

‘..I DID NOT ESCAPE, OR TRY TO ESCAPE, FROM A PARADOX: ON THE ONE HAND THE DESIRE TO GIVE A NAME TO PHOTOGRAPHY’S ESSENCE AND THEN TO SKETCH AN EIDETIC SCIENCE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH: AND ON THE OTHER THE INTRACTABLE FEELING THAT PHOTOGRAPHY ESSENTIALLY (A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS) ONLY CONTINGENCY, SINGULARITY, RISK: MY PHOTOGRAPHS WOULD ALWAYS PARTICIPATE, AS LYOTARD SAYS, IN “SOMETHING OR OTHER”:

IS IT NOT THE VERY WEAKNESS OF PHOTOGRAPHY, THIS DIFFICULTY IN EXISTING WHICH WE CALL BANALITY? NEXT, MY PHENOMENOLOGY AGREED TO COMPROMISE WITH A POWER, AFFECT WAS WHAT I DIDN’T WANT TO REDUCE; BEING IRREDUCIBLE, IT WAS THEREBY WHAT I WANTED, WHAT I OUGHT TO REDUCE THE PHOTOGRAPH TO; BUT COULD I RETAIN AN AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY, A VIEW OF THE OBJECT WHICH WAS IMMEDIATELY STEEPED IN DESIRE, REPULSION, NOSTALGIA, EUPHORIA?’ (1)

ROLAND BARTHES concerns of a photographer relate to the idea of presentation specifically in the producing of a photograph; the spirit of photography, if you like, is to take something immediately visible and translatable and present it in a unique (or perhaps not unique) perception. That is how we immediately perceive a photographic image, as something translatable from our common experience, taken from a ‘reality’ accepted. As Barthes sees it, the photograph is divided between the ‘material essences (necessitating the physical, chemical, optical study of the Photography)’ and the ‘regional

essences (deriving, for instance, from aesthetics, from History, from sociology)...the anticipated essence of the Photograph could not, in my mind, be separated from the “pathos” of which, from the first glance, it consists. I was like that friend who had turned to Photography only because it allowed him to photograph his son...not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think’. The camera allows a means of exploring the essence of an experience; forming a trace of the moment.

This moment, once there but gone forever, becomes trapped in time and space. Photography is no more presenting a ‘real’ experience than any other product of contemporary visual culture, for the real experience is abstracted by social, personal, historical (etc) factors although, by its nature we expect an element that we understand, something resolutely within our world of experience affecting our senses. The connections we make through images that are (almost) familiar render our experiences closer; our memory is brought to the immediate present, the trace of history is suddenly in the now, muddling the original memory. I could suggest that the photograph is shrouded in notions associated to the ephemeral, in the sense of holding a moment, and by it’s reproducibility as a medium. Several of the artists here consider their position as an image-maker calling to question the assumption that the photographer has the ‘power’ to turn what they ‘see’ into a ‘mental object’. The practice of using a camera, of taking a photograph, is also analysed through different processes highlighting that, although the image is constructed through process and materials, inevitably there is a vulnerability associated with the photograph (2) Through this exhibition one can ask at what point is the photograph