while the reader turns a page and finds himself staring into the very eyes of Jazz' (Alan 1956: 429).*

Presently this is a look that is actively re-created and exploited by those industries that use the broadest popular common-ground imaginary around 'Jazz' as a financial commodity. One such instance locally is visually exemplified in the self-published *Cape Town International Jazz Festival 1998-2008*, a coffee-table book that does entirely without accompanying text, as if the images could speak for themselves.

In such contexts the media celebrates itself and the musicians become beautiful props, engulfed by swathes of stage lighting, amongst a large, paying crowd on the one side and the large banner-logos of the sponsors on the other. This popular image of jazz was not always as stably registered in genre conventions as it now appears to be. Some of its forms were through-and-through avant-garde, and barely even survived on the fringes of urban cultures. Those artists actively involved in the classical modernist peak of 1960s jazz culture are now either dead or very old. In South Africa, one of the last surviving photographers to date is Basil Breakey.

In relation to music, there is an inherent tragedy in the documenter's progress through life and work. Similarly to the sound engineer and other non-musician, music-industry workers, the

---

<sup>132</sup> see: ANON. 2004. South African Jazz: Political History. *All About Jazz*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=1958> [last accessed: 01/12/2010].

documentary photographer or music journalist has to, in order to do their work properly, 'get close'. They have to love what they do from the outset, otherwise the hardships on the long, arduous way to making a meagre living out of what they do would not seem worth it. The photographer has to really love his subject. This is where the tragedy comes in: their subject does not love him. Musicians conventionally grow to distrust anyone working in the music industry, who potentially just wants to take their hard-earned money away from them again. Night after night, jazz musicians play for virtually and at times literally no money, while the takings at the bar go to the owners of the establishment, while the soundman wants to be paid his full price, even though this night hardly any audience came, while the hired photographer wants his full price, or at least his call-out fee, while the photojournalist takes carelessly ugly pictures, and writes uninformedly about the concert. That rare photographer who works for the musicians is often working through his own motivational psychology: a deep admiration for and attraction to the musicians. Through capturing something of the spirit animating the musicians, the photographer vicariously lives that spirit for a moment. It can be a quasi-ritualistic, possibly neurotic practice of adulation and theft.

Jazz photography, as we have seen, operates at the limits: the limits of socio-political hardship, of available light, of mental and emotional states. It also operates at the conceptual limits of the medium of photography itself. There is a creative dynamic at work in taking photographs of things that are particularly *difficult* to photograph well, which seems to hold the much-mentioned futility of the photographic endeavour somewhat at bay. To actually succeed in taking a reasonably sharp picture of moving musicians in extreme low-light conditions, such as a badly (or dramatically) lit, crowded stage in a venue or rehearsal space at night is a skilful achievement in itself. To commit to doing it without money and in a repressive political environment takes dedication and belief. To commit to sustain jazz photography as a personal project takes a certain kind of stubbornness around what photographs can be expected to do. David Goldblatt made this point in our interview when we were talking about Dorkay House:

*"You know, the problem with music from the point of view of photography is that while you're there, and the beat is there, it's enormously exciting and inspiring but when you look at it cold afterwards, there's no music... And the beat is gone. And whether you're dealing with a philharmonic orchestra or a jazz musician it's the same. So the photograph has to carry some kind of weight or spirit or resonance that... can't any longer be felt in the ears. And then – this is if you like the problem for the photography of music or a musician – and, I mean I've experienced that many times, I've been present in Dorkay House, I heard Kippie talking to his instrument on the stage and it was inspiring. But afterwards, it was*

*just cold. I don't know how you can transcend some of the basic facts of what's in the photographs. I don't know'* (Goldblatt 2011).

Goldblatt, speaking as a professional art photographer, has for the last five decades been developing a particular positionality towards the South African landscape, as well as the people he has documented within the framework of one or the other project. Breakey did not do this, which marks the purpose of my review of his archival material: his in-between position as both-and-neither amateur or professional photographer has yielded unusually intriguing and informative object-surfaces that are open to multiple readings.



Figure 30: Detail of *Contact sheet 6*, illustrating the visually powerful collaging of urban textures, when different kinds of photographs are seen together in the context of the design of the contact print.

## Chapter 4

### Breakey's Contact Sheets and Fragments



Figure 31. *Fragment 9*, illustrating the immediacy of compositional strength in some of the fragments, as opposed to digital, cropped-out or zoomed-in details. The cut and bent edges, sticky tape and negative space on the sheet work together in supporting the narrative unfolding between the frames.

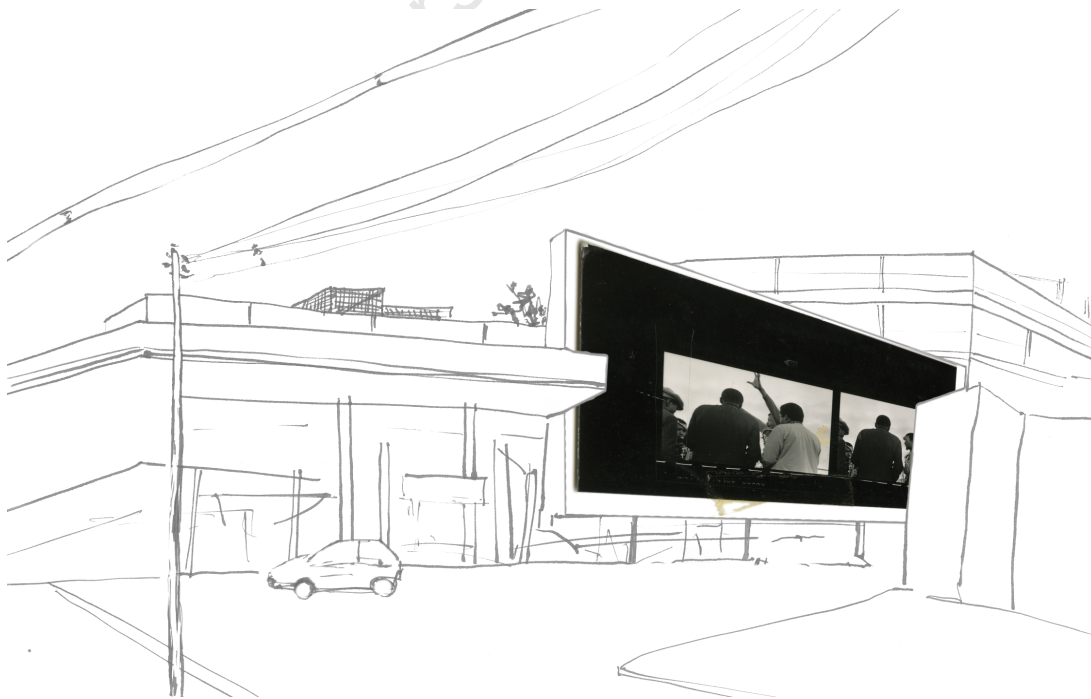


Figure 32. *Fragment 9* envisioned placed in public space as a billboard-sized reproduction.

#### 4.1 Approaches (outline)

This chapter presents exemplary *readings* and curatorial *applications* of a number of Breakey's fragments and contact sheets, based on the foundational material developed in the preceding chapters. The fragments are not primarily consulted as supplementary to the photographs already published, but as an extension in scope thereof, reaching further and performing differently to them. They are always conceived as part of the original 'Konvolut,' which, whenever needed, refers them back to the larger sheets in the postage envelope and the archive at large as a source for further investigation.

In positioning myself as artist-curator, I attempt to make the fragments work towards a variety of readings, staging proposed applications that range from 'conventional' fine art hangings to urban-interventionist and mass, popular media placements. These are proposals in view of enriching the public reception of local jazz culture on the one hand, as well as opening up jazz discourse to new visual approaches on the other.

Importantly in relation to Breakey's process-work archive, I have acknowledged moments of silence, too: one viewer sees an open book where another is mystified. Each fragment speaks differently to the present viewer and his imaginary audience. Some are loud and clear challenges to look, and to look again, while others appear insignificant, not of interest *at this present moment*. There will no doubt be more, future engagements with this particular archive, since this can only be an envisaging, a considered setting-in-motion. My viewing, reading and staging in response to Breakey's process work is framed as non-definitive and open: as a contemporaneous, encultured<sup>133</sup> understanding of specific sites of significance within Breakey's archive.

---

<sup>133</sup> On the notion of enculturation see for instance: Morris, P. (Ed.) 1994. *The Bakhtin reader: Selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. London: Edward Arnold.

## 4.2 Contact sheet 24

When I first picked up a copy of *Beyond the Blues*, the image of Nick Moyake coming up the stairs in Dorkay house caught my attention, although it is reproduced very small (Figure 31).

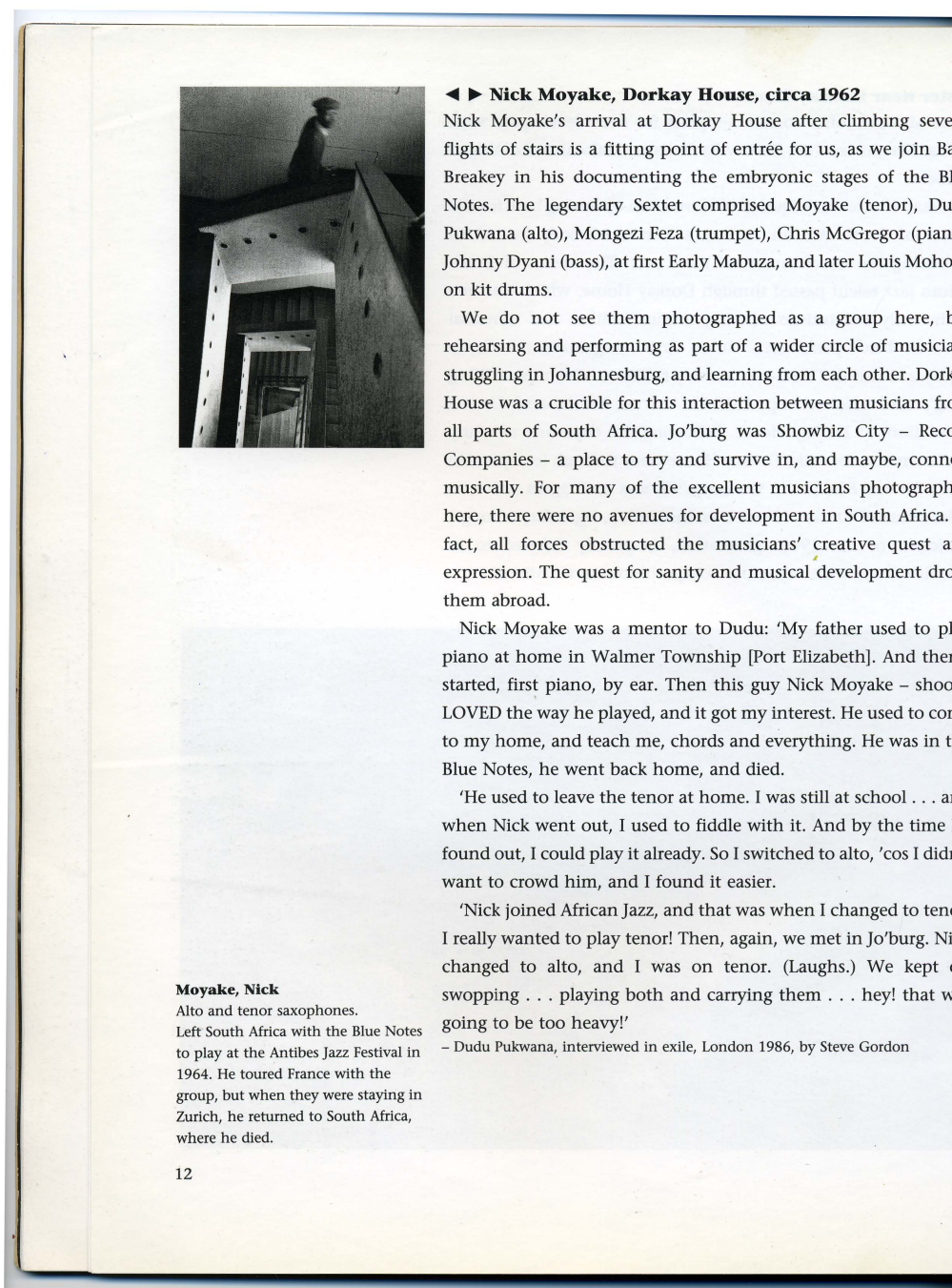


Figure 33. Scan of page 12 in *Beyond the Blues* with a photo of Nick Moyake, taken in 1962 at Dorkay House, Johannesburg.



The mention of the ‘Vorster Years’ on the preceding page<sup>134</sup> and the view down the Dorkay House stairwell instantly made me think of an image of a stairwell inside John Vorster Square prison, which I had seen in Broomberg & Chanarin’s 2004 book, *Mr. Mkeize’s Portrait* (Figure 32). The by-line reads:

*‘It was easier than it looks to fall down this stairwell, because they’re in John Vorster Square, South Africa’s most infamous police station. In 1963, the government introduced detention without trial, enabling easy torture of activists. In 1964, detainee Babla Saloojee was thrown from the seventh floor, becoming the first Vorster victim’ (2004).*



Figure 34. Scan from *Mr. Mkeize’s Portrait* (no page number in book), with a photo taken in 2004 inside John Vorster Square Prison, invoking the first death through state brutality there in 1964.

---

<sup>134</sup> ‘Basil Breakey’s photographs are documentary, and their essence is that they portray times and experiences he shared with his subjects during what he terms ‘the Verwoerd and Vorster years’ (Breakey & Gordon 1997: 11).

Looking more closely at Breakey's image again there is now an added poignancy to it.

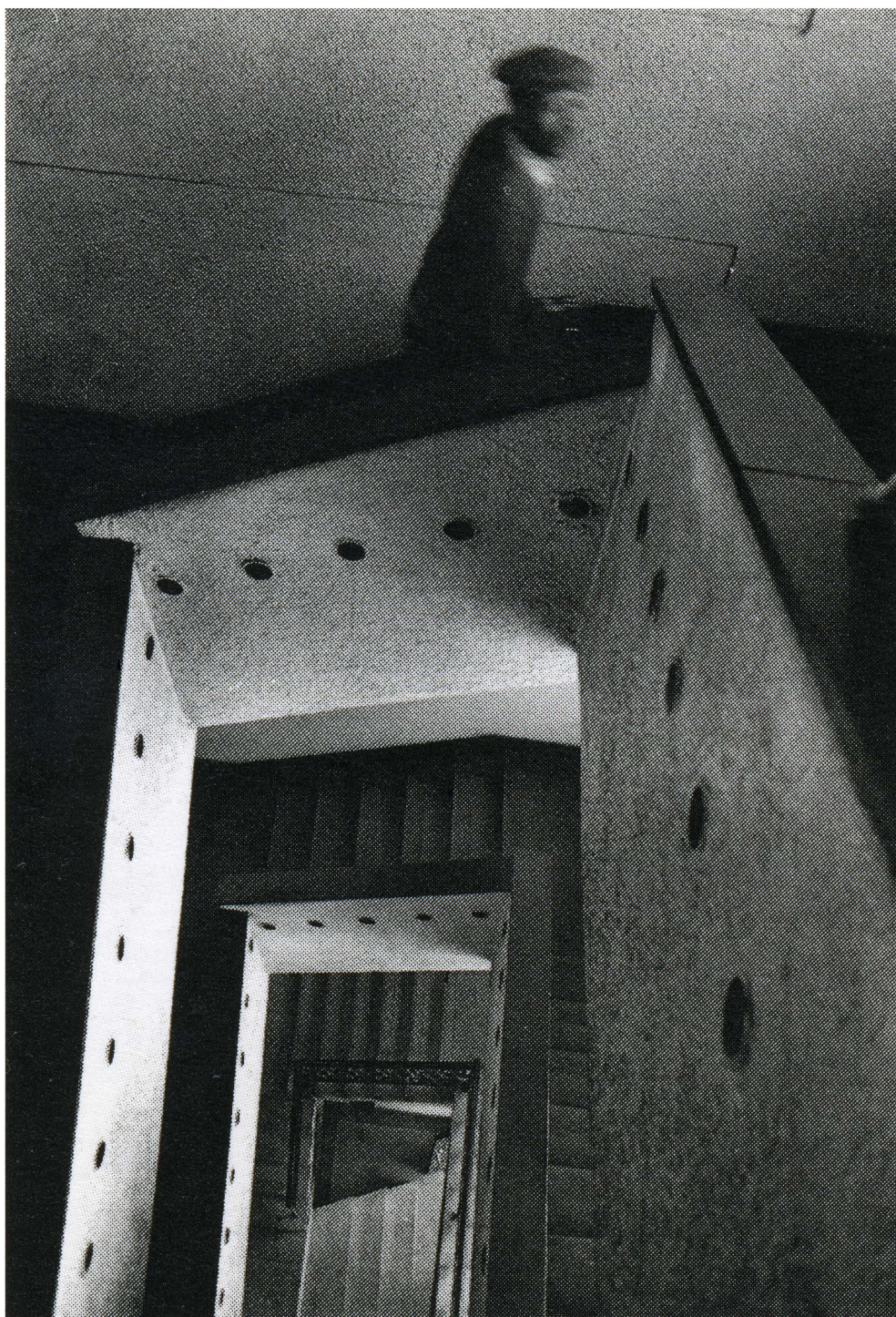


Fig. 35. Detail of scan from page 12 in *Beyond the Blues*. This image is a digital blow-up of a small offset print.

The closer, sustained look at the individual image can be performed for a future reader in two very different ways: It can either be done extrinsically (constructing a passive reader), as a blow-up from the negative, or intrinsically (activating a reader) by drawing attention to the image *in context*. In Breakey's archive, that context is a contact sheet, in several other cases even a number of different contact sheets in which photographs reappear in different configurations. Figure 33 shows one of Breakey's 'Dorkay House' contact sheets. At this stage, the chosen image of Moyake is one of many others.



Figure 36. *Contact sheet 24.*

Attention can be drawn to our key image of interest *in context* with the others on the sheet by pairing up a reproduction of the contact sheet with a print of Broomberg & Chanarin's photograph on a gallery or museum wall. The contemporary work would serve as the 'entry point' to make this engagement possible, while the sustained interest would be held by the act of scanning and closer looking initiated by the contact print. The lines of connection between the two works are not only purely visual or formal, but also constituted politically, historically and geographically. Breakey's densely populated black-and-white composite technical mosaic next to Broomberg & Chanarin's unpopulated colour photograph would allow different viewers to find their way through a number of associative processes, and – even without textual aids such as by-lines or labels – arrive at an emotional understanding of the conditions under which the musicians depicted lived and worked, and of how the spirit of that time resonates through the agglomeration of aspects and views, forceful environments and enforced absences.

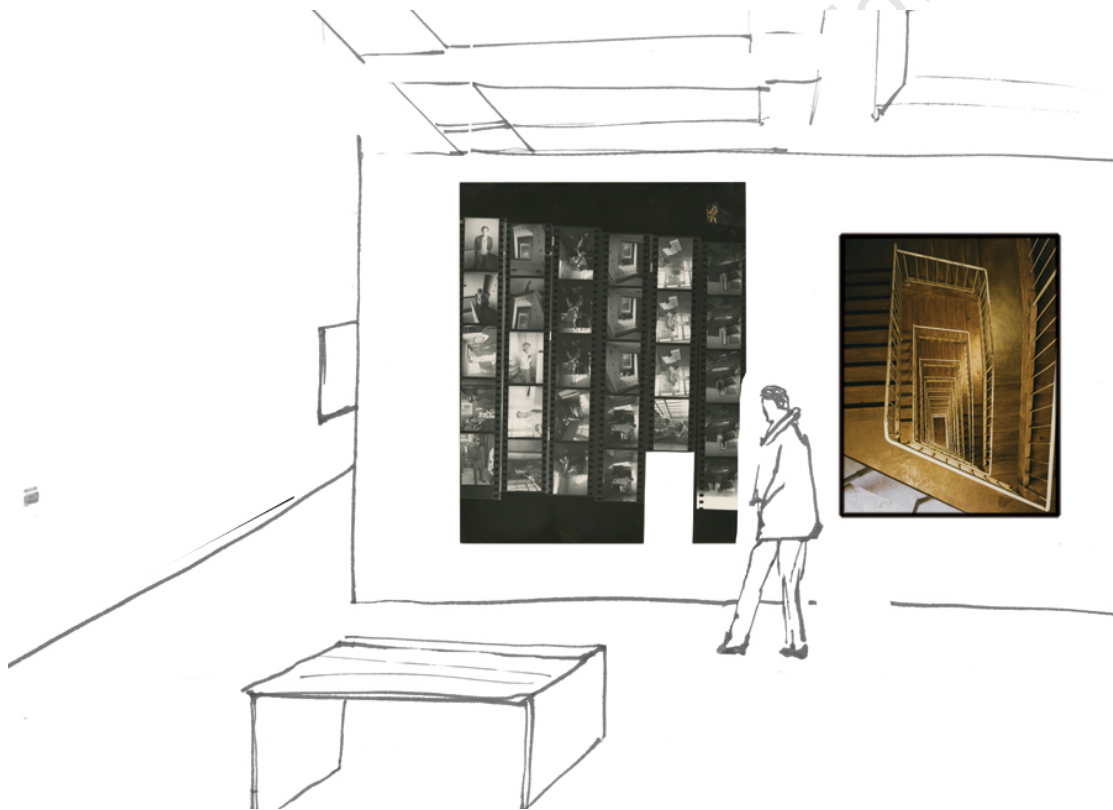


Figure 37. Installation view of *Contact sheet 24* and Broomberg & Chanarin's photograph of John Vorster Square prison stairwell from *Mr Mkize's Portrait* printed at approximately 1,7m x 2m and 1m x 1,7m respectively. Illustration: Sunette Viljoen.

This curatorial move enables an aesthetic engagement, and a new opening towards further readings of the archive: On this single contact sheet, we find four key photographs taken at Dorkay House that went into *Beyond the Blues*: 1) saxophonist Dudu Pukwana with the torn poster on the main entrance door behind him that gave the book its title [book pg.15], 2) saxophonist Nick Moyake coming up the stairwell in Dorkay House [book pg.12], 3) bassist Johnny Dyani resting on a chair [book pg.17], and 4) pianist Chris McGregor in the doorway of one of the rehearsal spaces [book pg.16] (see Figure 36). But here the images that did *not* find their way into the book regain a new interest and relevance.



Figure 38. *Contact sheet 24* with specific sections highlighted and yellow circular labels applied digitally.

Each time it is used, the archive absorbs this kind of new information brought to bear on it – every use constitutes an enrichment of the material. Crucial is the fact that reproductions of these contact sheets constitute images of image-objects that carry messages from the archive into the public realm via a variety of envisaged channels.

The enlarged contact sheet, *once* its point of access has been made a formally engaging one, opens up as a con-textual map across which jazz history can be traced in a number of ways that enrich each other: historical research and the art of jazz photo-documentary work combine to form a new object.



Figure 39. Approximation of a 1:1 scale view of *Contact sheet 24* printed at the proposed size (number 1), illustrating how, as soon as the viewer steps closer, other views of the same subject matter within the shared, contextual surface contribute unexpected, intriguing narratives: the past lies in wait to come alive.



Figure 40. Approximation of a 1:1 scale view of *Contact sheet 24* printed at the proposed size (number 2), illustrating how photographs are never quite discreet from each other on the reproduction of the sheet: its surface quality is very pronounced, reinforcing the *coexistence* of its constituent elements.

4.3 Fragment 1



Figure 41. *Fragment 1* (approximately 15cm x 3cm)



Reading:

The intimate relationship with his subjects is one of Basil Breakey's great assets. This fragment with its set of six frames speaks of Breakey's approach to 'people photography.' They are playful images, depicting moments where nothing much is happening. It is as if Breakey was just looking through the camera, seeing what he could come up with if he just let McGregor carry on with whatever he was doing. It is the record of an informal chat with no discernible intentionality attached to it, which is precisely why it works as a set of six, and wouldn't work as one image alone. This fragment creates the impression of a strip of motion-picture film, a sense chiefly created by the constant repetition of the individual compositions in conjunction with the small degrees of difference between them.

In a conversation I had about this set of images with Andrew Lilley, pianist, composer and associate professor in Jazz Studies at the South African College of Music at University of Cape Town, he pointed out that McGregor presents one of those rare and yet regularly reoccurring personalities in the history of South African Jazz who through their life and work managed to defy the two principal stereotypes of white South Africans: McGregor was – in Lilly's words – neither an 'agent'<sup>135</sup> nor a 'liberal.'<sup>136</sup> For Lilley, McGregor embodied the role of a social and cultural catalyst in living and working self-consciously as a link between traditional South African musical culture and what the western world already knew as 'jazz.' In crossing over between divided worlds in the time of political exile from South Africa, McGregor exposed South African musicians and South African music to the world as a kind of musical ambassador of the unsanctioned, people's culture of South Africa. Years after these photographs were taken and McGregor was living and working in Europe (and, incidentally when his outer appearance had taken an about-turn, and he was now donning a great white hippie-beard and more 'African' attire), the European influences in McGregor's music also brought the world – so out of reach during sanctions and censorship – a little closer to South Africa again: in the form of nearly twenty published records of outstandingly innovative, and critically acclaimed original compositions and performances. Scaruffi outlines McGregor's role here:

---

<sup>135</sup> This was said in reference to the recent debacle around the then president of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema, who, upon being questioned by a British journalist about the apparent discrepancy between his self-proclaimed status as being "poor" and his ownership of several expensive properties, shouted at him: "You bloody agent", and forced him to leave the press conference.

<sup>136</sup> Liberalism in South Africa has a deeply complicated history, but in this context it must suffice to say that for many South Africans it has the reprehensible connotations of appearing to do good in the face of a bad state of affairs (Apartheid), but being unprepared to risk anything for effecting real (revolutionary) change.

*'The South African influence on British jazz started with Chris McGregor, a white pianist who in 1960 had organized in South Africa a mixed-race group, the Blue Notes'* (Scaruffi 2006).

Knowing this, we look again at the fragment, perhaps tempted to look for signs of mystery, of genius. Across this vertical sliver of a contact sheet, our eyes move back and forth between the six frames, comparing them to one another in a manner similar to how a child eagerly engages in decoding the visual riddles in a 'spot-the-difference' cartoon. While the eye moves restlessly, the mind creates a micro-narrative: 'first, this occurred, then that, then that ...' – an apparently seamless force field of cause and effect, of destiny itself, playing out in front of the recording mechanism. The shutter clicks, the film is wound on, the shutter clicks again. The subject is trapped like a specimen in a box, albeit over and over again.

The specimen's repeated (and implicitly ongoing) entrapment occurs in this image-object from the early 1960s in aesthetic kinship to a process employed at the same time in New York by Pop artist Andy Warhol, 'the first filmmaker to use real time as story time, or to place 'real' time in synchronicity with 'reel' time' (Dvorak 2002), using a 'locked off' (immobile) 16mm camera to create a new kind of artwork that approached a synthesis of cinema and painting. Examples of such works are *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire* (1964). More importantly still, Warhol's other works from the same period resonate in a contemporary viewing of this contact sheet fragment, particularly his silkscreened, multiple portraits of Marilyn Monroe as a set of six (Figure 39).



Figure 42. Andy Warhol, *The Six Marylins (Marilyn Six-Pack)*, 1962, silkscreen ink on synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 109cm x 56cm, Collection of Emily and Jerry Spiegel. [Online]. Available: <http://www.agisoft.it/Arte/5/p/Ar/Warhol,%20Andy.htm> [last accessed: 15.05.2011].

Application:

Warhol's work is generally very large-scale, and he was an art-star in a world capital. Breakey produced very little work and he was and remains a little known person. No greater contrast is thinkable than between these two people re-working or making photographic portraits of extraordinary people, an actress-model-singer superstar and a pianist-composer-band leader fringe artist. Up to this point there are only some formal connections between the images, and every other connection seem spurious, but therein lies the curatorial 'trap:' the '*Six McGregors*' can be set up against the *Six Marylins* in a staged 'Culture War,' as a curatorial intervention that enables a review of the complex historical relations between the subaltern margin<sup>137</sup> and the hegemonic centre.<sup>138</sup> The years of origin of these two works are (most probably) the same, and the environments in which they were created were both 'bohemian' – seen from within their very different cultural contexts. The difference – so the line of attack – lies no longer in intentions or lack of intentions on behalf of the 'artist,' since for this moment the curator has stepped in as artist and 'high jacked' the intentions. The curator as artist appropriates the *Six Marylins* from the international art circuit with the same authority as he does the *Six McGregors* from the local archive – in order to provoke a look at the South African '60s, when Apartheid repression was driving cultural expression away or underground, in relation to America, which was at a high point of world expansion, massively transmitting its cultural innovations to the margins.

This entanglement of difference between America and South Africa, so audible in local forms of jazz music, finds powerful expression through the juxtaposition of these two, authentic works in 'original:' the one large, world-famous and valuable, and the other small, utterly unknown and without commercial value at all. The formal similarities are striking enough to sustain a critically reversed intertext between the various locations of perceived significance. Displayed together on the same museum or gallery wall (Figure 40), the difference in scale (a factor seven to one) will provoke the desired interrogation of the intentionality behind this fragment.

---

<sup>137</sup> 'In strictly political terms, the Gramscian concept of subalternity applies to those groups in society who are lacking autonomous political power' (Smith 2010: 181).

<sup>138</sup> The concept of margin and centre has been widely theorised as a central notion in Postcolonial Studies, a key work is: Ashcroft, B. & Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*. New York: Routledge.

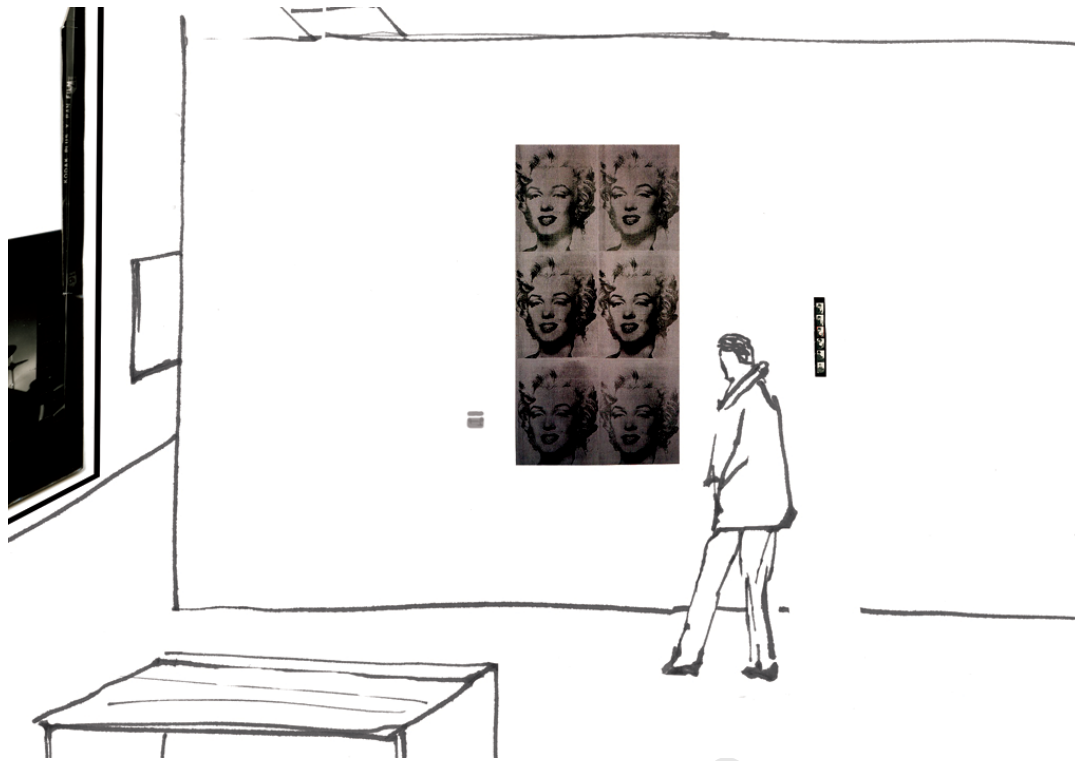


Figure 43. *Marilyn Sixpack* (Andy Warhol) and *Fragment 1* (Basil Breakey) installed in original in a museum (*Fragment 8* has been enlarged for visibility in the illustration). Illustration: Sunette Viljoen.

University of Cape

#### 4.4 Fragment 8



Figure 44. *Fragment 8* (approximately 8cm x 3cm).

#### Reading:

This fragment is, in itself, perhaps the most ‘iconic’ of the entire collection, not least owing to its unusually engaging formal qualities. It can be read as a conceptual artwork, as an ‘objet trouvée’, but what makes it a ‘find’ for the *archive public* is the formally engaging arrangement of its content. On the same film, a strip of mediated life experiences in a close spatial and temporal framework, Breakey depicts social, class contrast. The composite image conjures up a deeply divided (more accurately: fragmented) social spectrum. Formally, the image is a triptych with a missing centrepiece. The first glance, the most judgemental here, propels an interpretation in terms of class: the left hand image depicts the lower, working class, and the right hand image the upper, capitalist class. The middle class is absent – it has been cut out. The viewer is engaged in imagining the city in which these lives were lived: the bohemian flat above street level, with someone waking up in the morning on a mattress on the floor, looking rather like a street person, but reading a book; and the street below, into which the photographer might have stepped that same morning still, and suddenly felt arrested or intrigued by this old couple walking along the shop fronts (and: was that man with the sunglasses not perhaps a famous minister in government?).

#### Application:

The fragment is given a Situationist ‘détournement,’ and its image enters the urban, public sphere via mass print media, so a member of the public in a coffee shop chances upon it unexpectedly in a magazine. In this magazine, de Certeau, who theorised the city from above, is quoted on the next spread:

*'One can analyse the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which have outlived its decay; one can follow the swarming activity of these procedures that, far from being regulated or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy, developed and insinuated themselves into the networks of surveillance, and combined in accord with unreadable but stable tactics to the point of constituting everyday regulations and surreptitious creativities that are merely concealed by the frantic mechanisms and discourses of the observational organisation' (de Certeau 1984: 156).*



Figure 45. *Fragment 8* placed in a popular magazine. Illustration: Sunette Viljoen.

The missing image in the middle carries a sting – especially for a viewer who is not looking with expectations connected to the genre of jazz photography. For such a reader, had the left hand image shown one of the other Blue Notes members sleeping on the floor of Breakey’s flat (and there is indeed a little corner of another blanket and mattress protruding into the picture frame to the left), there would have been a ‘black subject.’ In the ‘60s, as most of us know, Breakey would have been breaking the law with this. Now, the missing photograph in the middle moves into focus again. Who or what is absent by force, a visual force expressed with scissor cuts? Something, someone has been sequestered because their very image may not come in between ‘us whites.’ This fragment-as-composite propels the eye back and forth, from left to right, across a blind spot, a gulf – in a magazine, the ‘gutter:’ forever the banality of living and dying, and of looking aside.



Figure 46. *Contact Sheet 47*. The same strip of film as found reproduced in *Fragment 8* also appears on this complete sheet.



Figure 47. Detail of *Contact Sheet 47*, which shows the uncut contact print of the same strip of film.

It is probable now that there must have been a mock-up that contained the ‘thumbnails’ cut out of the sheets, for with this fragment it has become obvious that the logic behind the clipped-out images from the sheets is to *select* rather than reject them. The image clipped out of the middle of *Fragment 8* is the image that was chosen to be included in *Beyond the Blues*, and left the gap that becomes so meaningful when the artists’ intention is subsumed by new contextual figurations.



Figure 48. Scan of page 32 in *Beyond the Blues*. The by-line reads: 'Chris McGregor sleeping [sic] on floor of a Joubert Park flat.'

The following is what I wrote about the above image *before* I had discovered the contact sheets and the fragments. Despite it being written by myself, I have put it as a quotation in order to illustrate the progress of thought via the new discovery of the fragments during my research:

*'As with nearly all of Breakey's photographs, the image reproduced above was taken using a 35mm single reflex camera (in Breakey's case an Ashai Pentax), the standard tool of the photo reporter to this day. The lens used was probably a 35-50mm wide-to-standard lens. The black-and-white film used (Breakey almost never shot colour) presumably had a sensitivity of ASA 100 to 400, although Breakey did at times use much faster film or 'push' lower sensitivity films to as far as ASA 1600. The shutter speed used was probably between a 15<sup>th</sup> and a 60<sup>th</sup> of a second, and the aperture was probably set quite open, somewhere between f4 and f8. These details (deduced, inferred and researched) form at least three types of information. Firstly, there is first-hand (technical and otherwise) information, which one has gleaned in conversation with the photographer, his colleagues and his archivist-cum-agent, Steve Gordon. Secondly, there are probabilities relating to the general life history to which I have gained some access through an interview about the subject (here: the intimacy of friendship with the photographer) and their photographer (here: living in a low-rental flat, a spatially restricted environment). Thirdly, there is the physical nature of the materials, tools and environmental conditions, co-determining the look of the visual record produced here, relatively low light (late morning or early evening light filtering through the window*



*above our line of vision), the relatively fine grain, the faint hints at motion blur and a relatively shallow depth of field.*

*In this photograph, Breakey has documented the world-famous South African pianist and composer Chris McGregor 'crashing' on the floor of his flat in Johannesburg in 1963. The image completely breaks with the visual confines and common stylistic concerns of the genre of 'Jazz Photography'. Breakey is depicting a person, without the standard mise-en-scène of either an instrument and/or a stage, anything that tells the viewer that they are in fact looking at a musician here, and goes even further by largely obscuring access to the subject's facial features. Also, the activity of reading while lying down is a quiet one in stark contrast to the dramatic visual display of a musician performing on stage. Therefore, this image falls into neither of the two main, standard categories of jazz photography, namely the stage shot (also: 'man blowing horn' shot), nor the VIP portrait (or: 'man with guitar neck'). While those who were close to McGregor might just be able to recognise him in this photograph, and, perhaps, also better understand the situation in which he is depicted, any other viewer is left looking for an accompanying explanation as to what they are supposed to be looking at.'*

Motivation:

The single image reproduced in *Beyond the Blues* is accompanied by biographical and anecdotal information written by Gordon and other photographs Breakey took of McGregor playing the piano during rehearsal and on stage. It is a round portrayal, filling some of the musicological gaps in public memory.

The contact sheet fragment, however, with this image on the left and the one of the anonymous elderly couple on the right, does not lend itself to that kind of story. It contains something extra, something beyond or outside of that story, in that sense it constitutes a Derridean *supplement*.<sup>139</sup> Placed across a double page spread of a magazine, it appears unexpectedly as a spectre from our collective past. This curatorial motion follows in the footsteps of the Lettrist International, which intervened in mass print media typically via written, conceptual artworks in small 'placed' advertisements. The image speaks first, and it does not have to 'talk jazz' – an endnote points to its provenance, and new engagements with the archive begin.

---

<sup>139</sup> 'Supplement means both replacement and addition, that which at once supplements and supplants. It can mean the adding of something to something that is already complete in itself; or it can mean the adding of something to complete something' (Derrida 1976: 144-5).

#### 4.5 Fragment 12



Figure 49. *Fragment 12* (approximately 8cm x 3cm).

#### Reading:

This fragment contains three images. The first to the left is of the tenor saxophonist Winston Mankunku and is turned 90 degrees to the left. The middle and right hand images are virtually identical, despite the fact that they depict the drummer Louis Moholo-Moholo in motion. This fragment shows the photographer's attempt to get a perfectly sharp image of the drummer's face, which was difficult due to the distance and the slow shutter speed in the low light conditions. Everything about this fragment suggests direction: Breakey's composition with the ride cymbal is spot on, and Moholo-Moholo's gaze double-backs on himself as well as towards a player outside the individual frames, but in this case towards Mankunku, blurred, in motion, obscured behind his large saxophone and the microphone stand. As a whole, the left-to-right reading of this row of images creates a powerful visual rhythm, and evokes an imaginary sound that is confident, challenging.

In a 2009 interview with Neo Muyanga, co-director of the Pan African Space Station (PASS) festival, Louis Moholo-Moholo explains that his given surname, 'Moholo,' means 'great, grand,' whereby his chosen name, the doubled 'Moholo-Moholo,' is intended to musically suggest the infinite repetition à la "Moholo, Moholo, Moholo, ..." to sonically and conceptually reinforce the meaning of 'Louis the great.' There can be no more fitting visual counterpart for this conceptual and defiant semantic move than this photographic fragment of Breakey's. As Moholo-Moholo strides through a musical passage we will never hear, Breakey's shutter clicks twice in quick succession, each time capturing 'Moholo the great' at work, generating the same conceptually infinite echo as Louis' augmented surname does: '*great, great, ...*'

This fragment constitutes a visually very musical image, both in content and in form. It belongs into an entirely different context than the previous images, because it transports – more effectively than a single image could – a sense of the music being played – a powerful, two-three rhythm that says: ‘swing!’

Application:

With its sideways-cum-double-image rhythm of classic stage shots, this fragment begs a decorative, illustrative use. It reads well on a small scale. While Louis Moholo-Moholo is still alive, it could be his business card. He still tours across the globe regularly, for several months every year. The image of this fragment from Breakey’s archive would be disseminated in the jazz scenes of Basel, Stockholm, Tokyo and Chicago, drawing an international interest in the bigger picture through a symbolic site of (archived) jazz photo work in South Africa.



Figure 50. *Fragment 12* envisaged as Louis Moholo-Moholo’s business card.

4.6 Fragment 5



Figure 51. *Fragment 05* (approximately 3cm x 8cm).

Application:

Winston Mankunku's seminal album from 1968 with the title *Yakhal' Inkomo* (Xhosa for 'the scream (cry or bellow) of the bull taken to slaughter') was recorded at the height of Apartheid oppression, when Mankunku was only 24 and had not yet gone into exile. The record epitomised the spirit of the resistance struggle for many South Africans and was a popular success. It could have had a reproduction of *Fragment 05* from Breakey's archive on its cover.

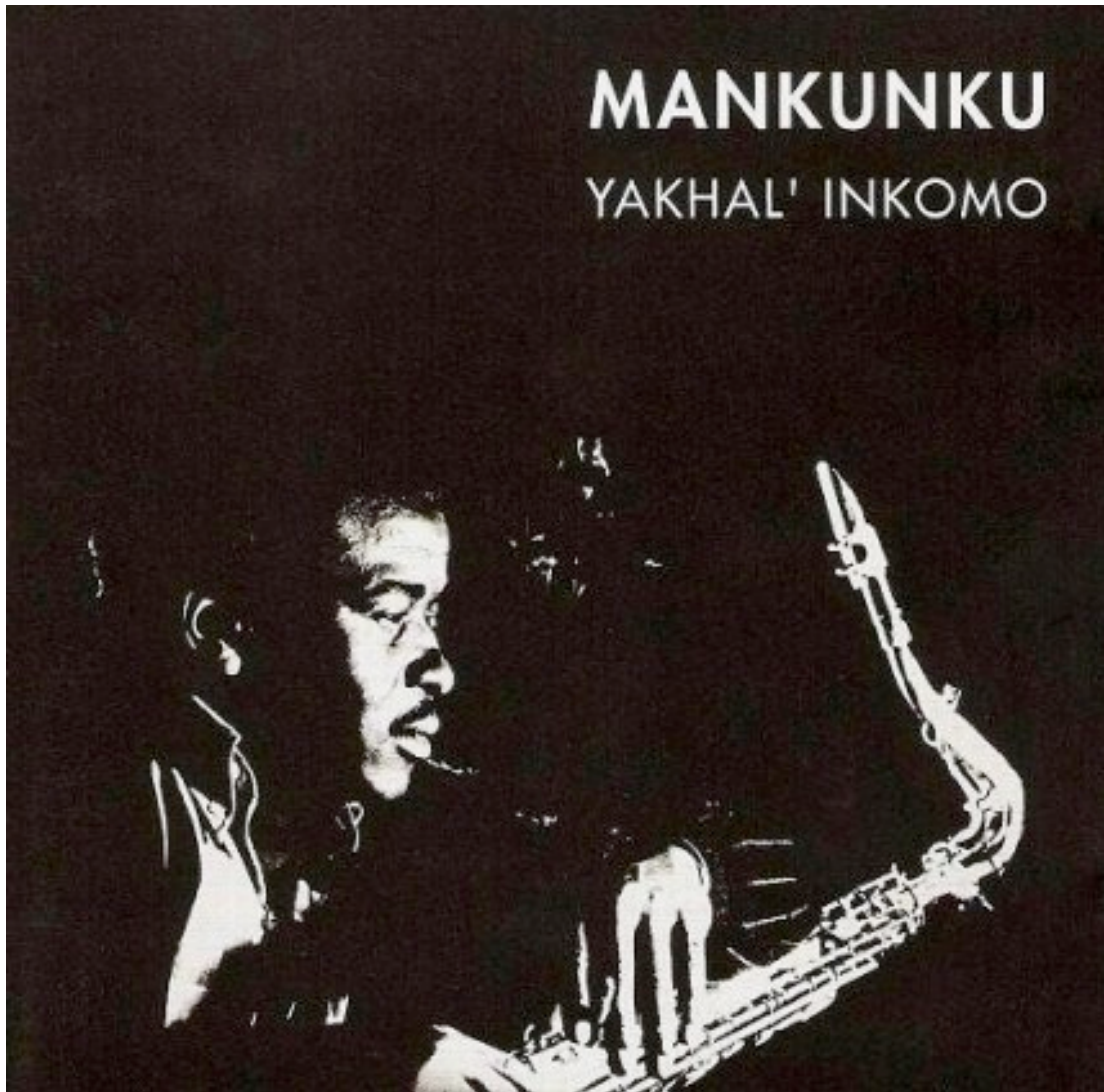


Figure 52. LP cover of MANKUNKU QUARTET, *YAKHAL' INKOMO* (1968). Cover photograph by Alf Khumalo. [Online]. Available: [http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_4KjiXr1ScXA/S2mEhi-aPFI/AAAAAAAAABwQ/9gHSzR7p33Y/s1600-h/MwnYiw.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_4KjiXr1ScXA/S2mEhi-aPFI/AAAAAAAAABwQ/9gHSzR7p33Y/s1600-h/MwnYiw.jpg) [last accessed: 09.11.2011].

Reading (Khumalo):

The LP cover photograph by Alf Khumalo (Figure 49) shows Mankunku in the classical idiom of jazz photography: lots of surrounding darkness, strong tonal contrast chiselling out the thoughtful, wise-beyond-years features of the lone fighter at rest, contemplating something mysteriously out of reach and deep within him while holding his saxophone, now a ‘weapon of the struggle’ – in other words, an expected, clichéd image. In fact, it is likely that Khumalo was drawing inspiration for this image from photographs of John Coltrane, to whom Mankunku, as a highly expressive tenor player, was often compared musically.



Figure 53. *John Coltrane and Miles Davis (background)* (1959) Photo: Don Hunstein. [Online]. Available: <http://www.wliw.org/21pressroom/m/miles-davis-the-sound-of-miles-davis/381/> [last accessed: 03.09.2011].

Reading (Breakey):

In contrast to how these two photographs are set up, showing the pensive, ‘intellectual’ side of jazz, the series of three images on *Fragment 5* shows Mankunku actually using his ‘weapon:’ screaming, screaming and screaming again through the saxophone, almost as if some force above or behind him is compelling him to go beyond all the limits of the body. One image from this filmstrip, again clipped off from this contact sheet fragment, was chosen for *Beyond the Blues* (page 65). On its own, it shows one moment of this boundless playing, but it cannot communicate its duration – the way Mankunku was shaken by it, as we witness so dramatically in the three jumbled frames. Breakey must have known that he was getting something here, standing right in the blast of that sound. Mankunku going down in his knees with expression allowed Breakey to frame even more of the floor between them, resulting in images which communicate the rushing across of an urgent message. Whether by chance or by active legwork, Breakey, even while reframing from vertical to horizontal, placed the horn of the saxophone in front of the amplifier behind Mankunku: few jazz photographs speak so loudly. Here is another cliché, which, for one brief succession of frames, is rendered utterly powerful: ‘man with horn in mouth.’



Figure 54. *Fragment 5* envisaged as cover artwork for a CD reissue of *Yakhal' Inkomo*. The reproduction of the fragment-strip folds out when the cover is opened. The printed CDs themselves present a round crop of that reproduction, thereby constituting a visual element which the listener lifts out.

#### 4.7 Fragments 13 and 15



Figure 55. *Fragment 13* (approximately 10cm x 4cm).

#### Reading:

Visible across five frames in this fragment is musical interaction on stage, a concert situation. Music is being performed, somebody is trying to make photographs of it: some angles work better than others, nothing very remarkable. The photographer is trying to make the negative space work. One image of Abigail Kubeka from this series, not present in this fragment, is reproduced in *Beyond the Blues* (page 45), where the by-line confirms the sense of a big stage: ‘*Abigail Kubeka, Swaziland Independence celebrations, 1968*’ (Breakey & Gordon 1997: 45). Kubeka sings into the vast, dark space. Here, however, due to the unusually flat tone of the print, which is probably due to under fixing, we just see ghosts: flat grey shadows, light impressions of figures, partially emerging from or receding into the dark. The further abstraction of the images produced by technical effects enhances the distance created by the perspective. The musicians feel far away, miniaturised, frozen. It seems strange that this doesn’t happen with so many of the other images, and here, suddenly it does.



Figure 56. *Fragment 15* (approximately 8cm x 3cm).



### Application:

The fragments are blown up to 100 – 1000 times their size (1m – 10m long side) and ‘wallpapered’ onto large walls in public spaces. Either fragment is ‘folded’ into or ‘wrapped’ over a large corner section, in order to visually maintain the integrity of their physicality. Conceptually, the translation via projection into mural painting translates these composite image-fragments into ‘life-sized’ *background* images, framing the interactions and situations between people in front of it. Woodstock, the former District Six or the City Bowl District all have walls which would take on these passed musical heroes, and represent them to a new generation of Cape Town’s inhabitants as a visual tribute. It is crucial to maintain the ‘oddness’ of the shape of the fragments, for it points to the provenance of the fragment: Breakey’s, and in this sense *our collective* archive.



Figure 57. *Fragment 15* envisaged as an interior mural in an urban cafe.

#### 4.8 Fragments 4 and 14



Figure 58. *Fragment 04* (approximately 8cm x 3cm).

#### Reading:

Several visual elements of completely different orders come together to create the sense of dynamism in these two fragments, particularly if they are viewed together. As we read *Fragment 4* (Figure 58) from left to right, an abstract composition unfolds, aided by the fact that the dividing lines between the three frames are obscured in the flat black surrounding the musicians. The central focus is the alto saxophonist Dudu Pukwana listening, sitting in his white shirt and sunglasses, a real 'hip cat.' Framing him from the right *and* the left, from across the frame, is the trumpeter Mongezi Feza. As we proceed with reading towards the right hand side of the fragment, the composition tilts, two trumpet bells face off, and the piece is over like a needle being flung off the record. Infinite readings are possible – this one draws attention to the curious compositional force that various photographic techniques have produced here. *Fragment 14* (Figure 58), is a particularly lively set of images for a Western reader due to the fact the Breakey moved, shot by shot, from facing the stage to standing by the left of the stage. As we read the visual narrative, watching the musicians trade solos, we are reading in the opposite direction to how the camera perspective shifts. This kind of dynamism is unattainable with a single shot.



Figure 59. *Fragment 14*.

## Application:

With their horizontal, oblong format and the progression of four closely related images, these are images that work well installed in a corridor. The most relevant type of public corridor in Cape Town for this set of jazz imagery of Breakey's is the South African College of Music (SACM), which offers degrees in jazz.<sup>140</sup> As students walk by these images, they are regarding their professional predecessors in a formal presentation that combines the aesthetics and modalities of ancestral portraiture and movie posters. Most importantly, however, the unconventional logic of the imaged fragments points directly to the visual archive. The fact that this archive is troubled in the double sense of what it bears of the past and how it is not borne enough in the present becomes as equally visible in the enlarged fragments as the jazz players whose music and history the students learn about. Particularly in the environment of tertiary education, such artefacts serve to create and interrogate the next generation's sense of history, identity and place. To offer jazz students an engagement with a visual archive as pertinent to their field as Breakey's fragmentary one is to offer incommensurably more than what can be offered through conventional jazz genre photographs. To offer rich and relevant information of this kind is to encourage an envisioning of a future that includes the past as a complex spectre where fracture and loss coexist with heroism and genius.

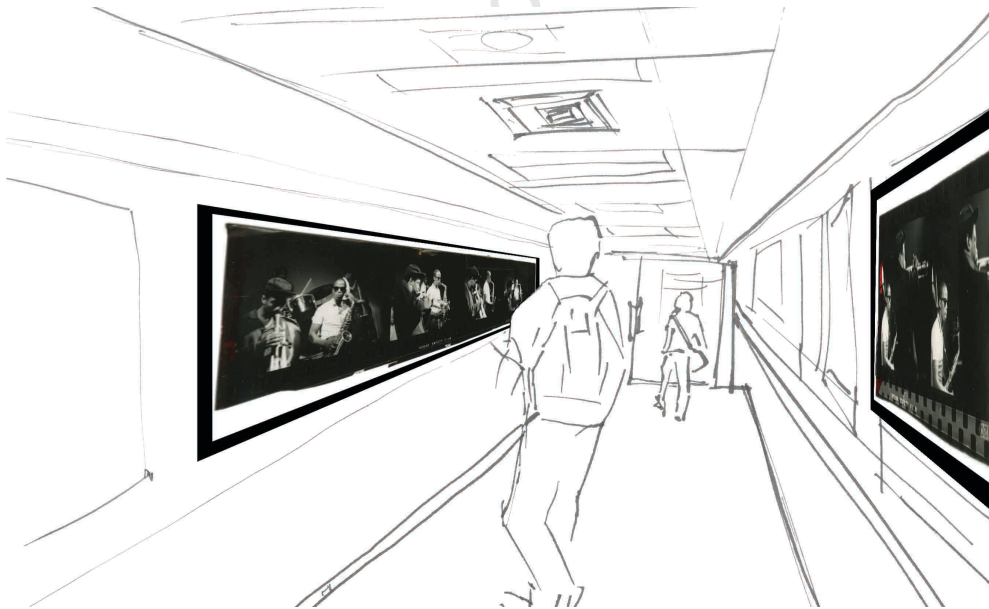


Figure 60. *Fragment 04* and *Fragment 14* installed in an institutional corridor, such as the South African College of Music (SACM), Cape Town. The visual archive is in practise. Illustration: Sunette Viljoen.

---

<sup>140</sup> Incidentally, Louis Moholo-Moholo has recently given a considerable donation to the Jazz department to set up a scholarship for previously disadvantaged students.

#### 4.9 Space

The exemplary readings and curatorial applications in this chapter have served to introduce a vision of Breakey's archival fragments as providing intertextual, layered sites of engagement with the visual archive from a number of different perspectives. There is no doubt that there is a large range of possibilities, and some of the proposals made have been purposefully irreverent in that regard. When working with archival material many ethical questions automatically arise, and with regard to documentary photographs of people the number of questions increases further. This dimension has been noted already in chapter one. However, it is hoped that at this point the reader may feel convinced that the combination of Breakey's particular subject position with his photography as archival material can support the curatorial intentions invested in the envisaged appropriations and interventions. I will conclude this chapter with a question to which I have no answer, followed by a catalogue of the remaining fragments in the archive.

There are a number of fragments that I have poured over repeatedly for months, and which I have come to like so much that I have desired to put them up in my home. Naturally, that would constitute a kind of theft, unless I got specific permission from Basil Breakey to do so. More importantly, this desire has confronted me with the question of private and public intentionalities. As soon as objects are shifted from the archive, which is public, into the private realm, the manner in which this happens as well as the motivations behind the general move and its specific manifestations become tantamount. There is no doubt that this is true also for a public-to-public curatorial-archival engagement, but the sense of public responsibility taken, and the public possibility to protest make this process paradoxically safer. In the private space, where 'das Unheimliche'<sup>141</sup> is at home, the desire to engage the archive possessively is troublesome. Of course there are innumerable kinds of spaces, and none are either wholly 'private' or wholly 'public.' Foucault (1967) pointed to a number of spaces that he called 'Heterotopias' that show up how contingent our uses, orderings and conceptions of space are. The question I have no answer for is, after much deliberation on what I have been calling 'applications,' whether private spaces – in a narrow conception – can or should be activated for this kind of project at all.

---

<sup>141</sup> Freud, S. 1919. *Das Unheimliche*. Project Gutenberg. 2010. [Online]. Available: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/34222> [last accessed: 09.01.2012].



Fig. 61. *Fragments 12, 10, 05 and 07* envisaged as a private collection of photographic prints. Illustration: Sunette Viljoen.

Making Breakey's fragments private property would be entirely counterproductive to a project that uses them as a conduit for making visual history publically *available*. To allow them to enter a marketplace that rarefies with ulterior motives, extrinsic to the work, would be to strip them of this potential again. They would merely enter a new archive, and their public life would be limited. That is the first part of the unanswerable question, because the answer it begs lies beyond what usually is said in answer to such concerns raised in the art world: yes, they are now tangible objects with a monetary value, but that is what makes their public dissemination and discussion possible in the first place – the collector's motivation to possess and gain on investment brings the work in view via reproductions and shows.

The range of limitations that come with such a system is large, and at some point insurmountable. One approach to address this would be to not limit the editions, to make affordable posters for instance, and let the tastes of the public decide, which brings up the other part of the question: where are the subjects in the images when this work is 'at home'? The aesthetic beauty of many of these images, particularly in their agglomerative constellations, is undeniable, but so is that of the photographs in the form Breakey intended them to be viewed.

To regard reproductions of his contact sheets with the nostalgia associated with the possession of beautiful items (however inexpensive) is to rob them of most of their potential to engage the public visual archive meaningfully. Put pointedly: public irreverence – offence even – still

presents an opportunity, whereas private reverence constitutes a dead-end for a project of this nature. After all, this remains a question without answer. Therefore, the following pages show those fragments for which there is much ‘reading,’ but no ‘application.’ I have desired them as artworks in my home, and this desire has been at conflict with the project of envisaging.

#### 4.10 Fragment 11



Figure 62. *Fragment 11* (approximately 2,5cm x 7,5cm).

Reading, and a wish:

*Fragment 11* (Figure 62) is my favourite image of the entire collection. I want to make it mine perhaps because it can never be mine, more than any of the others. It contains more absence than presence. It is the kind of fragment that communicates the question of its own continued existence most clearly. It presents less photographic image than it does hacked-out framing in the form of underexposed photographic paper; it is a fragment of a fragment, a last remainder before nothing at all is left. The last photograph of what once were three occupies the bottom left corner of the fragment, the right-hand edge of which extends upwards like the hacked stem of a now branchless, leafless tree.

The image itself, a stage-shot of a saxophonist playing, with part of a drum set visible in the background, is heavily blurred by the slow shutter speed in combination with the (what looks like upward, backward) movement of the musician with his horn, arching while playing. This photograph fails the descriptive function of recognisably portraying a specific person due to the motion blur. The name of this man in ecstasy is no longer important. The shutter speed was too slow to arrest the saxophonist's face in time and space onto the picture plane. The result is an image of a small *period* in time, tracing human experience rather than divisible moments.

This photograph alone cannot describe or confirm Pukwana's identity, yet in the context of this fragment it is alone – it has literally been abandoned, left behind. Presented as a lone reminder, it takes on a new significance: it shows a jazz saxophonist as such – not because the viewer does not know him, as would be the case with an 'uninitiated' reader lacking in enough knowledge of local jazz culture to know this player – but because the viewer cannot know him. Within a fragment that communicates something of how jazz photographs were being produced in the 60s, we see an image of jazz being played as such. The deictic failure of the leftover photograph in combination with the neurotic conditionality of the archive that keeps everything, even what was discarded on the cutting room floor becomes the poetic, 'timeless' achievement of the contact sheet fragment. The viewer is offered a 'real' glimpse – a glimpse that takes on significance in combination with a frame that tells something of the various contextual conditions that this glimpse forms a part of and now speaks to. There is nothing to be *done about* this image. Moving through having wanted to possess it, not being able to know how to share its beauty appropriately, all that is left is the wish for it to be preserved and made available for others to experience, in a real archive.



Figure 63. *Fragment 07* (approximately 3cm x 4cm).



Figure 64. *Fragment 10* (approximately 10cm x 3cm).





Figure 65. *Fragment 06* (approximately 3cm x 11cm).

## Coda

For a number of years I have been fascinated by the futility of most photography, in particular in those situations where the desire to capture a special moment seems to take over all reason in the person wielding the camera. This irrational photographic reflex can be observed in full flight at musical concerts. In February 2011 I was asked by arts journalist Miles Keylock (now editor-in-chief of Rolling Stone South Africa) to photograph U2's '360 degree' tour concert at Green Point Stadium for GQ online. All I could find interesting to make a visual record of were the 72.000 people gathered there that night, each and every one of whom was holding a mobile phone or camera in the air, capturing still and moving images of whatever part of the spectacle that was taking place in front of them.



Figure 66. U2 performing at Greenpoint Stadium, February 2011. Photo: Niklas Zimmer.

A very conservative guess at how many images were probably taken that night in the stadium would be: approximately two million. Much of this flood of image-data, and we may safely guess that the visual multiplications of the same subject were immense, was instantly shared, wirelessly via MMS, email, Facebook, Flickr, and so on. Already in the 1930s, Walter Benjamin began to consider critically this inversion of the traditional relationships between subject and 'artist' (image-maker): *'The desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly is just as*

*ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction'* (1935: 225).

Ever since the practice of art has been historically recorded, it has been common for a singular artist to depict masses of soldiers at war, or to pick a particularly beautiful or otherwise noteworthy and important specimen out from the crowd to serve as his model. In the course of the history of photography, this dynamic has changed radically. Susan Sontag has written extensively about the quasi-pornographic relationship between horror and pleasure in images, as well as the photographer's two main subjects, nudity and suffering (2003). In the present situation of the concert, which could be placed on a continuum between those dramatic extremes of total victimisation and total objectification, the members of the crowd take the images, and the artist-musician-celebrity presents himself to them as the model for innumerable iterations, reproductions of reproductions, to be disseminated without delay, broadcast in a multitude of directions.

This practice of sharing images, via social media and other electronic pathways and platforms, is one of the endlessly sub-contained 'programmes' of photography about which Vilém Flusser has theorised (1994). While, according to Flusser, the overall programming of 'photography' is to run through all of its options until each and every possible photograph is taken, the impulse to take pictures without thinking too much about it is satisfied, and financially exploited, by a variety of markets saturated with capturing and sharing technology. New sharing needs are created all the time. In fact, through mobile phone technology, one now no longer has the option *not* to have a camera on one's person at all times, and, additionally, many of us have already forfeited the option not to be online at any time, or in any place. As consumers, we are controllable producers of the wealth of others. In this neo-liberal, globalised age, humans are arranged along a spectrum of 'buying power.' As consumers, we are now button-pushers, fulfilling the requirements of the machine we will be programming until it becomes more intelligent than ourselves<sup>142</sup>. This present condition was science fiction until only recently, and theories of the technological image, such as those by Benjamin, Sontag, Flusser and Roland Barthes no longer fully or adequately address the 'fallout' of photography with which we are now faced.

At the very opposite end of a visual-photographic continuum to U2 performing at Green Point Stadium in the year 2011 lie the rare photographic documents of live jazz in small venues in downtown Johannesburg in the 1960s.

---

<sup>142</sup>'Singularitarianism is a technocentric ideology and social movement that is defined by the belief that a technological singularity — the creation of a superintelligence — is a likely possibility within the medium-term future, and that deliberate action ought to be taken to ensure that "the Singularity" occurs in a way beneficial to humans.' [Online]. Available: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singularitarianism> [last accessed: 12.04.2011].

## Conclusion

*“When you ask a photographer about his jazz images, you’re asking him about everything”*  
(McKenzie 2010).

Having first problematised the question of an appropriate discursive framework in which to situate a study of this nature, I have opened ‘photography’ up as a theoretical plane of reference upon which several traditionally discreet disciplines converge, with the aim of creating a framework of sufficient complexity to grasp the objects of study, namely a small collection of South African ‘jazz’ photographer Basil Breakey’s archival remains of contact sheets and contact sheet fragments.

Taking on the position of artist-curator, I have performed exemplary readings and stagings of these objects in order to envision an active public presence for them beyond the archive. This presence has been envisaged as one in which they would serve not as artworks per se, but as operating artwork-like, constituting accessible links to a visual history of South African jazz culture that exists but is currently difficult to imagine, because its repositories are so scattered and inaccessible.

I have problematised the push and pull between different uses of photographs and highlighted the ongoing need of critical reflection with regard to subject positions and social responsibility, particularly with regard to the dynamics of commercialism in the art market, which undercut the potential that such curatorial interventions and appropriations as envisaged here can have.

Basil Breakey’s contact sheets and fragments comprise powerfully complex visual material that engages other dimensions than the purely aesthetic or sensational. They can provide South African jazz discourse with a new visuality. Particularly the fragments resist offering up general meanings, and engage a subjective awareness, a more differentiated collage of a past that is continually lost or forever precluded by genre conventions, historical misrepresentations and other types of reductionist categorisation.

Many histories converge on these miniature composite technical by-products, and further research on them looks promising. Through the lens of these objects, Breakey’s photographic achievements remain intriguingly open and impossible to co-opt into conventional narratives,

since they are essentially anti-typological and anti-topographical. Much like the people whose likenesses hover within the layered surfaces of these contact prints, their ebbing and flowing into and out of the archive imbues them with a defiant, historical resonance.

The field of the visual arts and its related disciplines of documentary (art) photography play an active part in identifying, analysing and responding to vital changes in the creation of historical knowledge in the local context. In positioning myself as artist-curator, I have attempted to make the fragments work towards a variety of readings, staging proposed applications that range from 'conventional' fine art hangings to urban-interventionist and mass, popular media placements. Every performance exploits the layered composition of the material, but it cannot exhaust it. Every appropriation and intervention makes the work an actuality, but is itself only complementary to all other performances of the work. Other approaches can further enrich this material. These proposals have been made in view of enriching the public reception of local jazz culture as well as opening up jazz discourse to new visual approaches.

It would be satisfying to see reproductions of Breakey's contact sheets and contact sheet fragments go into various public realms. At least two challenges would have to be addressed: for one, the artist's wish: it is conceivable that Breakey himself would not be open to making the images publically available in this way. Secondly, funds would have to be raised to produce, place and install the works. If the negotiations resulted in a decision to recoup such costs, and generate an income from sales, new dynamics would come into play, which may well result in the reproductions becoming 'spectacular' objects with a market value. This would in some instances run counter to what this work ideally represents: a spectre of South Africa's collective history presented through open sites of visibility in relation to urban life in the South African '60s – an opportunity to remember anew, differently. In a best-case scenario, at least some of the placements and installations are temporary and sponsored, and no new contractual or financial agreements are entered into, allowing the work to exist without the weight of exclusive power. Perhaps also, the sheets and fragments will just continue to lie in their folder in Gordon's office, waiting for yet another researcher's engagement. In that case, the present text, the interviews conducted and the digital scans made will provide some material to consult.

## Appendix

Venues [Jazz, Cape Town]
The Ambassadors, The Bass [CBD], Cosmopolitan Hall, Darryl's, Duma's Falling Leaves Jazz Rendezvous [Gugulethu], Independent Armchair Theatre [Observatory], Langa community center [Langa], Mahogany Room, Manenberg's Jazz Cafe [CBD], Mobray Town, Rita's, Silvertree Boys Club, Speedway Cafe [Gardens], St Paul's Benefit Society Lodge, Staggersby Hostel (D6), Tafelberg Tavern [Gardens], Teazers [Harrington street], The Arts Centre [Green Point Common], The Mix [CBD], On Broadway [CBD], The Catacombs, The Chiquita, The Green Dolphin [Waterfront], The Jazz Den, The Mermaid Club, The Montreal Lounge, The Tombs, Weizmann Hall, Woodstock Town Hall

Photographers [Jazz, Cape Town]
Adam Welz, Alf Khumalo, Basil Breakey, Billy Monk (1937-1982), Cedric Nunn, Chris Ledochowski, David Marks, Dex Gordon, Eddie Koch, Eugene Arries, Fanie Jason, Gavin Pieterse, George Hallett, Gideon Mendel, Ginger Odes, Graeme Williams, Gregory Franz, Hardy Stockman, Ian Huntley, Ingrid Masondo, Jeeva Rajgopaul, Joe Skaffers, John Goldblatt, Jonx Pillemer, Jürgen Schadeberg, Michael Wyeth, Mike Mzileni, Mothlalefi Mahlabe, Mzi Mtola, Neo Ntsoma, Omar Badsha, Paul Weinberg, Peter Magubane, Peter McKenzie, Ranjith Kally, Rashid Lombard, Rodney Barnett, Santu Mofokeng, Shadley Lombard, Steve Gordon, Terry February, Tine Smith, Vincent Kolbe

Musicians [Jazz, Cape Town]
Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) [piano], Agrippa Mogwaza [bass], Alf Wyllie, Allen Kwela [guitar], Allou April [guitar, vocals], Andile Mseleku, Andile Yenana, Andrew Lilley [piano], Barney Rachabane [sax], Basil Coetzee [sax], Bheki Mseleku [piano], Bob Tizzard [trombone], Bokani Dyer [piano], Brian Abrahams [drums], Buddy Wells [sax], Carlo Mombelli [bass], Cecil Barnard (Hotep Idris Galeta) [piano] (1941 – 2010), Chris "Cup-and-Saucers" Ngcukana [baritone], Chris McGregor [piano], Christopher

"Columbus" Ngcukana, Christopher Columbus, Churchill Jolobe, Claude Deppa [trumpet], Cups Nkanuka, Danayi Dlova, Dave Ledbetter [guitar], Dennis Mpali, Donald Mahwetsa Laka [piano], Donald Tshomela [vocals], Dorothy Masuka [vocals], Dudu Pukwana [alto], Duke Makasi, Duke Ngcukana [trumpet & flugelhorn], Early Mabuza [drums], Enoch Mthalane [guitar], Ezra Ngcukana [tenor sax], Faz, Feya Faku [trumpet & flugelhorn], Frank Paco, Gary Kriel, Gavin Minter, Gito Baloi, Gorm Helfjord [guitar], Harold Jephta, Harry Miller [bass], Heinrich Goosen [drums], Herbie Tsoaeli [bass], Hilton Schilder, Hugh Masekela, Ian Herman [drums], Jason Reolon [piano], Jeanie Bryson [vocals], Jeff Weiner, Jimmy Adams, Johnny Dyani, Johnny Fourie [guitar], Johnny Mbizo Dyani [piano], Jonas Gwangwa, Jonathan Butler [guitar], Judith Sephuma, Kenny Japhta, Kesivan Naidoo [drums], Kippie "Morolong" Moeketsi [alto / clarinet], Kippie Moeketsi, Kutlwano Moagi, Kyle Shepherd [piano, sax], Letta Mbuli [vocals], Lionel Pillay [piano], Louis Tebugo Moholo(-Moholo) [drums], Lucky Ranku (guitar), Mac McKenzie, Marcus Wyatt [trumpet, Flugelhorn], Mark Fransman (sax, piano), Martin Kijima, McCoy Mrubata [sax, flute], Melanie Scholtz (vocals, piano), Merry Maxter, Merton Barrow, Mike Perry [piano], Miriam Makeba [vocals], Mitch Pike [Bass], Mongezi Feza [trumpet / flute], Mongezi Velelo [bass], Monty Weber [drums], Moreira Chonguica [sax], Morris Gawronsky, Morris Goldberg, Moses Taiwa Molelekwa [piano], Mzimkulu "Danayi" Dlova [alto], Nataniël [guitar], Neil Gonsalves, Nikele Moyake [tenor], Paul Abrahams [bass], Paul Hanmer [piano], Paul Sedres [saxophone], Pete Sklair [Bass], Pinise Saul [vocals], Ray Phiri [guitar], Robbie Jansen [alto sax], Roger Kaza [piano], Ronnie Beer [tenor], Roy Petersen [piano], Sakhile Moleshe [vocals], Sammy Hartman [piano], Sammy Maritz [bass], Sathima Bea Benjamin (vocals), Sean Bergin [sax, flute], Shannon Mowday [sax], Shaun Johannes [bass], Siphon Gumede, Stan Lombard, Ted Fraser, Temmy Hawker, Tete Mbambisa [piano], Thandi Klaasen [vocals], Tony Butala, Tony Schilder [piano], Tutu Puoane [vocals], Victor Ntoni [bass], Vincent Kolbe [piano] (1933-2010), Werner Puntigam, Wesley Rustin [bass], Willie Netie [trombone], Willie van Bloomenstein, Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi [sax] (1943-2009), Zelda Benjamin, Zim Ngqawana [sax, flute]

## Bibliography

- Adams, A. Ansel Adams. *PhotoQuotes.com – Quotations from the World of Photography*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.photoquotes.com/ShowQuotes.aspx?id=10&name=Adams,Ansel> [last accessed: 10.03.2010].
- Adams, R. 1996. *Why People Photograph*. New York: Aperture.
- African Centre for Cities / Centre for Urban and Built Environments Studies (ACC-CUBES). 2010. *Call for Contributions: South African City Studies Conference: 7-9 September 2011*. [Online]. December 2010. Available: <http://www.google.com/url?q=http://africancentreforcities.net/download/assets/sacsc-call.pdf&sa=U&ei=bmcIT-7iBrDimAWI3rioAg&ved=0CAQQFjAA&client=internal-uds-cse&usg=AFQjCNEVGIWIIOTkqUomMJOEnx978aPvlQ> [last accessed: 24.01.2011].
- Alan, P. 1956. Review: A Pictorial History of Jazz: People and Places From New Orleans to Modern Jazz. Keepnews, O. & Grauer, B. Jr. *Notes, Second Series*. 13(3). New York: Crown Publishers. 429-430. [Online]. Music Library Association. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/893321> [last accessed: 13.07.2010].
- ANON. 2008. Arts in the Apartheid Era. *Roddy Bray's Guide to Cape Town*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.capetown.at/heritage/history/apart\\_silent\\_arts\\_art.htm](http://www.capetown.at/heritage/history/apart_silent_arts_art.htm) [last accessed 21.10.2011].
- ANON. 2011. Category: Photography by genre. *Wikipedia*. [Online]. Available: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Photography\\_by\\_genre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Photography_by_genre) [last accessed: 23.01.2011].
- ANON. 2011. Master of Fine Arts. *Wikipedia*. [Online]. Available: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master\\_of\\_Fine\\_Arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Fine_Arts) [last accessed: 21.04.2011].
- Ansell, G. 2005. *Soweto Blues, Jazz, Popular Music & Politics in South Africa*. New York: Continuum.



- Assmann, A. 2008. Remembrance and Memory (extract). Translated by Flügel, E.  
*Constructed Memory, Dealing with the Past, Learning from History – Cultural Memory.*  
 Goethe-Institut. [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.goethe.de/ges/pok/dos/dos/ern/kug/en3106036.htm> [last  
 accessed: 29.06.2011].
- Barnes, M., Perks, B. & Williams, V. (Eds.). 1998. *Talking Photography – catalogue of the  
 Audio and Visual Collections at the British Library National Sound Archive.* London:  
 The British Library National Sound Archive.
- Barrow, M. 1998. Interviewed by Colin Miller (Cat no), 31.07.1998. Centre for Popular  
 Memory Archive, UCT.
- Barthes, R. 1972. *The Rustle of Language.* Translated by Howard, R., 1981. Berkeley:  
 University of California Press.
- Barthes, R. 1981. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography.* Translated by Howard, R. New  
 York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc.
- Batchen, G. 1999. *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography.* Cambridge:  
 MIT Press.
- Bate, D. 2009. *Photography: The Key Concepts.* New York: Berg Publishers.
- Becker, H. S. 2004. Jazz Places. Bennett, A. & Peterson, R. A. (Eds.) *Music Scenes: Local,  
 Translocal, and Virtual.* Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. 17–27.
- Benjamin, W. 1927-1940. *The Arcades Project.* Translated by Eiland, H. and McLaughlin,  
 K. Edited by Tiedeman, R., 2002. Cambridge: Belknap Press.
- Benjamin, W. 1931. *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie.* Translated by Patton, P.,  
 1977. Trachtenberg, A. (Ed). 1980. *Classic Essays on Photography.* New Haven:  
 Leete's Island Books. 199-216.
- Benjamin, W. 1935. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.* [Online].  
 Available:  
<http://ada.evergreen.edu/~arunc/texts/frankfurt/benjamin/benjamin.pdf> [last  
 accessed: 2011.04.03].

- Benjamin, W. 1969. *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Translated by Zohn, H. Arendt, H. (Ed.). *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Berger, J. & Mohr, J. 1982. *Another Way of Telling*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Berger, J. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Bookhardt, E. 2011. Sebastiao Salgado: Photographs. *Gambit*. 10 January. [Online]. Available: <http://www.bestofneworleans.com/gambit/sebastiao-salgado-photographs/Content?oid=1508013> [last accessed: 06.07.2011].
- Bourdieu, P. 1972. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourriaud, N. 1998. *Relational Aesthetics*. Translated by Pleasence, S. & Woods, F., 2002. Dijon: Les presses du réel.
- Breakey, B. & Gordon, S. 1997. *Beyond The Blues: Township Jazz in the '60s and '70s*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Bredenkamp, H. 2003. A Neglected Tradition? Art History as Bildwissenschaft. *Critical Inquiry*. 29(3): 418-428.
- Brentano, F. 1874. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. McAlister, L. L. (Ed.) London: Routledge, 1995.
- Broomberg, A. & Chanarin, O. 2004. *Mr. Mkhize's Portrait*. London: Trolley Books. [no page numbers in book].
- Calvino, I. 1988. Six Memos for the Next Millennium: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1985- 86. New York: Vintage.
- Chimurenga Newsroom. 2009. *A Legacy of Note... Louis Mobolo in conversation with Neo Mnyanga*. [Online]. available: <http://www.chimurenganewsroom.org.za/?p=3945> [last accessed: 15.12.2011].
- Claxton, W 2012. *Jazz Life*. New York: AMMO Books.
- Clifford, J. & Marcus, G. E. (Eds.) 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography (A School of American Research Advanced Seminar)*. California: University of California Press.

- Coplan, D. 1982 The Urbanisation of African Music: Some Theoretical Observations. *Popular Music, Vol. 2, Theory and Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 112-129. [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/852978> [last accessed: 14.07.2010 08].
- Crist, S. 2009. *The Contact Sheet*. New York: AMMO Books.
- David Griffin On How Photography Connects. 2008. [Video]. New York: TED. [Online]. Available: [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/david\\_griffin\\_on\\_how\\_photography\\_connects.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/david_griffin_on_how_photography_connects.html) [last accessed: 11.03.2011].
- de Certeau, M. 1984. Walking in the City. During, S. 1993. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge. 151-160.
- Debord, G. 1967. *Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Parry, R. London: Rebel Press, 2004.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1980. A Thousand Plateaus. Translated by Massumi, B. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Volume 2*. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Deleuze, G. 1968. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Patton, P., 1994. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. 1995. *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Department of Arts and Culture. 2010. *Arts and Culture Minister, Mr Paul Mashatile MP Pays Tribute to South African Jazz Legend, Tony Schilder*. [Press release]. 13 December. Available: [http://www.dac.gov.za/media\\_releases/2010/13-12-2010.html](http://www.dac.gov.za/media_releases/2010/13-12-2010.html) [last accessed 12.02.2011].
- Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage. 2011. *Museum Africa celebrates Memory*. 16 May. [Online]. Available: <http://www.joburg.org.za/culture/latest-news/303-museum-africa-celebrates-memory> [last accessed: 09.10.2010].
- Derrida, J. 1996. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Prenowitz, E. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. 1976. *Of Grammatology*, 1976. trans. G. C. Spivak. Baltimore, Md: Johns

- Hopkins University Press. p.144-5.
- Duiker, S., Koloane, D., Kroner, M. & Martin, M. (Authors). Hiekisch-Picard, S. & Golinski, H. G. (Eds.) 2005. *New Identities: Contemporary Art from South Africa*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz.
- Dvorak, M. 2002. Carol Shields and the poetics of the quotidian. *Journal of the Short Story in English*. 38 (Special issue: Poetics of the everyday in the Canadian short story). 57-71.
- Elkins, J. (Ed.) 2010. *Photo Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Elkins, J. 1999. *The Domain of Images*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Elkins, J. 2002. *Visual Studies: A Sceptical Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Ellison, R. 2003 *Collected Essays*, in: Shields, D. [undated] *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*, [Online], Available: <http://realityhunger.com/J.shtml> [last accessed: 15/05/2011].
- Enwezor, O. 2001. *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*. London: Prestel.
- Fischer, O. & Ljungberg, C. 2009. Iconicity: a definition. *Seventh Biennial Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.semioticon.com/virtuals/iconicity/index.html> [last accessed: 19.07.2011].
- Flusser, V. 1983. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. Translated by Mathews, A., 2000. London: Reaktion. 2000.
- Foster, A. 1996. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Foster, H. 1996. *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Foucault, M. 1969. *Archaeology of Knowledge and the discourse on language*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

- Frizot, M. 2010. Who's afraid of Photons? Translated by Kibby, T. Elkins, J. (Ed.) 2010. *Photo Theory*. New York and London: Routledge. 269-284.
- Genosko, G. 1998. *Undisciplined Theory*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Goldblatt, D. 2011. Interviewed by Niklas Zimmer (Cat no. Avi6.07), 04.03.2011. Centre for Popular Memory Archive, UCT.
- Gombrich, E. H. & Woodfield, R. (Eds.) 1987. *Reflections on the History of Art: Views and Reviews*. California: University of California Press.
- Gombrich, F. H. 1999. *The Uses of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*. London: Phaidon.
- Gordon, S. 2003. Basil Breakey: Beyond The Blues. *Making Music*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.music.org.za/Editorial.asp?ID=20> [last accessed 01.02.2011].
- Gordon, S. 2011. Interviewed by Niklas Zimmer (Cat no. Avi6.08), 15.03.2011. Centre for Popular Memory Archive, UCT.
- Gridley, M. C. & Rave, W. 1984. Towards Identification of African Traits in Early Jazz. *The Black Perspective in Music*. 12(1) (Spring, 1984). 44-56. [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214968> [last accessed: 14.07.2010].
- Hancock, M. 1996. What is a Photojournalist?. *Photojournalism* [blog]. 1 January. Available: <http://markhancock.blogspot.com/1996/01/what-is-photojournalist.html> [last accessed: 21.06.2010].
- Honey, P. 1997. Tortured Souls: review of Beyond the Blues: Township Jazz in the '60s & '70s by Basil Breakey, David Philip. *Financial Mail*. 23 May. [Online]. Available: <http://secure.financialmail.co.za/97/0523/leispeop/jazz.htm> [last accessed: 12.04.2010].
- Horstkotte, S. & Pedri, N. Introduction: Photographic Interventions. *Poetics Today*, 29 (1). Spring 2008. 12.
- Hurn, D. & Jay, B. 2000. *On Looking at Photographs: A Practical Guide*. Anacortes: Lenswork Publishing.

- Ings, R. 2009. The Hearing Eye: Jazz and Blues Influences in African American Visual Art. *Journal of American Studies*. 44(2010), e35. Graham Lock and David Murray (eds.) New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Xv + 366.
- James, C. 1986. Partial Truths. Erickson, P.A. & Murphy, L.D. (Eds.) 2006. *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Jayawardane, N. 2011. Queering the Congo. *Africa is a Country* [blog]. 21 November. Available: <http://africasacountry.com/2011/11/21/queering-the-congo/> [last accessed: 24.11.2011].
- Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*. 2000. [Film]. Directed by Ken Burns. USA: Florentine Films.
- Johnson, J. 2008. What to do with Invidious Distinctions? *Art Signal Contemporary Art Magazine*. 2007-2008. [Online]. Available: <http://magazine.art-signal.com/en/what-to-do-with-invidious-distinctions/> [last accessed: 15.07.2011].
- Johnson, W. 2011. Social-Documentary Photography, Back in Context. *The New Yorker: Photobooth* [blog]. 9 December. Available: <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2011/12/social-forces-visualized.html#ixzz1j0JIKeEs> [last accessed: 02.01.2012].
- Jonker, J. 2002. A Silent Way: Routes of South African Jazz 1946 – 1978. *Chimurenga Magazine, Series 1 (Chimurenganyana)*. Book 1 of 6. Cape Town: Chimurenga, 2009.
- Jurgenson, N. 2011. The Faux-Vintage Photo Part II: Grasping for Authenticity. *Society Pages: Cyborgology*. [Online]. Available: <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/05/11/the-faux-vintage-photo-part-ii-grasping-for-authenticity/> [last accessed: 20.11.2011].
- Khoza, K. 2005. Black and White – Breaking the Blues. *Kush.co.za*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.kush.co.za/workarea/show.asp?articleno=48> [last accessed: 10.09.2010].
- Krieger, M. 1984. The Ambiguities of Representation and Illusion: An E. H. Gombrich Retrospective. *Critical Inquiry*. 11(2), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 181-194. [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343390> [last accessed: 03.11.2011].

- Lamster, M. 2011. Did David Burdeny copy Sze Tsung Leong's photographs? *Los Angeles Times*. 28 February. [Online]. Available: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/la-ca-photoplagiarism28-2010feb28,0,4200255.story> [last accessed: 2011.06.03].
- Lefebvre, M. 2007. The Art of Pointing. On Peirce, Indexicality, and Photographic Images. Elkins, J. (Ed.) 2007. *Photography Theory*. New York: Routledge. 220-243.
- Leibovitz, A. 2008. Annie gets her shot (Excerpt from *Annie Leibovitz at Work* New York: Random House). *Vanity Fair*. October 2008. [Online]. Available: [http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2008/10/annie\\_excerpt200810](http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2008/10/annie_excerpt200810) [last accessed 17.06.2010].
- Lemke, J. (date unrecorded) *Multiplying Modalities: Presentational, Orientational, and Organizational Meaning*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.personal.umich.edu/~jaylemke/papers/hypermodality/travels1.htm> [last accessed 14.07.2011].
- Lisson Gallery. 2008. *Spencer Finch: Lux and Lumen | Perplexed in Public*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.re-title.com/exhibitions/archive\\_LissonGallery2617.asp](http://www.re-title.com/exhibitions/archive_LissonGallery2617.asp) [last accessed 09.08.2011].
- Liukkonen, P. & Pesonen, A. 2008. Erwin Panofsky (1892 – 1968). *Kuusankosken kaupunginkirjasto*. [Online]. Available: <http://kirjasto.sci.fi/panof.htm> [last accessed: 10.03.2011].
- Lombard, R. 2011. 'Livin' and breathin' all that jazz' – an interview with Rashid Lombard. Interviewed by Keylock, M. March 18. *Mail & Guardian Online*. [Online]. Available: <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-03-18-livin-and-breathin-all-that-jazz/> [last accessed: 20.04.2011].
- Lubben, K. (Ed.). 2011. *Magnum Contact Sheets*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Lucy, N. 1997. *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Introduction*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell
- Mahlaba, M. 2008. *Jazz: The South African Journey*. Mzileni, M. *All That Jazz: A Pictorial Tribute*. Cape Town: Highbury Safika Media.

- Markowska, M. 2010. Flusser and the Polish (photography) novels. *FLUSSER STUDIES 10*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.flusserstudies.net/pag/10/markowska-polish-novels.pdf> [last accessed: 2011.05.10].
- Mason, J. E. 2010. Vincent Kolbe, Musician, Librarian, Activist, & Sage: 1933-2010. *John Edwin Mason: Documentary, Motorsports, Photo History* [blog]. Available: [http://johnedwinmason.typepad.com/john\\_edwin\\_mason\\_photogra/2010/09/vincent-kolbe-1933-2010.html](http://johnedwinmason.typepad.com/john_edwin_mason_photogra/2010/09/vincent-kolbe-1933-2010.html) [last accessed: 10.10.2010].
- Matich, O. 2007. *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siecle*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- McGregor, L. (Auth., Ed.) and Nuttall, S. (Ed.): *At Risk: Writing on and over the Edge of South Africa*. Cape Town & Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- McKenzie, P. 2011. CTIJF Jazz Photography Workshop with Peter McKenzie. Hosted by ESP Afrika, Fountains Hotel, Cape Town, 22-26.03.2011.
- McLuhan, M. 1964. *Understanding Media – The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Merrington, P. 2011. Rewind the BETAMAX of life: Nam June Paik at Tate Liverpool and FACT. *Rhizome Artbase Blog*. [Online]. 5 January. Available: <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/jan/5/rewind-the-betamax-of-life-nam-june-paik-at-tate-1/> [last accessed: 2011.03.12].
- Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. 1994, revised 2001. *MFA, MA(FA) & MPhil Guidelines*. [Online]. Cape Town: Michaelis School of Fine Art. Available: <http://www.uct.ac.za/about/arts/michaelis/> [last accessed: 21.04.2011].
- Mirzoeff, N. 1999. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 1986. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 2002. Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture. *Journal of Visual Culture*. 1(2). Thousand Oaks: SAGE. 165-181.



- Mitchell, W.J.T. 1994. *Landscape and Power*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Mobley, P. 2011. Showing a Contact Sheet. *Road Diaries: A Photographer's Journey*. 11(5). [Online]. Available: <http://www.mobleyshoots.com/2011/07/showing-a-contact-sheet.html> [last accessed: 23.08.2011].
- Moholo-Moholo, L. 2011. Interviewed by Niklas Zimmer (Cat no. Avi6.09), 12.01.2012. Centre for Popular Memory Archive, UCT.
- Moxey, K. 2010. *What Does Visual Studies Do? Interview with Keith Moxey*. Centre for Visual Studies. [Online]. Available: <http://www.visual-studies.com/interviews/moxey.html> [last accessed: 21.04.2011].
- Muller, C. 2006. *The New African Diaspora, the Built Environment and the Past in Jazz*, Ethnomusicology Forum, Volume 15, Issue 1, 2006 (Special Issue: the past in music), p. 63-86.
- Muller, C. A. 2002. *Voice/Over? Twentieth Century American Music in Diaspora*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/ConferenceArchive/voiceover/diaspora.html> [last accessed: 04.02.2011].
- Myers, H. & Christie, T. 2006. Talking Pictures: John Szarkowski on the good, the bad and the flat in American photography. *LA Weekly*. 7 December. [Online]. Available: <http://www.laweekly.com/content/printVersion/51129/> [last accessed: 03.01.2012].
- Ndebele, N. S. 2010. *Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative*. University of Cape Town. [Online]. Available: <http://www.apc.uct.ac.za/about/> [last accessed 12.03.2011].
- Nicolescu, B. 2006. Transdisciplinarity as Methodological Framework for Going Beyond the 'Science-Religion' Debate. *Metanexus, 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference*. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia June 3-7, 2006. [Online]. Available: <http://www.metanexus.net/magazine/tabid/68/id/10013/Default.aspx> [last accessed: 23.04.2011].
- Nichols, B. 1981. *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Nietzsche, F. 1883-85. Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Translated by Del Caro, A., 2006. *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 256-273.
- Nixon, M. 1995. The World of Jazz in Inner Cape Town – 1940 to 1960. *Papers presented at the Symposium on Ethnomusicology No. 13, University of Zululand, 1995; and the Symposium on Ethnomusicology No. 14, Rhodes University 1996*.19-23.
- Nkosi, L. 1966. Jazz in Exile. *Transition*. 1966(24). [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2934513> [last accessed: 14.07.2010].
- Nuttal, S. 2009. *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-apartheid*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- O’Kane, J. 1985. History and the Production of Memory. *Critical Arts*. 3(3). 53-56.
- O’Toole, S. 2011. The Sting in a Scorpion’s tale. *Mail&Guardian Online*. 1 July. [Online]. Available: <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-01-the-sting-in-a-scorpions-tale/> [last accessed: 13.09.2011].
- Pagter, S. 2008. Genres in Photojournalism. *PAGTER.NET: Essays on Photography*. April 21. [Online]. Available: <http://www.pagter.net/articles.html> [last accessed: 12.08.2011].
- Panofsky, E. 1939. *Studies in Iconology*. New York: Doubleday, 1957. 3-31.
- Payton, N. 2011. On Why Jazz Isn’t Cool Anymore. *Nicholas Payton*. [blog] Available: <http://nicholaspayton.wordpress.com/2011/11/27/on-why-jazz-isnt-cool-anymore/> [last accessed: 28.11.2011].
- Peirce, C. S. 1931-58. Hartshorne, C., Weiss, P. & Burks, A.W. (Eds.) *Collected Writings*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Peretti, B. W. 2001. Speaking in the Groove: Oral History and Jazz. *The Journal of American History*. 88(2) (September 2001). Organization of American Historians. 582-595 [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2675107> [last accessed: 13.07.2010].
- Peters, M. 2010. Keeping the Cape jazz tradition alive as legends fade. *The Sunday Independent*. September 12. [Online]. Available:

- <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-236913761.html> [last accessed: 04.08.2011].
- Phelan, P. 1993. *Unmarked – the politics of performance*. London: Routledge.
- Piaget, J. 1928. *The Child's Conception of the World*. London: Routledge.
- Pinson, K. H. 2007. *The Music Behind the Image - A Study of the Social and Cultural Identity of Jazz*. Ph.D. Ohio University.
- Radical Culture Research Collective. 2007. *A Very Short Critique of Relational Aesthetics*. [Online]. Available: <http://transform.eicpc.net/correspondence/1196340894#redir> [last accessed: 23.07.2011].
- Rosenau, J. & Durfee, M. 1995. *Thinking Theory Thoroughly: Coherent Approaches To An Incoherent World*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Scaruffi, P. 2002-3. A brief summary of African Popular music - South Africa. *Scaruffi Music Database*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.scaruffi.com/history/african.html> [last accessed: 13.09.2011].
- Scaruffi, P. 2006. Chris McGregor. *Scaruffi Music Database*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.scaruffi.com/jazz/mcgregor.html> [last accessed: 10.05.2011].
- Schaffner, I. 2011. *Seen And Not Heard: Perusing Works By Siemon Allen*. [Online]. Available: <http://sa-venice-biennale.com/2011/05/seen-and-not-heard-perusing-works-by-siemon-allen/> [last accessed: 18.09.2011].
- Seja, S. 2005. Das Bild als Handlung? Zum Verhältnis der Begriffe "Bild" und "Handlung". Sachs-Hombach, K. (Ed.) 2005. *IMAGE 2: Kunstgeschichtliche Interpretation und bildwissenschaftliche Systematik*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.bildwissenschaft.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=157&menuItem=miArchive&showIssue=22](http://www.bildwissenschaft.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=157&menuItem=miArchive&showIssue=22) [last accessed: 24.03.2011].
- Shepherd, N. 2011. *Undisciplined Ancestors*. [Online]. Cape Town: APC Research Initiative. Available: <http://www.apc.uct.ac.za/gazette/current/?id=42&t=int> [last accessed 15.12.2011.]

- Shields, D. [undated] *Reality Hunger - A Manifesto*. [Online]. Available: <http://realityhunger.com/J.shtml#289> [last accessed: 15.05.2011].
- Silby, B. 1998. *Dennett's Reduction of Brentano's Intentionality*. Christchurch: Department of Philosophy, University of Canterbury. [Online]. Available: <http://www.definition.com/articles/silby015.html> [last accessed: 2011.07.04].
- Solomon-Godeau, A. 1991 *Photography at the Dock – Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sontag, S. 1973. *On Photography*. New York: Rosetta Books, 2005
- Sontag, S. 2004. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin.
- Stevenson Gallery. 2011. *Zanele Muboli: Faces and Phases*. [Press release, online]. Available: [http://stevenson.info/exhibitions/muboli/index\\_faces2011.html](http://stevenson.info/exhibitions/muboli/index_faces2011.html) [last accessed: 02.12.2011].
- Sturken, M. & Cartwright, L. 2001. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tagg, J. 2009. *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tan, F. & Monk, P. 2007. *Disassembling the Archive*. Toronto: Art Gallery of York University, Distributed Art Publishers Inc. [no page numbers in book].
- The Stuckists. 1999. *Chatham: The Hangman Bureau of Enquiry*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.stuckism.com/stuckistmanifesto.html#manifest> [last accessed: 16.10.2011].
- The UK Cannabis Internet Activist (UKCIA). 1999. Cannabis in Africa. *UKCIA Research Library*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ukcia.org/research/Geopolitics/africa.php> [last accessed: 14.01.2012].
- Titlestad, M. 2004. *Making the Changes: Jazz in South African Literature and Reportage*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

- Titlestad, M. 2005. Jazz discourse and black South African modernity, with special reference to “Matshikese.” *American Ethnologist*. 32(2) (May 2005). 210–221.
- Trautsch, C. .2010. Die Bildphilosophien Ludwig Wittgensteins und Oliver Scholz' im Vergleich. *IMAGE 11 – Zeitschrift fuer Interdisziplinaere Bildwissenschaft*. January 2011. [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.bildwissenschaft.org/image?function=fnArticle&showArticle=160>  
 [last accessed: 23.08.2011].
- Universität des Saarlandes. *Bildwissenschaften der Künste (Bachelor)*. [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.uni-saarland.de/de/campus/studium/studienangebot/az/bildwissenschaften-der-kuenste-bachelor.html> [last accessed: 20.04.2011].
- Valéry, P. 1928. La conquête de l’ubiquité. Oeuvres, tome II, Pièces sur l’art, Nrf, Gallimard, Bibl. de la Pléiade, 1960, 1726 pages, pp. 1283-1287; *Paru dans De la musique avant toute chose, Éditions du Tambourinaire*, 1928; [Online] Available:  
[http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Valery\\_paul/conquete\\_ubiquite/conquete\\_ubiquite.html](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Valery_paul/conquete_ubiquite/conquete_ubiquite.html) [last accessed: 2011.01.22].
- Ward, G. C. & Burns, K. 2000. *Jazz: A History of America’s Music*. New York: Knopf.
- Ways of Seeing (Episodes 1 – 4)*. 1972. [TV Series] British Broadcasting Company. [Online] Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnfB-pUm3eI> [last accessed: 2011.02.13];  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peONDtyn8bM&feature=related> [last accessed: 19.03.2011].
- Wike, L. 2000. Photographs and Signatures: Absence, Presence, and Temporality in Barthes and Derrida. In *Visible Culture, An Electronic Journal For Visual Studies*. [Online]. Available:  
[http://www.rochester.edu/in\\_visible\\_culture/issue3/wike.htm](http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue3/wike.htm) [last accessed: 2011.04.15].
- Woodfield, R. 2008. Gombrich and Panofsky on Iconology. *International Yearbook of Aesthetics*. 12, 2008. University of Glasgow. 151-16. [Online]. Available:

[http://birmingham.academia.edu/RichardWoodfield/Papers/153533/Richard\\_Woodfield\\_Gombrich\\_and\\_Panofsky\\_on\\_Iconology](http://birmingham.academia.edu/RichardWoodfield/Papers/153533/Richard_Woodfield_Gombrich_and_Panofsky_on_Iconology) [last accessed: 23.11.2011].

ya Salaam, K. 1995. Herman Leonard: Making Music with Light. *African American Review*. 29(2) (Summer 1995). 244-245.

Yoder, B. 2011. *Why David Hockney Should Not Be Taken Seriously*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.goodart.org/hockney.htm> [last accessed: 2011.04.05].

Zender, M. 2011. *ANTH S-1163 (32749)*. Announcement for course, Harvard Summer School 2011. [Online]. Available: <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k79606> [last accessed 14.04.2011].

University of Cape Town