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Dark Highway

Practice-based photographic explorations of the consequences
of aspirational consumerism

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Table of Contents

1. Table of Figures & Abbreviations	<u>5</u>
2. Research Evidence	<u>6</u>
3. Abstract	<u>9</u>
4. Introduction	<u>11</u>
4.1 Research Questions	<u>15</u>
4.2 Project Research Aims	<u>15</u>
4.3 Research Rationale	<u>15</u>
4.4 Motivations	<u>16</u>
4.5 Origins of the Hybridised Approach	<u>17</u>
5. Contextual Review	<u>20</u>
5.1 Introduction	<u>20</u>
5.2 Documentary and the Truth	<u>20</u>
5.3 Documentary Photography as an Expanding Field	<u>22</u>
5.4 Advertising and Documentary	<u>23</u>
5.5 The Open (and closed) Road or Photography and The Road	<u>24</u>
5.6 The Averted Gaze	<u>26</u>
6. Methodology	<u>28</u>
6.1 A Documentary and Advertising Hybridised Methodology	<u>28</u>
6.2 Field Work	<u>29</u>
6.3 Construction	<u>32</u>
6.4 Dissemination	<u>32</u>
6.5 Conclusion	<u>34</u>
7. Project 1: Hard Times	<u>35</u>
7.1 Outcomes	<u>35</u>
7.2 Introduction	<u>35</u>
7.3 Context	<u>36</u>
7.4 Field Work	<u>36</u>
7.5 Visual Language	<u>40</u>
7.6 Dissemination	<u>42</u>
7.7 Contribution	<u>43</u>
8. Project 2: Westway: a portrait of a community & Urban Gypsies	<u>45</u>
8.1 Outcomes	<u>45</u>
8.2 Introduction	<u>45</u>
8.3 Social Context	<u>45</u>
8.4 Photographic Context	<u>47</u>
8.5 Field Work	<u>49</u>
8.6 Visual Language	<u>51</u>
8.7 Dissemination	<u>52</u>
8.8 Contribution	<u>54</u>

9. Project 3: Sacrifice the Birdsong	<u>57</u>
9.1 Outcomes	<u>57</u>
9.2 Introduction	<u>57</u>
9.3 Context	<u>57</u>
9.4 Field Work	<u>58</u>
9.5 Visual Language	<u>59</u>
9.6 Dissemination	<u>66</u>
9.7 Contribution	<u>67</u>
10. Summary of Research Contributions	<u>69</u>
11. Reflection on Research Aims	<u>70</u>
12. Peer Review and Recognitions	<u>71</u>
13. Media Coverage	<u>73</u>
14. Continuing Contributions	<u>74</u>
15. Long-term Research Aims	<u>74</u>
16. Bibliography	<u>75</u>
17. Extended References	<u>76</u>
18. Appendices	<u>86</u>
18. Project Outcomes	<u>86</u>
18.1 Hard Times	<u>86</u>
18.2 Westway	<u>86</u>
18.3 Sacrifice the Birdsong	<u>87</u>
18.4 Awards	<u>87</u>
18.5 Media Coverage	<u>88</u>
18.6 Solo Exhibitions	<u>90</u>
18.7 Group Exhibitions	<u>91</u>
18.8 Book Publications and Contributions	<u>91</u>
18.9 Archives	<u>91</u>
18.10 REF Supporting Statements	<u>92</u>
19. Project Portfolios	<u>98</u>
20. Acknowledgements	<u>102</u>

1. Table of figures:

- Fig.1. Hine, L. *Mill Children South Carolina (1908)* Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/301920> (Accessed: 25 March 2022).
- Fig.2. Ryniewicz, K. (2019) *Chosen Family for Queer Britain*. Available at: <https://ryniewicz.co.uk/Queer-Britain-x-Levi-s> (Accessed: 25 March 2022).
- Fig.3. *Long Delay, When Lives Collide* (2004)
- Fig.4. Curtis, E. *A Tewa girl* (1906) Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c05386/> (Accessed: 25 March 2022).
- Fig.5. Lange, D. *Migrant Mother* (1963) Available at: https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/dorothea-lange-migrant-mother-nipomo-california-1936/ (Accessed: 10 March 2022).
- Fig.6. J, Fullerton-Batton. *Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Richard Jones and children, Lockdown Day 53* (2020) Available at: <https://juliafullerton-batten.com/project/sophie-ellis-bextor-richard-jones-and-children-lockdown-day-53/> (Accessed: 25 March 2022).
- Fig.7. Muncey, G. *Port Talbot - Lonely Cloud* (2019) Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/george-muncey-lonely-cloud-photography-170619> (Accessed: 25 March 2022).
- Fig.8. *Sean & Charlotte, Hard Times* (2010)
- Fig.9. Luvera, A. *Assisted Self-Portrait of Ben Evans, Assembly* (2013 – 2014) Available at: <http://www.luvera.com/assembly/> (Accessed: 14 September 2021).
- Fig.10. *Sean & Charlotte Sleeping, Hard Times* (2010)
- Fig.11. *Mike, Hard Times* (2010)
- Fig.12. *Kevin, Hard Times* (2010)
- Fig.13. *Nigel & Kim, Hard Times* (2010)
- Fig.14. *John, Hard Times* (2010)
- Fig.15. *Brian, Hard Times* (2010)
- Fig.16. Simon Callow & Paul Wenham-Clarke, *Hard Times* (2010) Opening
- Fig.17. *A home on The Westway Traveller site* (2013)
- Fig.18. *Stable Way, The Westway* (2013)
- Fig.19. *Oasis, Westway* (2013)
- Fig.20. *West London Stables, Westway* (2013)
- Fig.21. *Westway Sports Centre, Westway* (2013)
- Fig.22. *Cindy & Shirley, Westway* (2013)
- Fig.23. *Line Dancing, Westway* (2013)
- Fig.24 *African Dancing for Keep-fit, Westway* (2013)
- Fig.25. Jean-Baptist Oudry, *Stillleben mit Vögeln und Insekten*, (1723) Available at: <https://www.meisterdrucke.com/kunstdrucke/Jean-Baptiste-Oudry/65132/Stillleben-mit-V%C3%B6geln-und-Insekten,-1713.html> (Accessed: 14 September 2021).
- Fig.26. *Kerbside Memento, Sparrowhawk, House Sparrow and Chaffinch, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)
- Fig.27. *Kerbside Memento, Goldfinch & Bullfinch, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)
- Fig.28. *Kerbside Memento, Adder, Kestrel, Nuthatch, Buzzard & Wryneck, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)
- Fig.29. *Predator & Prey 2, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)
- Fig.30. *Tree of Life, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)

Fig.31. *Carcase, New habitat, Sacrifice the Birdsong (2013)*
 Fig.32. *One for Sorrow, Sacrifice the Birdsong (2013)*
 Fig.33. *Acey (2010)*
 Fig.34. *Kim (2010)*
 Fig.35. *Eddie (2010)*
 Fig.36. *John (2010)*
 Fig.37. *Wayne (2010)*
 Fig.38. *David (2010)*
 Fig.39. *Anna (2010)*
 Fig.40. *Anna at home (2010)*
 Fig.41. *Oxford Gardens School Sports Day (2013)*
 Fig.42. *Ishmael-Oxford Gardens School Sports Day (2013)*
 Fig.43. *Westway Sports Centre (2013)*
 Fig.44. *Hammid-Oxford Gardens School Sports Mentor (2013)*
 Fig.45. *Westway Stables (2013)*
 Fig.46. *Westway Stables, five degrees below (2013)*
 Fig.47. *Paddington Central new development (2013)*
 Fig.48. *Construction of Crossrail*
 Fig.49. *1st Communion Day (2013)*
 Fig.50. *Westway Traveller Site (2013)*
 Fig.51. *Terry's Christening Day (2013)*
 Fig.52. *John O'Donnell-Champion Boxer (2013)*
 Fig.53. *Star of the party (2013)*
 Fig.54. *Birthday pub party (2013)*
 Fig.55. *In the gutter (2013)*
 Fig.56. *Predator and Prey, Muntjac, Fallow Deer spine and Badger skull (2013)*
 Fig.57. *Barn Owl Wing (2013)*
 Fig.58. *Predator and Prey, Fox Skull, Rabbit Skulls and vertebra (2013)*
 Fig.59. *New Habitat, Motorway Rooks (2013)*
 Fig.60. *New Habitat, Perch (2013)*

List of Abbreviations

AoP: Association of Photographers
 FSA: Farmer Security Administration
 REF: Research Excellence Framework
 RSPB: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

2. Research Evidence:

The three project portfolios are available as pdf files via the One Drive link below:

1. *Hard Times (2010)*
2. *Westway: a portrait of a community (2013)*
 Sub-Project: *Urban Gypsies (2019)* is available as a pdf of the final book publication. Available at: <http://www.whenlivescollide.co.uk/book.html>
3. *Sacrifice the Birdsong (2013)*

PORTFOLIO LINK

PROJECT 1 – Hard Times

Research Period: Sept 2008 - March 2011

Exhibitions:

- *Hard Times*, 3rd March to 30th June 2011, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Crypt Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London. (112,000 visitors).
- *Hard Times*, 1st to 30th September 2011, St Martins Church Gallery, Birmingham.
- *Hard Times*, 29th Sept to 29th Oct 2012, Bournemouth Central Library, Bournemouth.
- *Hard Times*, 10th Aug - 7th Sept 2013, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Scotland.
- *Hard Times*, 14th Sept – 12th Oct 2013, St Fergus Gallery, Wick, Scotland.

Awards:

- Association of Photographers Awards 2010, Documentary Series Winner & Gold Award.

Book Publications:

- Association of Photographers, 27th Photographers Awards Book (2010).
- *Hard Times*, (2011) exhibition catalogue, 2000 copies.
- *Hard Times*, (2011) self-published, 150 hardback copies.

Project 2 - Westway: a portrait of a community

Research Period: Jan 2011 - Feb 2013

Exhibitions:

- *Westway: a portrait of a community*, 9th Jan – 28th Feb 2013, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Gallery in the Crypt, Trafalgar Square, London.

Awards:

- *Urban Gypsies*, shortlisted Sony World Photography Awards 2013.

Sub-project:

- Urban Gypsies Research Period: June 2018 - June 2019

Book Publication:

- *Westway: a portrait of a community*, (2013) Self-published.
- *Urban Gypsies*, (2019) Hoxton Mini Press.

PROJECT 3 – Sacrifice the Birdsong

Research Period: Sept 2012 – Sept 2013

Exhibitions:

- *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, 4th – 15th Oct 2013, Centrespace Gallery, Bristol

Awards:

- *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, The Hasselblad Masters Awards, Shortlisted, (2016).

Book Publications:

- *Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2015), Self-published available [Amazon](#)
- Hasselblad Awards book (2016).

Additional Output:

This additional output was a retrospective exhibition of four previous works: *Westway*, *Hard Times*, *Sacrifice the Birdsong* & *When Lives Collide*.

Exhibition:

- *The Dark Highway*, 20th Nov to 18th Dec 2014. The Gallery, Arts University at Bournemouth.

Book Publications:

- *The Dark Highway, Text + Work* (2014), available [Amazon](#).

Under pinning Project:

When Lives Collide is the under-pinning project referred to in the thesis but is not one of the portfolios and is available for reference on the link below:

The work examines the consequences of road traffic accidents in the UK and is a combination of survivor portraits and re-enactments of crash scenes.

When Lives Collide (2006): Website – [Link to site](#), Book – [Link to PDF](#)

3. Abstract

Dark Highway: Practice-based photographic explorations of the consequences of aspirational consumerism.

This practice-based research investigates how advertising photography strategies, techniques and aesthetics can be employed effectively in environmental and socially engaged issue-based photographic projects. By examining society's relationship to its primary form of transport, the automobile and road network, this research explores the social and environmental consequences of a consumerist free-market economy. Through new photographic interpretations, the marginalised people, places and creatures that occupy the shadowy zones at the periphery of the road network are given a voice.

The hypothesis underpinning the research is that the photographic aesthetics and techniques of advertising can be used to generate visual interpretations that communicate sometimes difficult and complex messages to the broader public in a language that is accessible. Specific dissemination strategies, adapted from the researcher's experience of commercial and advertising photography, are utilised to fulfil the further aim of reaching a wide and diverse audience for this issue-based work, as outlined in the accompanying critical commentary.

The commentary provides the underpinning research, production and contributions of three major bodies of photographic work that have each been publicly disseminated as exhibitions, *Hard Times* (2011) Association of Photographers Gold Award 2010, *Westway: a portrait of a community* (2013) Shortlisted in the World Photography Awards and *Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013) shortlisted in the Hasselblad Masters Awards 2015.

The practice-based research methodology for each of the projects is multi-layered and in the case of *Hard Times* and *Westway: a portrait of a community*, combines elements of advertising photography aesthetics and techniques with social documentary approaches. The latter includes long-term engagement with individuals and hard-to-reach communities as well as openness and collaboration. In the case of *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, advertising techniques and aesthetics are applied to an issue-based environmental subject and are influenced by still life art history practices. In this way the hybridised approach is tested in two different issue-based fields in order to ascertain its ability to raise awareness and promote public engagement.

Advertising photography employs a complex visual language that has developed over the last hundred years and goes hand in hand with a capitalist economy. It can be argued that such consumerist activity is devouring our planet geologically, ecologically and morally. The automobile is the ultimate product of mass-market consumerism and is irrevocably linked to life goals and social status. In the developed world most people own a car before owning a home, but both are milestones in our own personal story. In the UK, the Thatcherite ideology of the 1970s and 80s promoted privatisation and the free-market economy, fuelling the belief that capitalism would benefit everyone, not just the richest. In fact, the opposite has been the case as wealth inequality has drastically increased over the decades.

Advertising photography is a tool used to perpetuate consumerism and globalisation. Yet, in the photographic research presented here, it is being used to highlight social and environmental issues resulting from that same capitalist ideology. In effect, the advertising gaze has turned to examine the consequences of its own actions.

The three photographic projects presented here make a unique contribution to the field of photography by visually representing the complex links between aspirational consumerism, the automobile, the home and the environment. By examining society's relationship to its primary form of transport, the automobile and road network, the research highlights the consequences of consumerism in 21st century Britain.

4. Introduction

The practice-based photographic research visually explores the complex links between aspirational consumerism, the automobile, the home, cultural identity and the environment and disseminates the findings to mass audiences. In addition, the research investigates how a hybrid of documentary and advertising photography can enable new visualisation of the marginalised people, places and creatures that occupy the shadowy zones at the periphery of the UK road network.

The research leads to new photographic representations of some of the sociological and ecological consequences of our consumerist society's dependence on the automobile as the primary transport system. Specific dissemination strategies adapted from my experience as an advertising photographer are utilised to reach wide and diverse audiences.

The research comprises of three interconnecting bodies of work:

Hard Times (2011), Winner of an Association of Photographers Gold Award and the winner of the Documentary category of the Photographers Awards.

The Westway: a portrait of a community (2013), Shortlisted in The World Photography Organisation Awards and published in part as *Urban Gypsies* (2019) Hoxton Mini Press.

Sacrifice the Birdsong (2013), Shortlisted in The Hasselblad Masters Awards 2015.

Public dissemination has been through a variety of means, including solo exhibitions, books, group exhibitions, photography media, photography awards, news media, magazines, radio, television and widely on the internet. The practice-based research methodology for each of the projects is multi-layered and in the case of *Hard Times* and *Westway* combines elements of advertising photography aesthetics and techniques with social documentary approaches. The latter includes long-term engagement with individuals and hard-to-reach communities as well as openness and collaboration. In *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, advertising techniques and aesthetics are applied to an issue-based environmental subject and underpinned by still life art history. In this way, the hybridised approach is tested in two different issue-based fields to ascertain its ability to raise awareness and promote public engagement.

Appropriate photographic discourse and theories will be addressed in terms of their relevance to each of the three projects. The review will also examine interconnecting narratives which link socio-economic and environmental factors to consumerism and the automobile.

Two canons of photography underpin the projects:

Firstly, advertising photography which it can be argued began in the 1920s with early practitioners, such as Edward Steichen but came into its own in the 1950s. This field underwent a digital revolution in the late 1980s and 90s but also hybridised forms emerged combining advertising and documentary ideology such as the work by Oliverio Toscani between 1982-2000 (2015).

Secondly, social documentary photography which was established in the 19th century by practitioners such as, the Scottish partnership David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. Using Calotype in the 1840s, they produced a social documentary of the fishing community of Newhaven (ca.1845). In the 1880s, Jacob Riis's influential book *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) shows children sleeping on the streets of New York. Lewis Wickes Hine (1874-1940) between 1904 and 1926 photographed Europeans arriving at the Ellis Island Immigration Station (no date). These practitioners are pertinent to the work presented here, as they inform, educate, and disseminate the truth but include constructed elements.



Fig.1. Hine, L. *Mill Children South Carolina* (1908)
Available: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/301920>

The methodology applied here originated from a commercial source but joins a wider conversation pioneered by practitioners like Paul Seawright and Anna Fox in which social documentary is reconsidered and reinvented through alternative hybridised approaches, including the use of colour, large scale and seductive text. Nick Knight combined fashion and documentary aesthetics in his series *Skinhead* (1982) and more recently in a fashion film *Brighton Sorts* (2018) for British Vogue. Whilst Martin Parr applied his documentary aesthetic to advertising and fashion commissions for Le Bon Marche (AFP-Relaxnews, 2015). Some new fashion practitioners are exploring social issues and in this way hope to influence public opinion. Such activist photographers include Conor Clinch's film for Love Magazine, in which he focuses on disability (2020), and Kuba Ryniewicz explores gender identity in the feature *Stop the Bullshit: What It's Like Being Young, Polish and LGBTQ+* (2021).



Fig.2. Ryniewicz, K. (2019) *Chosen Family for Queer Britain*.
Available: <https://ryniewicz.co.uk/Queer-Britain-x-Levi-s>

The advertising world appropriated the aesthetics of documentary practice to give campaigns a sense of authenticity. Martin Parr combined his 'new documentary' approach to fashion brands such as Gucci and US Vogue. Ewan Spencer's documentary approach to youth culture has been applied to commissions for brands such as Nike, New Balance and Adidas (LGA, no date). In this way, documentary images have reached a new and diverse fashion audience attracted by the representation of the real.

Since the 1970s, the boundaries between genres have become increasingly unclear. These hybridised approaches challenge the ethos of each genre and become increasingly difficult to define. My projects build upon and respond to previous hybridised practices and join in this ongoing conversation (See Contextual Review p.20).

In the Methodologies section (p. 28), the hybridised approach will be deconstructed to reveal how the practitioner moves between fieldwork, construction and dissemination, creating a work of expressive realism, as in reality as expressed by the author. In the section The Origins of the Hybridised Approach (p.17), the motivations for making the three interconnected bodies of work will be explained and how the methodology developed.

Advertising is a complex visual language that has developed over the last hundred years and feeds consumerism, capitalism and globalisation. We now realise that the

utopian lifestyles promised in advertising campaigns are devouring our planet geologically and ecologically. The three projects demonstrate my change of motivation from commissions generating profit, to activist issue-based work. In a similar way to advertising, the impact of each project is judged by the size of the audience. However, it is difficult to assess if the work has changed or informed opinions, as there is no quantitative method of assessment.

Hard Times, *The Westway* and *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, developed from an earlier project, [*When Lives Collide* \(2006\)](#), which examined the impact of fatal car accidents on survivors and/or relatives. The three projects explore the complex links between our life goals and expectations in the context of a consumerist society that promotes home and vehicle ownership. Although each project covers only British locations, all have powerful global resonance linking to poverty, homelessness, racial integration, cultural identity, globalization and the environment.

Although working as a lone researcher, the representation of the communities and narratives results from close consultation with the participants involved. Throughout the participants have been consulted regarding the making, presentation, and dissemination of the project. In *Hard Times* and *Westway*, the research aims to inform the public through authentic narratives from minority groups wanting their voices heard unmediated by the press, who often reinforces stereotypes. In *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, the visual narrative is informed through consultation with environmentalists who want to raise the issue's profile.

Throughout the history of the medium, activism has been a serious motivation for many documentary photographers, such as Lewis Hine who campaigned for the rights of children in the 1900s, or Ansel Adams crusading for the protection of the American environment through the National Parks scheme in the 1930s and by conflict photographers such as Robert Capa, Don McCullin and Tim Heatherington. Although documentary photography has expanded in recent decades and diversified, activism has remained a core motivation. The three projects presented are aesthetically very different from this canon of activist work. However, through authentic insights, the research shines a light on injustice and provides a public voice for the participants through media dissemination.

The photographic research methodology, field work, construction and dissemination for each of the three projects will be reviewed in the commentary and then linking research outcomes will be evaluated. The commentary on the projects will contextualise their contribution to the field of issue-based photography.

4.1 Research questions

1. Can practice-based photographic research investigate the social and environmental consequences of consumerism by exploring society's relationship to its primary transport network?
2. Can a hybrid of advertising and documentary photography effectively represent marginalised groups and subjects considered difficult in an accessible form?
3. Can dissemination strategies in advertising photography be applied to issue-based photographic outcomes to promote public engagement?

4.2 Project Research Aims

1. To investigate the socio-political issues associated with consumerism and the automobile and develop an effective photographic strategy that visualises the findings.
2. Test out participant collaboration within issue-based photography that simulates the advertising photographer and client relationship and reflect upon the outcomes.
3. To explore the potential for an advertising and documentary photographic hybridised approach to represent social and environmental issues considered difficult in a form that encourages public engagement.
4. To effectively communicate to wide audiences the impact on human and animal life of our consumerist society's dependence on the automobile and road network.

4.3 Research Rationale

As mentioned above, the three projects presented here were developed from an earlier project [*When Lives Collide \(2006\)*](#) (see p.17) which examined the impact of fatal car accidents on survivors and/or relatives. At the time of making *When Lives Collide*, according to The Department of Transport (2011), there were 3221 deaths and ten times as many people seriously injured on UK roads. The equivalent of an ongoing war but the government and public seemed relatively unconcerned with the situation. When I was seventeen, a friend was killed in a motorbike accident and I wanted the public to understand how terrible it is to lose someone in such a violent and pointless way.

When Lives Collide included reconstructions of the road traffic incidents as described by those involved. My advertising photography practice heavily influenced these images which were constructed using make-up, actors, lighting, stunt cars, and digital manipulation. The scenes were inspired by artists such as Jeff Wall and Gregory Crewdson and challenged the definition of documentary photography.

Through a combination of survivor portraits, personal statements and re-enactments, the project was able to articulate these devastating stories. This combination of portraits and constructed images would break many accepted documentary photography conventions and bring criticism. However, I had no reason to follow these unwritten rules and thought that the media would have little interest without the crash scenes. This proved to be true as and when the exhibition toured the UK, it was widely covered in the media, including BBC television news and ITN News. *When Lives Collide* underpins the three projects presented here and represents chapter one of the story. The projects that follow explore broader issues and the hybridised methodology applied was further developed and finetuned.

4.4 Motivation

Since the invention of the automobile, human fatalities have been staggering, but when we add the animal lives lost, habitats destroyed, pollution and global warming, it is hard to understand why we accept the situation. Probably the most significant decision the automotive industry has ever made affecting the planet and humanity was its early choice of fuel. The first US combustion engine designed by Samuel Morey in 1826 burnt ethanol which was created through the fermentation of vegetable matter, today known as biomass. We now know this to be a carbon-neutral process and Henry Ford described it as “the fuel of the future,” *New York Times* (1925) ‘Ford predicts fuel from Vegetation’, 20 Sept, p. 24. Due to the National Prohibition Act 1919, the US government highly taxed the production of alcohol and encouraged the use of gasoline as an alternative fuel. In this way a century of carbon emissions was set to take place with all the climate change consequences associated. This one decision alone has had a catastrophic impact on the environment and the world’s ecosystems.

The privately-owned automobile is irrevocably linked to identity and social status and is associated with a sense of personal freedom, but this glossy bubble is also an extension of our home and personal space. For most people, owning a car comes before owning a home, but both are life goals. We judge ourselves and others by the quality of these possessions and often work hard for more luxurious examples.

The car and consumerism are closely linked with new tempting models being offered continuously and we are under pressure to conform to these consumerist aspirations. *Hard Times* (2011) explores the lives of those who are pushed to the periphery of this system. Individuals who cannot buy into this hierarchal structure are forced to sleep in doorways besides the road or even under it, transforming the structure into a dwelling. For these individuals, the road becomes the destination, not a network.

The automobile can act as a shield to prevent social interactions with individuals outside of their cultural group. This is the case with The Westway (A40), an elevated highway that transports hundreds of thousands of commuters overhead to the heart of London. Built in the Brutalist architectural style and completed in 1970, the area is one of Britain's most inner-city environments. The *Westway* (2013) project explores this area which provides an opportunity for relatively low-cost living and has attracted many migrant groups, including a community of Irish Travelers living literally beneath the road.

Sacrifice the Birdsong (2013) examines the direct consequences of road collisions with British wildlife. The project explores the distorted ecosystem created by an ever-increasing use of automobiles, leading to a disrupted ecology in which scavengers proliferate and specialist species are pushed towards extinction. Together the three bodies of work build upon the original underpinning project by representing the price paid by human and animal life due to our love of consumerism and infatuation with the automobile.

4.5 Origins of the hybridised approach

Raymond Williams the cultural critic, described advertising as ‘the official art of modern capitalist society’ (1980, p.134), an art form that Oliviero Toscani revelled in as the Art Director of Benetton from 1982 to 2000, as will be discussed later.

The hybridised methodology in the research arose in response to my career as an advertising photographer. The term advertising photography applies to creative work that represents brand identities and is usually created in conjunction with an advertising agency. In most cases, the final visual outcome is a combination of photography and text and is aimed at a specific audience or demographic. In this role, I worked closely with the clients to achieve an outcome that met their needs to promote the brand and increase sales. Collaborating with an art director, I would make test images and together, we would make multiple adjustments and further tests until a successful outcome was produced.

In Rebecca Swift's research on advertising photography, she notes, ‘Photography has been the dominant visual form in print advertising since the 1960s and its application has continued to grow with the rise of digital media.’ (2018, p. 17). Roland Barthes famously discusses the visual language of advertising in *Rhetoric of the image* (1977) when he deconstructs a pasta advert. Since then, the language of advertising has become considerably more sophisticated and the public has learned to appreciate this new art form through exposure to decades of creativity, including surreal cigarette adverts from the 1970s to 1990s, for example, Benson and Hedges (no date), and television adverts such as ‘*The Surfer*,’ a 1990’s advert for Guinness incorporating cutting-edge CGI (The Hall of Advertising, 2020). The public has become very familiar with this imagery and is highly receptive to its messages. David Bate (2016, p. 146) comments,

It is the role of creativity that makes advertising so instrumental to ideology and is fascinating to observe the rhetorical skills and art of persuasion it uses to make us see a product or object integrated into contemporary life.

(Bate, 2016, p. 146)

Appropriating this approach, the visual language applied here is designed to seduce an audience into engaging with social and environmental issues that they might typically avoid.

Once restricted to the printed page, advertising imagery colonised our social environment, from shopping malls to our homes and now even on our smartphones.

We are immersed in the rhetoric of desire, a desire that can never be satisfied; Jacques Lacan (1998, p. 235) explored this subject in Seminar X1, commenting that 'Man's desire is the desire of the other'. He knew the power of advertising is built on fantasy, fuelling a constant hunger for more through the representation of aspirational lifestyles. However, more than this, we want to be seen by others living that lifestyle. These desires and aspirations can never be fulfilled, for as soon as one is attained, a new aspiration appears. These constant unquenched desires fuel consumerism and feed our capitalist economy's thirst for growth.

We have prioritised the car above all other transportation methods, not just because it is convenient but to satisfy our desires. Automotive design can be compared to fashion design, as cars combine function and aesthetics. Cars are in effect, the biggest and probably the most expensive accessory you own. They tell us so much about the owner, including social status, sexuality and personality.

Cars are the ultimate product of consumerism, as they are mass-produced in a style that suits all tastes, in sleek forms that love the lens, with easily available finance to help make the dream possible. Potentially, in reach of everyone, except those disenfranchised from the capitalist system. People like those represented in *Hard Times* (2011), trapped in first-world poverty at the periphery of the system. Sleeping alongside the road in archways and shop doorways, they have slipped through the gaps in the mesh of capitalism and cannot, or do not wish to, find their way back.

After years of working in advertising photography, including car photography in South Bank Studios, I wanted more from my images. In my spare time, I produced personal projects and motivated by the loss of a friend, I decided to investigate society's love of the automobile. This was the starting point for the underpinning project *When Lives Collide* (2006), in which I would discover a hybridised methodology and included reconstructed crash scenes (see Fig.3).

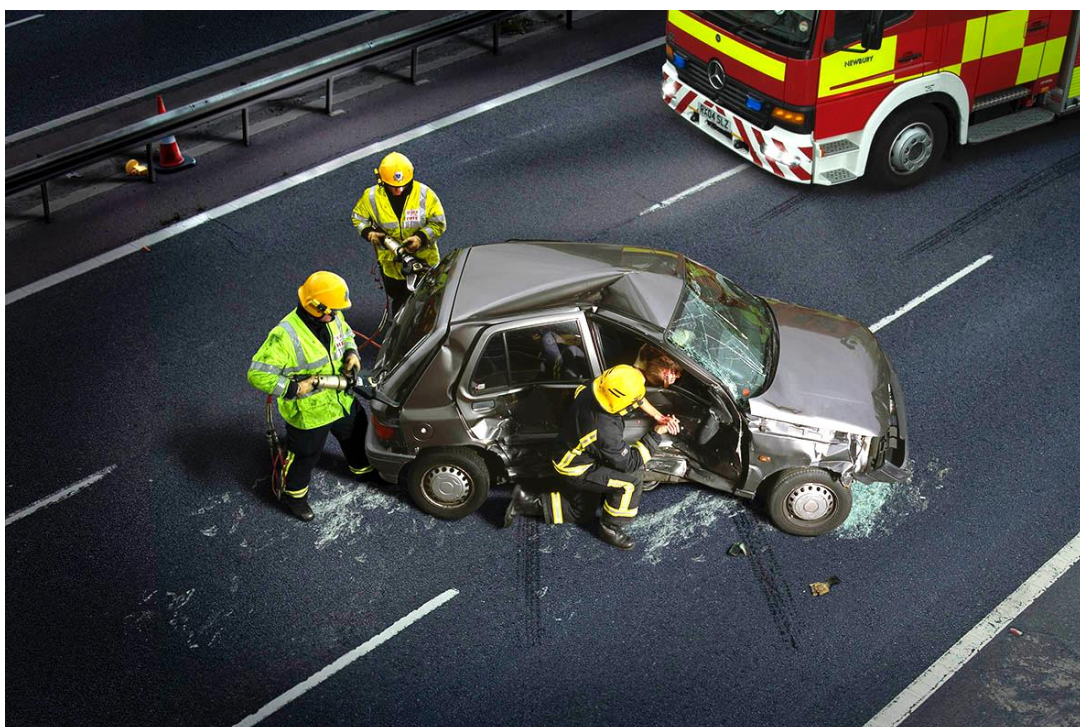


Fig.3. *Long Delay*, *When Lives Collide* (2004)

Our society seems to be addicted to consumerism and like many addicts, it is willing to suffer the lows to live the highs. By combining image and text, the research gives those on the frontline a means to be heard by wide audiences. The research highlights the inequality of a consumerist society in 21st Century Britain, as homeless people struggle to survive, minority groups are forced to live in highly polluted areas and wildlife is driven to extinction. The research offers an opportunity for us to take a long hard look at ourselves and consider the consequences of our actions.

5. Contextual Review

5.1 Introduction

This review explores the broad context for the research in which new hybridised documentary practices have emerged, leading to questions regarding truth, authenticity, and artistic interpretation. Culturally laden with meaning, the phrase 'the road' is reviewed in terms of its meaning to life opportunity and expectation. Photographic theories and relevant discourses are examined, including notions of the gaze and the abject.

Historical and contemporary documentary practitioners pertinent to the issues covered are reviewed throughout this section and in the Projects section that follows. Through this combination of practice and theory, a deeper understanding of the research's intent is provided.

5.2 Documentary and the Truth

Truth and reality are crucial to documentary photography but postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers such as Barthes, Derrida, Foucault and Kristeva challenged this in the late 20th century. They claimed it was essential to analyse the image itself and the knowledge base that produced it. Poststructuralists discard the idea of a singular truth and criticise all-encompassing theories that claim to uncover truth, such as science and religion. It was thought that the relationship between power and knowledge could have consequences for subjectivity and identity. Post-modernism and post-structuralism challenge the view that photography is an objective method of evidence gathering. Postmodern critiques questioned the very idea of authenticity in documentary images as always being part fictional. Numerous examples are cited of skewed visions of the world mediated through a colonial gaze, such as the staged images of Native Americans made between 1898-1930 by Edward Curtis (see Fig.4).



Fig.4. Curtis, E. *A Tewa girl* (1906)

Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c05386/>

As this brief overview suggests, photography represents truth through a frame, a human construct, consequently, truth can be twisted and misrepresented. Positionality, as in your culture and life experiences will affect your viewpoint and potentially the research outcome. Subjective humans cannot be objective and there will always be mediation and transformation.

One of the most famous documentary images of all time made by Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother* (1936) is a constructed image created in response to a particular motivation. The Farm Security Administration brief was to highlight the plight of struggling agriculture workers in the Great Depression of the 1930s, in order to win over voters and elicit government support. In six consecutive images made over approximately 15 minutes, Lange strives to depict a migrant agricultural worker, a mother of seven, in a way that generates sympathy from an audience. The iconic image produced has become emblematic of this terrible period of US history. Politically motivated, Lange's image applies a documentary aesthetic to create a sense of the real. However, through carefully considered framing she depicts a socially acceptable image of a mother caring for two children, not the seven she actually has. In this way, the image perfectly answers the FSA brief by representing a family worthy of the audience's sympathy. Lange's vision is a consequence of her positionality as she strives to fulfil the brief and could be compared to a commercial commission. So rather surprisingly, we can see that one of the most iconic documentary images was, in fact a highly constructed image, made with a small amount of consultation with the participants. Whereas my work, although similarly constructed, is the product of a collaborative approach in which the participants are closely consulted on the way they are to be represented. In addition, the photographer and participant relationship is a long-term one, built up over months of contact and provides a means to disseminate the authentic voices of the participants.

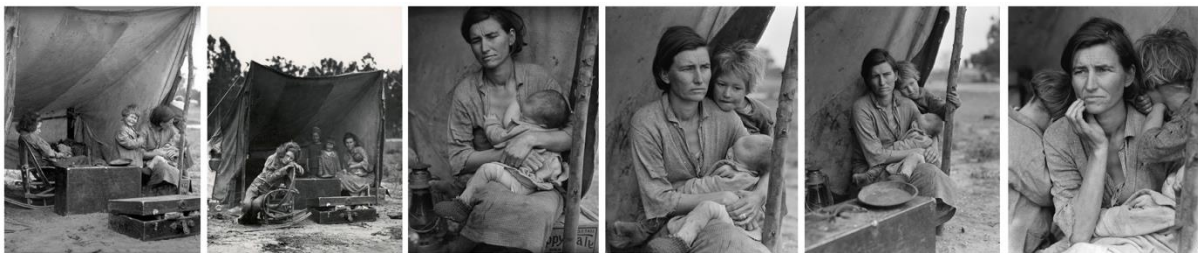


Fig.5. Lange, D. *Migrant Mother* (1936)

Available: https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/dorothea-lange-migrant-mother-nipomo-california-1936/

Making these projects, I was not concerned with documentary photography's conventions and applied an advertising methodology, knowing it would be controversial. From the frames above, we can see, one of the most iconic documentary images of all time was constructed. Renowned writer and educator Prof. Michelle Bogre also argues that the truth is hard to define as 'It is complex, slippery, a carnival house of mirrors' (2019, p. 55). Images are shaped by our own culture and personal experience and the hybridised approach creates a work of expressive realism, that is a reality as perceived by the author.

The projects presented play with the notion that photography represents the actual. However, as John Grierson, the pioneering documentary filmmaker said, 'The only reality that counts in the end is the interpretation which is profound,' (Aitken, 1990, p 63).

5.3 Documentary Photography as an Expanding Field

Traditional documentary stills photography has had its territory and function undermined for decades. Firstly, by fact-based television programmes, followed by the problems of authenticity inherent in digital imaging, and now social media and the smartphone have democratised the practice.

Traditionally newspapers were the home for such images, but these publications are now experiencing an existential threat. Why buy a newspaper if you can watch live news streamed on your phone? The smartphone rules the photographic landscape and citizen journalists have become a ubiquitous and powerful presence. Always first on the ground at any incident, omnipresent and all-seeing. It appears a professional eye is no longer needed. However, like a living creature responding to the Darwinian paradigm, documentary photography has evolved and adapted to new environments to proliferate and survive.

New documentary photography hybrids have created new interpretations of the real. David Bate (2016, p. 66) comments that 'documentary is itself such a slippery category' as it encompasses elements of practice that use techniques from art, news and journalism. Leading practitioners of the 1980s, such as Jeff Wall and Andreas Gursky, brought new postmodern photography into the art gallery. Commenting on the modern world, they are like historic painters capturing the essence of our time. Their work is not traditional documentary photography, as they use digital retouching to manipulate elements. Wall's *Gust of Wind* (1993) image brings together dozens of individual moments into one visual time capsule. For many bastions of the genre, such as Magnum photo agency, digital manipulation rules the work out as documentary. For them, a link to the referent is crucial, or how else can the images be considered historical documents? Wall uses actors and often re-enacts scenes he witnessed. As previously noted, this work was a powerful influence on making *When Lives collide* (2006). At the planning stage of this project, I realised my advertising photography experience could be put to good use. Inspired by Wall, Gursky, and Crewdson, I could create cinematic scenes to re-enact factual events. Contemporary photographic artist Alex Prager (2018) takes control further, constructing large crowd scenes with actors that simulate the real. While art photographer Hannah Starkey constructs and directs her images creating scenes of ordinary people and places simulating documentary images (O'Hagan, 2018). As will be seen in *Hard Times* (2011), the advertising/documentary hybrid develops further; instead of actors, I use real people in a similar way to Hannah Starkey. Participants were asked to re-enact ordinary moments of their life. For instance, a couple living in the car demonstrated how they slept in the vehicle.

Philip-Lorca diCorcia's work *Hustlers* (2013) combines documentary and constructed imagery in his staged portraits of male prostitutes found on Santa Monica Boulevard. The images were made in hotel rooms he arranged in full readiness, including the

angle of view, layout and lighting. Once this scene was set, he would drive around until he identified an individual and then return to the preprepared stage.

When Lives Collide was motivated by a personal loss. Similarly, diCorcia's series was motivated by his brother's death due to AIDs. Beyond this in *Hard Times* and *Westway* I construct and control the scenes but significantly, the people are depicted in locations they inhabit or have inhabited.

5.4 Advertising and Documentary

As already noted, while documentary and advertising photography have hybridised, the advertising world has seen the potential to borrow documentary aesthetics, adding a powerful sense of the real to otherwise fictional narratives. Amongst others, documentary photographer Martin Parr has applied his documentary approach to fashion and advertising commissions for brands such as, Apple, Kodak, Gucci, US Vogue, Le Bon Marché department store and this even extends to making television commercials, such as BBC idents (no date). Aesthetically, my work occupies the same ground as Parr's advertising work; he has applied documentary aesthetics to advertising commissions, whereas I have applied advertising aesthetics to documentary issues. We have traversed the photographic landscape from opposite directions but arrived at a similar destination.

Oliviero Toscani was a fashion photographer but became the artistic director of Benetton clothing. He directed the production of a series of challenging advertising campaigns highlighting social or environmental issues. He says in the New York Times in 1991 that 'I have found out that advertising is the richest and most powerful medium existing today, so I feel responsible to do more than to say, 'Our sweater is pretty.' (Duffy, 2017). His work highlights and challenges stereotypical views on race, gender, religion, sexuality and promotes inclusivity. He photographed many of the adverts himself but sourced images from other photographers when needed. He used Therese Frare's documentary image of David Kirby, a gay activist and Aids victim, as he lay dying in hospital (ibid). There was a confused reaction; some charities were horrified at the commoditisation of suffering, while others considered that the adverts brought the public's attention to an issue not being highlighted enough by the US government.

Toscani wanted to raise awareness of social issues and could be seen as an activist, but fundamentally it is all about sales for Benetton. In contrast, *Hard Times* (2011) was made in collaboration with the Big Issue Foundation who hoped the project would highlight their service to society. There was no charity funding for *Westway* (2013), but The Westway Trust initially helped steer the project's focus and promoted the exhibition. *Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013), morally supported by wildlife centres and naturalists, stood on its own. The RSPB did not want to publish the work, saying members did not like images of dead birds.

There are similarities to Toscani's work, as he claimed to use advertising for his own purposes as an artist. However, my research work is more in-depth and investigates complex links between aspirational consumerism, the automobile, the home, cultural identity and the environment. Toscani's work visually interprets multiple social and

environmental issues without any long-term engagement, unlike my research projects which are all long-term investigations.

Fine art and commercial photographer Natalie Lennard's work *Births Undisturbed* (2017) re-enacts human births from ancient to modern and her process is similar to the underpinning project *When Lives Collide* (2006) in that she uses actors and make-up. Advertising photographer Julia Fullerton-Batten has a style reminiscent of Crewdson and in recent years has applied this approach to subjects such as the UK sex industry in *The Act* (2016) and the Covid-19 lockdowns in *Looking out from Within* (2021). In the later work, she depicts real families and individuals in their own homes (see Fig.6). Both photographers explore social issues and apply a cinematic advertising aesthetic and examine very different subject matter to the three projects presented here.



Fig.6. J, Fullerton-Batten. *Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Richard Jones and children, Lockdown Day 53* (2020) Available: <https://juliafullerton-batten.com/project/sophie-ellis-bextor-richard-jones-and-children-lockdown-day-53/>

5.5 The Open (and closed) Road

The mass production of cameras and automobiles began around the same time with the Kodak Brownie in 1900 and the Model T Ford in 1908. Together these two mechanical devices transformed the world socially and economically. Simultaneously they travelled the road of democratisation and became inseparable, like artist and muse. One loves to watch, the other loves to be watched. Together they have altered our perception of distance and time and transformed our way of seeing. Car windows frame the world passing by, it's as if we are traveling in the camera itself. Not surprisingly, the Road Trip has become an iconic documentary trope and numerous renowned photographers have made such a pilgrimage. Although the projects presented are not road trips, the connection to this iconic format needs to be addressed as it has underpinned and shaped documentary photography. The majority have been American road trips; no other region of the world seems to hold

the same fascination. Many practitioners considered to be amongst the greats have earned their reputation by this route.

For instance, Walker Evans's *American Photographs* (1938) resulted from a decade of photographing the south and east of America. The book captures a portrait of American culture and society through images of ordinary people, in ordinary settings, in essence, he captured the vernacular. In *The Americans* (1959), Robert Frank travelled coast to coast, capturing America's racial, class and political tensions. Using a more relaxed style, he is thought to have been the first to use a snapshot aesthetic. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963), a typological study in the mould of Hilla & Bernd Becher, acts as a survey of these monotonous highly branded structures. In Stephen Shore's *Uncommon Places* (1982) and *American Surfaces* (1999), he describes feeling like an explorer and enjoying the sense of freedom cars provide. In contrast, Jacob Holdt's series *American Pictures* (1977) was a slow road trip taking five years and explored corruption, racism, drug abuse, bad housing, poor health care and highlights the consequences of consumerism and is perhaps the closest in its intent to the projects presented here.

British photography projects relating to the road are rare, presumably because UK roads do not engender the same romance and allure as the US highways. However, *A1 - The Great North Road* (1981) by Paul Graham is an iconic body of work that merges New Colour with traditional British documentary. Forty years on, the project resonates; Peter Dench was inspired to retrace Graham's route in his series *A1: Britain on the Verge* (Clifford, 2018). This time, the road trip is made in response to Brexit, Dench hoped to catch the essence of a country in political turmoil. Graham's book *American Night* (2003) explores the urban streets and parking lots of New York in which lone members of the poor, disabled and homeless wander. Tonally over exposed and desaturated these images are juxtaposed with saturated full-colour images of suburban family homes reminiscent of real-estate promotional material. As Graham says (Schuman, 2010), '*American Night* is about the social fracture of America, but it is also about the landscape of America, from the inner-city to the suburbs to the McMansions.'

Martin Parr's work *From A to B - Tales of Modern Motoring* (1994), both a book and television series, is a broad study of British car culture, exploring the links between lifestyle, class, identity, race, gender and self-image. More recently, young British photographer George Muncey's series *Lonely Cloud* (2019) explored suburban towns and spaces adjacent to motorway networks and he uses the project to explore his connection to this country (see Fig. 7). Photographic practice-based research on the topic includes the work of Charles Meecham's *The Oldham Road Rephotography Project* (2015) which investigates the use of topographical photography to represent 'aspects of place that remain hidden in generic representations.' (2015, p. 5). Also, Paris Petridis, explores figurative aspects of the road and its relationship to the landscape it 'cuts through, like a scar,' *Notes at the edge of Landscape* (2010).



Fig.7. Muncey, G. *Port Talbot - Lonely Cloud* (2019)

Available: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/george-muncey-lonely-cloud-photography-170619>

There is no road trip as such in my images, for the road itself is the destination and the hidden shadowlands and negative spaces surrounding it are the new lands to be discovered. The notion of the road is loaded with symbolism, it represents both endless freedom and infinite drudgery; it is a metaphor for our life journey. For most people, the phrase open road is synonymous with adventure, but for the homeless, the alternative phase, life on the road denotes a downtrodden existence searching for shelter. In the projects presented, the periphery of the road is the site of exploration. A site that is in effect is shut down or closed to the people or animals represented.

5.6 The Averted Gaze

Today, we are immersed in a world of slick, sophisticated imagery and we avert our gaze when confronted by scenes that do not fit our comfortable consumerist lifestyle. The projects presented apply the aesthetics of advertising to subjects that are usually considered difficult and encourage a considered gaze.

Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* (1966), explores the symbolic meaning of dirt and its links to prejudice and the taboo. She proposed that dirt is 'matter out of place' (1966, p. 36). This implies two states of matter, one that is ordered and the other disordered. This will be further discussed in the *Sacrifice the Birdsong* project section (p.51). However, this categorisation of pure and impure has serious implications for individuals who may be excluded from mainstream society, such as the homeless. Consumerism pushes for constant economic growth and exerts pressure on individuals to live affluent lifestyles. Wealth inequality has increased over time and in the Oxfam study *An Economy for 99%* (Hardoon, 2017), eight people were reported to own as much as half the human race. This gulf between the haves and have-nots encourages highly judgemental views from the privileged.

Commenting upon theory relating to the gaze, established by Sartre, Foucault, Berger, Derrida, Mulvey; Jonathan Schroeder proposes that 'the gaze is more than to look at, it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze,' (1998. p. 208). However, in the projects presented, the subjects experience different forms of gaze. A homeless person on the street is accustomed to the averted gaze, one in which eye contact is avoided at all costs as if they are invisible. With some minority groups of The Westway, particularly the Travellers, the viewer wants to look but fearing confrontation, undertakes a clandestine gaze. In comparison, when faced with roadkill, the viewer is physically revolted and looks away in disgust.

Modern news media has censored visions of violence, horror and abhorrent subjects. It is doubtful that the images by New York photographer Weegee (Fellig, 1984) made in the 1920s of crash victims and murders would be published today. Contemporary conflict images are censored to such a degree that images such as Nick Ut's Pulitzer Prize-Winning image (1973) of a young child after a napalm attack are rarely seen (1972). This image was credited with changing American public opinion and was an activist image that precipitated political change. Through the application of advertising aesthetics, the projects presented intend to intrigue and entice the viewer. Speaking in a visual language that does not confront but gently invites them in, the viewer is asked to consider difficult social and environmental issues they might have once shied away from.

This contextual review has considered the changing nature of issue-based photography from a document considered to record facts, to hybridised forms that visualise the truth expressed by the author. The review has highlighted the socio-economic links between the automobile, road travel and the rise of photography as a tool to promote consumerism. In the individual project sections, social and cultural contexts are explored further, and their contribution to the wider field of photography is considered.

6 Methodology



Fig.8. Sean & Charlotte, *Hard Times* (2010)

6.1 A Documentary and Advertising Hybridised Methodology

The research methodology combines contextual, theoretical, practice-based research and is emergent and multi-layered. This mixed methodology has multiple component parts and through a process of reflection on action, the methodology has emerged as discussed in the following sections.

There are many models of reflective research. The closest model to the one applied here is the Integrated Reflective Cycle (Bassot, 2013) which has four stages: experience, reflection, theory and preparation. In this model, in addition to reflecting on action, practitioners review the outcome in context to the broader field; before taking the next action. Applying this model has led to significant changes between the underpinning work *When Lives Collide* and the three works that followed.

Photography is my research tool and is used to collect visual data supported by interviews and the findings are articulated through artistic means. In this way the work makes a significant contribution to new knowledge through a variety of forms other than conventional academic texts. In this way it conforms to the approach discussed in Sir Christopher Frayling's seminal paper *Research in Art and Design* (1993).

The hybridised methodology is multi-layered and combines elements of advertising and documentary aesthetics and techniques with social documentary principles operating in an issue-based realm. An underlying principle of social documentary photography is to gain authentic visions of the truth or at least a truth perceived by the author. Openness and collaboration are encouraged through long-term engagement with individuals and communities, leading to new authentic insights.

Unlike advertising, my photographs aim to inform, educate, and promote empathy, not to raise market share. Whether it can be considered social documentary photography or something else is the question, but it is still fundamentally an issue-based investigation.

This is not a unique methodology, but its application to issue-based topics is less common. In *Hard Times* (2011) and *Westway* (2013), the work is informed by participants' life statements. This combination of image and text tells the stories of these marginalised people who are excluded from this hierarchal system. In *Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013), the combination of image and text is informed by naturalists who are not in front of the lens but whose knowledge and opinions are gained from years of frontline experience of environmental issues.

The core of the research is its intent to explore social and environmental issues utilising the photographic aesthetics and techniques of advertising photography. In doing so, generate visual interpretations that communicate sometimes difficult and complex messages to a broader public in a language that is accessible and encourages greater engagement with these topics. The research aims to look beyond stereotypical representations and statistics to reach the crux of an issue and, using the hybridised methodology create new and authentic outcomes that visually portray the findings.

There are four main intertwined strands of the research woven together as if they were one rope. The core strand is the research intent and represents the aims and objectives of the research. The three outer strands that constitute the methodology include fieldwork, construction and dissemination and are wound around the core. Depending upon the project being undertaken, the strands take different levels of strain and this varies as the project progresses. The various methods are not listed in order of priority but are a synthesis creating the methodology.
(RQ1,2)

6.2 Field Work: primary source research, collaboration, archival and semi-formal interviews.

The fieldwork occurs in phases; firstly, a top-down approach to establish support for the project and gain a deeper understanding of the topic. Followed by a bottom-up phase representing the majority of the research and allows those on the frontline to communicate their views and experiences. This approach is often associated with social documentary photography and has been applied to varying degrees within the three projects.

For example, with the *Hard Times* project, the first meetings were with The Big Issue Foundation management and regional officers. This was to obtain specialist advice from experts in the field to avoid naive interpretations of the issue and to encourage constructive criticism. This is followed by meetings with outreach workers who facilitate introductions to homeless people. At this point, the research becomes bottom-up and frontline participants become the major contributors to the research.

In the same way, the *Westway* project began with advice from The Westway Trust and then heads of local organisations. Followed by the bottom-up approach with

individual families living in the area. The top-down approach was not as successful in *Sacrifice the Birdsong* as wildlife charities were unwilling to support this controversial topic. The first line of stakeholders was the local wildlife rescue centres followed by the bottom-up level with individual environmentalists. Following the traditions of long-term social documentary practice, many weeks of fieldwork were undertaken, meeting local communities and individuals before any images were made.

The fieldwork also includes primary research investigations of specialist sources of information, such as charity records and archives. These allow the research to drill down into a particular aspect of the issue and lead to authenticated new research findings, for example, in the corroboration of Big Issue vendors' personal stories.

Throughout the making, presentation, and dissemination, there is a high level of collaboration with the participants, giving them agency and the work authenticity. Rather than an independent operator observing and taking images, collaboration is key to my practice and that of many other socially engaged practitioners. This collaborative approach follows in a long line of such approaches by practitioners such as Bruce Davidson, *East 100th street* (1970), Jacob Holdt, *American Pictures*, Jim Goldberg, *Rich and Poor* (1985), Julian Germain, *No Mundo Maravilhoso Do Futebol* (1998). Also, in the case of Harry Hall's work, *The Manifestation of Change a Photographically Based Investigation That Visualises the Processes of Urbanisation Within the Kharnack Nomad Communities* (2016).

Collaboration leads to the making of images together through a conversation and process of continual exchange. This process of 'making not taking', grew out of my advertising practice and compares to the relationship between a photographer and client. In effect, the participants take the place of the client, and their view of the issue becomes paramount. They are encouraged to give feedback to help the development of the images and together we hope to inform public opinion.

As Ariella Azoulay (2012 p. 219) argues, the photographic 'encounter involves four protagonists at least- a camera, whoever stands behind the lens, whoever faces the lens, and whoever might become a spectator viewing the product of the encounter.' While the authorship of an image is conventionally attributed to the person who depresses the shutter, Azoulay argues that it should in fact be 'seen to result from the encounter between the four protagonists' (2012 p. 220). The photographer may occupy the most powerful position within this configuration but what is captured in the image 'depends on the agency of all parties to it and on their ability to intervene in the frame or to restrict it.' (ibid) The narratives conveyed in my work are informed by the research undertaken with participants. Although a collaborative methodology is not unique, one in which the participants effectively replace the client is highly unusual. As Azoulay suggests, this type of methodology gives the participants powerful agency and, in this way, their voices are clearly heard. Segal-Hamilton comments in a CNN Lifestyle (2019) article reviewing *Urban Gypsies* (2013) on the level of agency:

Through this close collaboration the Travelers are deciding how they want to be represented. And who can blame them for wanting to take control of their own image?

(Segal- Hamilton, 2019)

Anthony Luvera, worked with homeless people for twenty years and developed a highly collaborative methodology incorporating co-creation, collaboration, and participation. His exhibition *Assembly* (2014) was the culmination of one year's work with homeless people in Brighton and comprised of images and audio recordings made by participants to capture their life experiences. Assisted Self-portraits (see Fig.9.) The collaborative methodology applied in *Hard Times* and *Westway* grew from commercial practice and is similar to Luvera's. However, he comments in an interview with Alice Turrell (2020), 'The process of a participatory project or a socially engaged practice, is as important, if not more so, than the finished pieces presented to an audience.' This is where our approaches diverge; my primary goal is to communicate impactful outcomes to wide audiences, as in advertising campaigns and so the visual outcomes are paramount!



Fig.9. Luvera, A. *Assisted Self-Portrait of Ben Evans, Assembly* (2013 – 2014)
Available: <http://www.luvera.com/assembly/>

Conversations with participants made in semi-formal interviews were invaluable in reaching informed and significant outcomes. Applying standards now widely accepted in socially engaged documentary photography, the projects followed recommended research ethics guidelines. All the research undertaken was approved by AUB Research Committee to ensure the work met the university's principles of dignity, respect, fairness and equality. Participants were recruited to the projects through a slow process of networking and trust-building with individuals and communities, followed by informed consent procedures to ensure all parties were treated fairly and respectfully. The collaborative nature of the study allowed for the

participants to approve and edit their statements. Importantly, they were all given the option to be anonymised in their images or text, and should they wish, be withdrawn. (RQ1,2)

6.3 Construction: the visual language

This methodological strand is aligned with practices and aesthetics originating from advertising photography. The constructed aspects of advertising photography are appropriated through the careful consideration of location, composition, pose and use of light, to create imagery with a high-quality aesthetic that emulates aspects of mainstream advertising photography. Similarly, these elements are constructed in such a way as to clearly communicate a message or narrative, in this case one agreed through collaboration with the participants (as mentioned p. 30). In this way the aesthetics applied, and the research intent mimic the advertising photographer and client relationship. However, this methodology is applied to social and environmental issue-based subjects and through the use of this familiar visual language encourages public engagement.

This methodology developed to encompass authentic moments and interactions which were allowed to play out in front of the lens. Advertising aesthetics were applied to create a mise-en-scene and then genuine action was allowed to take place but in this highly controlled area. In the image *Sean & Charlotte Sleeping* (Fig.8,10) *Hard Times*, a young couple living in a car were depicted sleeping in it. When asked to demonstrate how they slept at night, they became very tired and fell asleep and the image records this genuine moment.

Unlike *When Lives Collide*, in the two social issue projects, all the people and locations represented are genuine, as in there are no actors or make-up artists involved. This principle of authenticity is also applied to *Sacrifice the Birdsong* in which all the creatures depicted are roadkill. However, the locations depicted are not the sites where their death took place.

In most visual advertising, there are often four elements: image, logo, strapline and body text. Similarly, in this research, a core aspect of the construction is the considered combination of image and text to anchor the messages to the visuals. In this way, a traditional documentary long-term collaborative methodology is combined with advertising aesthetics, construction and intent to create the visual language. (RQ3)

6.4 Dissemination: multi-layered mediation

Dissemination strategies are part of the research methodology as I consider this aspect from the beginning, as would be the case in an advertising campaign. Advertising is the ultimate form of public engagement and the desire to create impact is a core aim of the research. The link between dissemination, public engagement, and impact is crucial within academic research fields since the Research Excellence Framework (2014) was introduced to which the projects were submitted.

The primary dissemination method for the projects was a gallery exhibition, two of which (*Hard Times* and *The Westway*) took place at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Gallery

in the Crypt. The most effective forms of dissemination reached far beyond these gallery spaces, but the exhibition was the catalyst. Although only meters from the National Gallery and The National Portrait Gallery, the cultural gap between St Martin's and these bastions of the art world is huge. Reserved for an elite of artists with exhibitions planned for many years, the aims of these venues have a different focus. The National Portrait Gallery provides a 'collection of portraits of the persons who make, or have made an impact on British history and/or culture' (Cullinan, 2015). Whereas, St Martin-in-the-Fields aims to bring communities together, 'We stand for faith at the heart of a peaceful, inclusive and progressive society, and making this happen now is more urgent than ever before,' (2021). In this way, St Martin's is attuned to the research aims of this socially engaged work. However, there is room for overlap and common interests between the art world and socially engaged contexts, evidenced in the subsequent inclusion of my work in the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize (2013) and the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma History Month (2013) at the Victoria and Albert Museum (see appendices, p.86).

St Martin-in-the-Fields Gallery in the Crypt is located at the heart of London's tourist zone and *Hard Times* had 113,000 visitors and *Westway* had 60,000 visitors drawn in by the media publicity. Although not exactly a gorilla approach, both exhibitions tapped into the mass audiences visiting the exhibition quarter of London. In addition, they were arranged over a short lead time of months, not years. This aspect of the dissemination will be discussed further in the individual project section.

Limited dissemination occurred through self-published books, but a much higher level was achieved through the publication of *Urban Gypsies* (2019) via a mainstream publisher, Hoxton Mini Press. This publication features the gypsy images and statements from the *Westway* project and was published six years after the exhibition created a second wave of media coverage. The publisher primarily targets the photography community, but the book was also available in galleries, on the high street and online nationally and internationally. The publication is in the process of being included in the Museum of London's photographic archive, which may lead to future forms of dissemination for years to come (See Contributions p.69).

The most significant dissemination was achieved through the general media, going far beyond the connectivity of the gallery space and reaching mass audiences, including television, radio, lifestyle magazine, news press, online news platforms and the photography media. The BBC2 Culture Show featured *Hard Times* (2011) and BBC Radio London's Robert Elms Show (2019) covered *Urban Gypsies* (2019). Gaining global coverage online *Urban Gypsies* (2019) was featured on CNN Lifestyles, Australian News, The Face Magazine and in print in Marie Claire (2019). Through principles appropriated from commercial practices the work to connect with wide audiences (see Media Coverage p.88).

(RQ3)

6.5 Conclusion

As described, the methodology is multi-layered and emergent, comprising of three strands, each with component parts. Fieldwork incorporates primary source research, archives, semi-formal interviews and involves high levels of collaboration throughout. This approach has much in common with the principles of social documentary practice. Construction builds the visual language and is closely aligned with advertising aesthetics, techniques and processes. Dissemination is multi-layered and is key to meeting the research aims and influences the projects from the outset, as in advertising photography. In this regard, dissemination strategies are part of my overall research methodology. The strands of the methodology are further discussed in the project sections.

The methodology originated from a commercial source but joined a wider conversation pioneered by practitioners such as Paul Seawright and Anna Fox, in which the genre of social documentary is reconsidered and reinvented through alternative hybridised approaches, including the use of colour, large scale and seductive text. The constructed approach contradicts many documentary principles but visually interprets the crux of the issue, clearly communicating to the public in a language they recognise.

7. PROJECT 1 – Hard Times.

Research Period: Sept 2008 - March 2011

7.1 Outcomes: See Appendices (p.86)

7.2 Introduction

The practice-based research explores how photography can be used to investigate British homeless people's lives in the wake of the 2008 economic crash, one of the most challenging periods of modern times. *Hard Times* explores socio-economic themes of opportunity, homelessness, aspirational consumerism and the automobile, mediated through an advertising and documentary photography hybridised lens. For many of these people, Thatcherite goals of home and car ownership are just dreams, as they spend their lives at the periphery of this system sleeping in doorways or walking the streets.

The project resulted from an extended investigation into the lives of Big Issue vendors in England and was made in partnership with the Big Issue Foundation. Referencing Charles Dickens' 1854 novel, the project title was chosen to emphasise the challenging period experienced by many sectors of society in what came to be known as the Credit Crunch.



Fig.10. Sean & Charlotte Sleeping, *Hard Times* (2010)

7.3 Context

There are numerous national and local charities supporting the homeless in the UK, including [The Big Issue Foundation](#), [St Martin's Charity](#), [Shelter](#), [The Passage](#), [St Mungo's](#), [Centrepoint](#), [DePaul UK](#), [The Salvation Army and Crisis UK](#). The Big Issue Foundation was launched in 1991 by John Bird (now Lord John Bird MBE) and Gordon Roddick (co-founder of the Bodyshop). The two conceived of a system where the homeless could help themselves by trading a street magazine as John Bird says in an interview with Mark Beech, 'getting a hand-up, not a handout' (2016).

Homelessness has been a favourite trope of social documentary photographers from the earliest days of the medium, with activist practitioners such as Jacob Riis photographing children sleeping on the streets of New York in the 1880s and publishing his influential book *How the Other half Lives* (1890). Building on this work are other well-known practitioners such as Dorothea Lange, Bruce Davidson, and Don McCullin, who represented the subject in what now is considered to be the traditional aesthetic of gritty black and white film photography.

Anthony Hernandez's work *Landscapes for the Homeless* (1995) takes a different approach, it depicts deserted sites in Los Angeles where the homeless have made camp and records the detritus they have left behind. In my opinion, this work objectifies and dehumanises the homeless and suggests a fear of interaction with the individuals involved.

In the same year, Julian Germain, Patricia Azevedo and Murilo Godoy started a 12-year project titled *No Olho da Rua* (Germain, no date) which translates as 'in the eye of the street' and depicts young homeless Brazilians of Belo Horizonte. Provided with cameras, they were encouraged to make images representing their lives and the work illustrates the power of collaborative photography research to give socially and economically marginalised people a voice.

The Big Issue suggested a list of individuals with positive stories. However, due to the economic crash, I suggested a more authentic approach, including the long-term homeless and the recently made homeless. In this way the project would capture a historical record of this troubling time. Whilst undertaking this research, the link to aspirational consumerism and its relationship to its primary mode of transport became apparent. Homeless individuals were found to be living in cars, under flyovers, and in doorways at the periphery of the road network and the project in this way grew organically out of the underpinning work *When Lives Collide*.

7.4 Field Work

On visiting each location with a Big Issue outreach worker, likely candidates for the project would be identified based on their current situation and background story, if it was known, to create a representative group.

The Big Issue workers warned me never to ask when the person's life went wrong, as for many, this was a question full of judgment. My approach was to investigate their life as it was now and only refer to the past if they wished. Together we would visit significant places such as where they slept before they started to sell the Big

Issue and these places often represented a terrible low point. This might be a doorway or archway and would often trigger intense emotions and served as a reminder of how hard they had tried to get back to mainstream society.

The selection of these individuals at times, was an unsettling process. In many ways, it was akin to being a butterfly collector, searching for a particular type of person to illustrate the group's diversity. Sometimes hearing a rumour of a particularly unusual situation and then following the trail until the person was found.

The photography explores how people can survive under conditions of extreme adversity, and one of the challenges was to find a balance between capturing striking images that could have tremendous impact but are not exploiting vulnerable people.

Many homeless people put up a mask to shield their true feelings and vulnerabilities, and it took time for them to lower this. The interviews were relaxed sessions where we would have a coffee and chat and I would take notes and ask simple open questions such as 'What have you been doing this week?' This kind of simple non-judgemental question led to the participants revealing what was foremost on their mind. Recordings could not be made as the participants were very suspicious and feared the authorities. Upon completion of the interviews, some participants did not want the statement to be put into the first person, as they were too emotional and preferred that I comment on our time and conversation together. This was an unexpected problem as I was concerned that having two forms of written statement would make the work less cohesive. Each participant's story was presented through a combination of images and a quote used as a strapline below the image, plus the individual's full story text. This is discussed further below in the visual language section.

When making the images, I would take my time working slowly and quietly, watching each person closely and then I would arrange the pose and light (as described in the methodology section). Using lighting to give the images a high-quality aesthetic was a problem at times, due to the lack of space and cumbersome equipment. Working with them as if they were a client, I shot digitally and showed the participant the images as we went along to build confidence and get feedback on their representation. They wanted the portrait repeated on a few occasions as they felt it misrepresented them, but this always strengthened the work. This is a very similar process and experience to my previous advertising practice; through a collaborative exchange of opinions with a client a stronger piece of work would emerge.

Similarly, to the Travellers of The Westway, the homeless are the 'other within,' a group little understood or appreciated. My approach felt very dangerous on occasions as some of the participants would have huge mood swings, probably due to drug dependencies or mental health issues. In the beginning, I worked with an assistant, but I noticed that working alone allowed the bond between myself and the participants to build quickly and maintain their attention more effectively. Often, a mutual feeling of vulnerability negated the lens's aggressive quality when directed at a subject.

Some individuals had shocking stories, such as Anna, who had claimed to be a page three model, saying that Lord Patrick Lichfield had photographed her. She had

turned to drugs to keep thin, but this led to ever stronger substances. 'In the end, I was a smackhead and a prostitute, working for my pimp on Portland Square.' *Hard Times*. When I photographed Anna, I recognised the movement and pose of a model, but I needed to authenticate her story. I contacted the Lichfield archive and they were able to quickly corroborate her story. Her story was positive, 'The Big Issue has helped me back on the road to normality. I am grateful to be alive. Because it could all have been very different.' *Hard Times*.

I had heard from vendors that many ex-service people lived on the streets, but they could not direct me to any. I contacted The British Legion, hoping they could help but they dismissed this as a street myth. I discovered that The Big Issue held records of vendors' previous occupations at their headquarters and working through these, I found ex-service personnel from home and abroad. I tracked down and photographed a number who had experienced active service, including in the Falklands and the First Gulf War, so the story was confirmed.

Interviewing these ex-servicemen provided valuable insights, Mike comments 'I joined as a boy and everything was laid on, you don't have to worry about bills or feeding yourself,' 'I slept rough after I left the services, they don't prepare you for civil life.' *Hard Times* (2011). We went to an industrial estate where he once slept and experimented with different poses but settled on one where his face was covered as he wanted to remain anonymous (Fig.11).



Fig.11. *Mike, Hard Times* (2010)

Kevin's story was a particularly harsh critique of a consumerist-led economy, as he had once been committed to the Thatcherite dream and was driven by the buzz of meeting sales targets and earning bonuses. 'I used to be a kitchen salesman and I was bloody good at it,' *Hard Times*. The company closed in the economic crash, and

he could not meet his family's financial commitments and, as in many cases split with his partner.

However, there were many positive findings, including the number of vendors that said that The Big Issue had helped them and even saved their life. For example, Brian who had served in the Falklands said 'I've now been selling for five years and it has made a big difference to my life.' (Fig.15).



Fig.12. Kevin, *Hard Times* (2010)



Fig.13. Nigel & Kim, *Hard Times* (2010)

I took Kim and Nigel back to the derelict hotel where they had squatted for months and photographed them within the room they had occupied. They saved money selling The Big Issue and were able to put a deposit on a room and then Kim was able to obtain work as a chambermaid. I photographed them in their new home and Kim commented, 'We're going to be ok now, everything's working out.' (Fig.13).

The Big Issue was a great help to most, giving them a purpose and the opportunity to build a life, but I felt some should have been receiving some form of care as they appeared to have mental health issues, such as John (Fig.14), who I photographed in a squat in Birmingham. The most alarming aspect of the research was that some individuals would disappear and leave no way to trace them. I had no idea if they had died or just moved.



Fig.14. *John, Hard Times* (2010)

The photography records people living on the street, in cars, in doorways, industrial buildings, derelict hotels and even secretly in nature reserves. However, others helped by charities such as The Big Issue Foundation have managed to pay for simple forms of accommodation and are no longer on the street. For these people, the charity's help has given them access to regular food and health care as well as a safe place to sleep. Many of those approached during the project's making were very mobile and would hitch rides or risk dangerously stowing away on trains or lorries but would often walk long distances on the roads to relocate.

7.5 Visual Language

As discussed in the methodology section (p.28), auto-photography projects (photography performed by the participants themselves) have been used by social scientists to address this topic, as described in the paper *Imag(in)ing 'homeless places' using auto-photography to (re)examine the geographies of the homeless*, (Johnsen, May and Cloke, 2007). This insider approach is considered to give a

deeper insight into the issue and have social and mental health benefits for the participants. For practitioners such as Anthony Luvera working with homeless people in Brighton, 'The process of a participatory project or a socially engaged practice, is as important, if not more so, than the finished pieces presented to an audience' (2014). My work borrows much from long-term socially engaged documentary practice and, through close collaboration, achieves a semi-insider representation. However, in the same way as advertising photography aims to reach mass audiences through impactful images, the visual language is paramount. Therefore, to maintain and control the overall project structure and visual language, I considered it essential to make the images myself rather than editing participants' work.

Initially, I considered staying with the homeless people on the street to photograph as an insider, but this was considered unsafe by The Big Issue and AUB's ethics committee. Some vendors found the idea humorous and a little insulting, as they felt to spend a few days pretending to live their life would not be a realistic experience of their situation. An alternative was found in which I would make several visits to each vendor over weeks to form a bond and in this way, get close to an insider point of view.

Reflecting upon the underpinning project *When Lives Collide*, I felt the images had a cinematic aesthetic that projected a sense of fantasy not fact (Fig.3). I wanted to leave the cinematic aesthetic of Gregory Crewdson (2002) behind and the application of advertising techniques provided the answer. The images could be constructed using genuine people in genuine locations but controlled to create a high-quality aesthetic. Desaturating the colours but increasing contrast I created a subtle palette with the tonal impact of a black and white print but rendered in high resolution. In the same way as a negative made with a large-format camera, the images present incredibly high levels of detail that would have been difficult to take in as a viewer at the actual scene. Julian Stallabrass (2007, p. 82) calls this effect the 'data sublime,' and this will be discussed in detail in the *Sacrifice the Birdsong* project section.

We are very familiar with the sight of homeless people and Big Issue vendors on our streets, but we have little idea of the back story. The project explores the hidden aspects of these people's lives and immerses us in their world, providing new insights on a familiar topic. The immersion is achieved by combining highly detailed large-scale images, supported by simple lines of text acting similarly to advertising straplines such as, Brian Rowe (Fig.15). His comments include, 'The Falklands experience was horrible and preyed on my mind years afterward.' and 'I thought I would come home to a hero's welcome, but when I did not, that is when the shock set in.' In *Hard Times*, the text and image are deliberately at odds, for the image conveys an almost stereotyped representation of a homeless person. However, he is not a tramp; he is a fallen hero. The text conflicts with the stereotypical narrative the audience imagines. The juxtaposition of image and text functions in such a way as to encourage the viewer to look and think beyond initial superficial appearances, literally do not read a book by its cover.



Fig.15. *Brian, Hard Times* (2010)

Similarly, Sean and Charlottes' statement is headed with the strapline 'I used to look pretty but not anymore. I am not sure I can take much more.' An apparently tranquil image of a young couple sleeping is shattered when we realise they live in a car, just trying to survive (Fig.8,10). Each strapline emphasises a different aspect of the issue for example, David says, 'I can't sleep in a town anymore it's too dangerous.' *Hard Times*, (2011) In the image, we see a man who appears to be camping in the woods, but we discover that he has witnessed terrible sights and is hiding to feel safe (Fig.38). The images and text go hand in hand, and both are intrinsic to the outcome which encourages the reconsideration of this sadly familiar topic.

7.6 Dissemination

The primary form of dissemination was a five-venue tour in which exhibition design remained consistent throughout, comprising of 20 images printed and framed to A1 proportions accompanied by their straplines and the full statements from each individual. St Martin-in-the-Fields was the first venue in the tour and has worked closely with the homeless since the First World War and today provides shelter for up to 200 vulnerable people.

The exhibitions were widely covered in the media, including the BBC2 Culture Show and regional television. Radio coverage included BBC Radio London, BBC Radio West Midlands, BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Solent. Printed media included The Metro, The Times Education Supplement, Birmingham Post, The Photographer Magazine, Image Magazine and The Big Issue Magazine, plus wide coverage online (see Media Coverage p.88). A series of six images won an Association of Photographers Gold Award and were included in the Awards book which was disseminated internationally (see Awards p.87). Two thousand copies of the exhibition catalogue were produced and sold for donations at the galleries.

Lord John Bird and actor Simon Callow both gave supporting speeches on the opening night and over the following three months, 113,000 people visited the show. However, the largest audiences were reached through the media promotion supported by Big Issue's public relations company Rewired: Creative Communications Agency who reported that the publicity reached 1.4 million people.

7.7 Contribution

This practice-based long-term social-documentary photographic research explores the complex links between homelessness, aspirational consumerism and the road. It makes a significant contribution to the field of photography and society by addressing a very familiar social issue considered difficult or abhorrent in a visual language that encourages public engagement and empathy. Susan Sontag points out the power of photography to desensitise an audience in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (2003, p. 79). This applies not just to photography but to most repeated abhorrent sights that we encounter. We become emotionally numb to the suffering of others and avert our gaze (section averted gaze p.26), but the hybridised approach applied is designed to subvert this process and, through photographic means, attempts to reconnect the audience. Sontag describes how once we feel that there is nothing we can do, we become 'bored, cynical, apathetic' (ibid, p. 79). It is impossible to quantify how many people were influenced by the work, but as mentioned above, 1.4 million people were reached by *Hard Times* (2011) and the images and text conveyed a clear message that with a run of bad luck, anyone of us could be in a similar situation within weeks.

Through the combination of images and text, the participants have been able to voice their opinions through the media and in doing so, have provided valuable insights for the public, such as Brian Rowes, Sean and Charlotte, Mike, John Edwards, Kim and Kevin. Their stories were covered on the BBC News website (April 2011). Brian, Sean and Charlotte, Anna and John's stories were all covered extensively in *The Photographer Magazine* and *Image Magazine*. Extracts of the statements were used widely in various press, including *The Times Higher Education* (March 2011), *The Metro* and *Birmingham Post* (Sept 2011). Some participants attended the exhibitions and were happy to be photographed by the media, including Anna in London and Acey in London and Birmingham. The media coverage was an empowering experience for the participants as their views were widely disseminated. Sean, who was photographed living in the car, took part in a BBC South Today television feature (April 2011). The BBC 2 Culture Show coverage of the work increased the number of visitors to the St Martin-in-the-Fields exhibition to see and read their stories.

The photography represents an historical record of a time in which the divide between the 'haves and have-nots' has never been so extreme. A period of time in which the capitalist consumer dream that a free-market economy will bring wealth to all has proved to be a blatant falsehood. The research records how the loss of opportunity can lead to unemployment, homelessness and substance abuse, followed by the terrible realisation that life goals have become unobtainable. In the winner takes all game of capitalism, if you slip all the way to the bottom, you are effectively out of the game. You become a marginalised observer that walks the roads we drive, watching us slide past in luxury hi-tech vehicles on route to our

cathedrals of consumerism. While you sleep in doorways or under flyovers, literally and metaphorically out in the cold.

The research makes a significant contribution to the field of photography by demonstrating how an advertising/documentary hybridised approach can be applied to a familiar topic, photographed numerous times, yet encourage high levels of public engagement.



Fig.16. Simon Callow & Paul Wenham-Clarke opening night, *Hard Times* (2010)

8. PROJECT 2 - Westway: a portrait of a community

Research Period: Jan 2011 - Feb 2013

Sub-project - Urban Gypsies

Research Period: June 2018 - June 2019

8.1 Outcomes: See Appendices (p.86)

8.2 Introduction

The practice-based photographic research investigates a multi-cultural community that lives beneath or in the shadow of a major elevated highway, The Westway (A40) that transports commuters to the heart of London and is one of Britain's most inner-city environments.

The research commenced in Jan 2011 and the first wave of research was completed by Jan 2013 which led to *Westway: a portrait of the community* being exhibited in Feb 2013 at St Martin-the-Fields Gallery in The Crypt, Trafalgar Square, London. This exhibition comprised 55 framed images supported by participant statements, 15 of these images were of The Westway Traveller community. In 2013 I produced a self-published book intended as a dummy for a mass-produced publication with a mainstream publisher. Unfortunately, none were interested in the whole project and only 50 copies were printed. However, in 2018 a mainstream publisher agreed to produce a hardback book that focussed on the Traveller section of the project. Over the following year, a second wave of research took place with the Travellers to agree the supporting text and *Urban Gypsies* was published in June 2019, with a total of 40 images.

8.3 Social Context

This photographic research explores the lives of those living alongside or beneath The Westway (A40) which towers over the community for 2.5 miles between Edgware Road and Wembley. This huge monolithic concrete structure commissioned by the GLC and engineered by Sir Bruce White and Partners pays testament to the car-centric ideology of the 1960's town planners. At this time, the road network was becoming the primary form of transport. In 1950 there were 4 million privately owned cars in the UK, by 2010 this had risen to 34 million (Department for Transport, 2011, p.1). The Western Avenue section of The Westway A40 passed through the area covered by the project and on average, recorded in 2009 136,000 vehicles a day and was the 5th busiest road in Greater London, (Cecil, 2017).

According to reports in The Times (1972), 5000 families lost their homes for every mile of the new road and understandably, they were resistant. When the Minister of Transport John Peyton and Michael Heseltine Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Transport, opened the road on the 28th July 1970, the proceedings were noisily accompanied by local residents waving banners and protesting on the road itself and from homes alongside the road (Baker, 2014). Once completed, the locals'

attitude changed as they came to accept the situation and moves were made to reclaim the land under this giant structure and in 1971, the local people formed [The Westway Trust](#). A sports centre, skateboard park, horse riding school, industrial units and artists' workshops were all created literally under the road.

The photographic research explored the environment and communities to the south of the road passing through the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. To the north are some of London's most affluent areas, but in dramatic contrast the areas to the south are some of the most underprivileged districts. Surrounding the Latimer Road area, there are numerous high-rise blocks built from reinforced concrete in the brutalist architectural style of the 1960s which tower over the communities below.

The population of the area is one of the most ethnically diverse in the UK. Migrants from the West Indies came to London in 1948 before The Westway was built. Recent arrivals to the borough include the Moroccan and Somalian communities attracted by the relatively low-cost accommodation available in the area. A Gypsy and Traveller community had been established in the district long before The Westway as recorded by photographer John Thomson (1877).

The Irish Travellers of the UK were once nomadic people but that lifestyle has been discouraged by national and local government who prefer Travellers to adopt a more settled life on official sites. *The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960* put restrictions on temporary encampments to prevent Travellers creating unofficial sites. Local authorities were expected to provide official sites as an alternative and The Westway site became official in 1975.

The Traveller site on Stable Way is situated in the shadow of a major intersection (Fig.10) with The Westway (A3220 & A40) and the homes are found between two slip roads. This is an intensely urban environment in which the dwellings are literally under the road and suffer from associated noise and pollution. In 2017 The CleanSpace IoT Network led by Lord Drayson identified The Westway as being amongst the three most polluted areas of London (Cecil 2017). In essence, the road appears to offer this micro-community a safe place to shelter, yet they live on a highly polluted wasteland, breathing highly polluted air and have lost their traditional way of living. This unusual community of twenty families became a particular focus for the research, leading to the book *Urban Gypsies*.



Fig.17. A home on *The Westway Traveller site* (2013)

8.4 Photographic Contexts

From the many long-term social documentary projects in the UK focussing on communities, a number relate closely to the themes of multi-culturalism, cultural identity, integration, class, and urbanisation represented in the *Westway* project. The project joins this wider conversation represented by the likes of Tish Murtha, Nick Hedges, Liz Hingley and Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen.

Tish Murtha's works *Elswick Kids* (1978) *Juvenile Jazz Bands* (1979), *Elswick Revisited* (1987) all explore aspects of social deprivation in Northeast Britain. In many of her images, she has children playing on the streets which, as can be seen, resonates with images of Traveller children playing at *The Westway Traveller Site* (Fig.18, 50) who are still experiencing this type of upbringing so rarely seen today.



Fig.18. *Stable Way, Westway* (2013)

The Finnish photographer Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, founder of Amber Film and Photography Collective, made her famous work *Byker* (1985). The work depicts the close-knit communities of Newcastle through a range of environmental portraits, close-up portraits and shots of the urban landscape in a traditional black and white gritty documentary style. Then she returned to make *Byker Revisited* (2009) to photograph the families living on The Byker Wall Estate that replaced the terraced streets she originally photographed. In *Byker Revisited* (2009) the portraits are often semi-posed or constructed scenes in the home which depict the family relationship through environment, body language and gesture. This time, the images are in full saturated colour in rooms well-lit by combinations of artificial light and daylight and closely relate to my project's constructed aspects.

New Dawns Old Nightmares (1967) by Nick Hedges explores urban redevelopment in response to the housing crisis of the 1960s. This work directly relates to the *Westway* project, in that it records the everyday lives of people living with brutalist architectural landscapes on new housing estates, tower blocks, and town centres. *Homemade in Smethwick* (2016) by Liz Hingley is a more recent project that explores the lives of Asian families in a borough of Birmingham. Through a combination of portraits and environmental images in homes, workplaces, and social spaces, she celebrates the area's cultural diversity. Like the *Westway*, Smethwick is attractive to migrant workers and families and has a highly diverse ethnic mix.

The otherness of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people has been a particular interest to photographers since the beginning with practitioners such as Carol Szathmari (The J. Paul Getty Museum, no date), Eugene Atget (1913) and Andre Kertesz (1916). A Gypsy family and their caravan were photographed at Latimer Road by John Thomson in 1877 which is where The Westway Traveller site is today. Thomson's image represents the beginning of a photographic journey recording the

history of this area of London and its link to this ethnic group. Jo Spence, known for her phototherapy work, in her early career photographed Travellers at The Westway (Baird, no date). Once the site became official The Travellers in response to aggression from local people, became extremely private and there are very few images made after that time.

Westway (2013) differs from these works as it is a long-term photographic exploration of a community's relationship to a particular architectural element of their environment and investigates the opportunities and problems it has presented to them.



Fig.19. *Oasis, Westway* (2013)

8.5 Field Work

The first phase of the research was to learn about the area's history and was followed by a month in which I roamed the area making contacts with key figures and residents, building links but not making images. A firm bond was established with the Oxford Gardens School which proved invaluable as the school acted as a hub of the community. Photographing the children and their families at school events necessitated a highly organised and ethical approach. Informed consent was obtained with the help of the school, as it was vital that all parties felt that ethical guidelines were being followed.

Latimer Christian Centre serves the local community whatever their religious persuasion and through audio interviews and images, I was able to understand their experience of living by The Westway.

The West London Stables was located literally beneath the roundabout junction of the A40 and the A3220 and experienced high levels of noise pollution, but the horses

were completely unphased by this (Fig.20). The stables were run as a resource to the local community offering a glimpse of rural life to these inner-city people. Its activities brought together a diverse range of people from those living in high-rise council flats to those from very privileged backgrounds.



Fig.20. *West London Stables, Westway* (2013)

The Westway Sports Centre, West London Stables and the Traveller site were all close neighbours and therefore it seemed essential to include the Traveller site. This was not an easy community to approach; they were very private and suspicious of strangers. I asked local people I had photographed to mention my project to the Travellers and after six months, I was invited to meet the head of the Travellers community.

I was granted access on the condition that permission was agreed for each visit. Firstly, I photographed key life events such as weddings, christenings, first communions and birthday parties and I was able to build up the level of trust. The Travellers were not happy to have observational images made of the adults, but this did not apply to the children. Many men did not want to be photographed for fear of losing work if they were identified as Travellers by outsiders. We agreed on a formal approach to making the portraits as this allowed the participants to know exactly what was happening. Over time this put the group at ease and the rules were relaxed a little, although never when photographing the adult men. Through this arrangement, a unique insight was provided into this very private community that rarely gave access to outsiders.

The research revealed that since a permanent Traveller site was established in 1976 a level of protection and stability was established for this group which may never have been possible without the construction of the road. *Marti's Story, Westway*

describes how the local non-traveller community was vehemently against the site and locals demolished it with sledgehammers. Understandably when it was rebuilt the Travellers have never forgotten, and that is why they are so private today.

The images and text for the exhibition were discussed in detail with participants to ensure that they felt well represented and the information was accurate. With all the various community groups involved, the same collaborative approach was applied. The individuals viewed images as they were made and were able to give feedback. Prints were given as a form of payback which participants highly valued. Through this process which echoed my advertising photography commissions the participants gained agency and trust was built on both sides of the lens.

8.6 Visual Language

Reflecting upon the work made in *Hard Times* I was satisfied with the techniques and aesthetics applied which included the colour grading and use of flash lighting for both interiors and exteriors. In *Hard Times*, I had started to work alone, as I found the bond between the photographer and sitter built more quickly and the participant's attention was maintained. Using smaller lightweight equipment, I no longer needed an assistant and working alone became considerably easier. This was a breakthrough moment that would be applied to several projects that followed, as I now felt completely comfortable, and I was able to work autonomously.

As mentioned, in the initial stages, I photographed several small local mechanic businesses based under The Westway to help spread my network of connections. However, I also used these subjects as a way to fine-tune my aesthetic approach. From there, I moved on to hubs of the local community, and in a similar way to Liz Hingley's environmental portraits, close-ups and landscape combine to create a picture of this multi-cultural inner-city community, in this case, viewed against the backdrop of this monumental concrete structure, The Westway. Unlike *Hard Times* in which the images were made in many locations across the country, the anchoring of this project to the geographic location was vital. This colossal concrete structure, The Westway, needed to play a role as important as the local people in the project. Therefore, wherever possible in an image I would juxtapose a portrait with an urban backdrop to create depth and locate the image, (see Fig.18,19, 20, 21).

In the interior shots, the formal constructed approach continued to be applied (as mentioned in Field Work section). Backgrounds were selected that gave context to the portraits, such as a wall-papered wall in a local pub (see Fig.54) or an interior pub door (see Fig.53). As the project progressed, the community became more trusting and although still wanting to continue with the formal approach, they were much more willing to be photographed. This allowed the constructed approach to be applied more easily as participants became more patient and familiar with camera and lighting setups. On special occasions with the Traveller community, such as a Christening, I would find a likely spot for a portrait and individuals would come to be photographed, sometimes queuing for their turn. This was the case with the image of Cindy and Shirley holding Terry. The baby was passed from one person to the next as they were taking their turn to be photographed with him (Fig.22).



Fig.21. *Westway Sports Centre, Westway* (2013)

8.7 Dissemination

Westway was exhibited at St Martin-in-the-Fields Gallery in the Crypt for six weeks, 60,000 people attended and the project was covered widely in the media. In the same way as *Hard Times*, the gallery location and publicity was vital to reach this large audience and the exhibition acted as the catalyst for various audience interactions that followed. Firstly, the work was shortlisted in the Sony World Photography Awards 2013; this brought international coverage and as a result ten images were exhibited at Somerset House. This in turn led to the work being featured in *The Sunday Times Magazine* and one of the images was included in the Taylor-Wessing Photography Portrait Prize 2013. I was invited to submit 15 images to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History month at The Victoria and Albert Museum. At this point, it seemed this would be the last form of dissemination other than lectures and magazine features on my practice.

As mentioned above, a book publisher, Hoxton Mini Press had been found to create *Urban Gypsies*, but several other publishers had suggested the book needed to be in the same vein as *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* (2010-2015). For me, this was unacceptable as the research revealed the group's struggle to maintain their cultural identity and the book needed to reflect this. Hoxton Mini Press respected this viewpoint and thought it was essential to bring it to the public's attention. Once this was agreed, the self-published book *Westway* could no longer be reprinted or sold as part of the contractual agreement with Hoxton Mini Press.

The highly collaborative approach applied in the research is not unique, but it was a new experience for the Travellers who had always felt under attack by the media and were very suspicious of photographers. The close relationship created continued long after the exhibition and was key to the creation of the book *Urban Gypsies*.

The title *Urban Gypsies* was a concern, as using the word Gypsy could be considered derogatory, but the Travellers used the term themselves. We also considered that the word Gypsy would extend the work's reach beyond photographic and academic networks. The self-published hardback book was 106 pages and was printed to 12 inches square. Hoxton felt that this was not practical for *Urban Gypsies* as it would make the book a prohibitive price. A small easily affordable format was chosen to disseminate the work more effectively and 2000 copies were printed.

On consulting with the Travellers, they were very reluctant to be quoted directly as they feared direct retribution. We decided that the book's commentary would reflect my journey and be in my voice. In this way, I would highlight the feelings and issues raised by the Travellers but not as direct quotes. However, Marti's Story would be included in full at the end of the book as he had been a fierce campaigner and was always willing to be heard in the media. Martin Ward known as Marti, sadly passed away before *Urban Gypsies* was published, but he would have been delighted with the coverage it gained, raising the issues faced by the Traveller community internationally.

Urban Gypsies was extensively covered in the press, media and social media, enabling the images to be seen by wide audiences nationally and internationally. Global coverage included features in CNN Style (USA), Post (Italy), Kwerfeldein (Germany), News.com.au (Australia) and in UK-based publications such as Time Out, The Face, and Marie Claire. This culminated in an interview on The Robert Elms Show, BBC Radio London (2019) with an audience of 400,000 listeners, in which I was able to talk about the specific issues that faced The Westway Travellers.



Fig.22. Cindy & Shirley, Westway (2013)

8.8 Contribution

The project has generated high levels of public engagement in two waves of dissemination; the first was the exhibition *Westway* with 60,000 visitors and the second the *Urban Gypsies* (2019) publication. Both reached wide audiences through a variety of media and have given local people a voice on the social issues that matter to them.

The photography on the surface evidences a highly multi-cultural yet harmonious British community. This is particularly clear in the Sports Day images of Oxford Gardens School, in which all the varied ethnic groups mix as one. Speaking about the school, Sarah Cooper (Head Teacher, Oxford Gardens School) comments, 'We celebrate a wide range of religious festivals throughout the year and it opens the children's eyes to life. It makes them see that everyone is different and that difference should be celebrated'. This theme of integration is evidenced by the many portraits of local people such as the Line Dancers of Latimer Christian Centre (Fig.23) and the diverse group of women from the African Dance for Keep Fit Class; they stand proudly behind a Union Jack umbrella on Jubilee Day (Fig.24). The photography evidences the economic diversity of the local people through the images made in the West London Stables which show children from the privileged areas north of The Westway with children from the local tower blocks.



Fig.23. *Line Dancing, Westway* (2013)

The project gives local people a voice through their statements with many impactful comments both positive and negative, for example, two from Mary White, Latimer Christian Centre, 'I am very proud of those people back in the 1960s who said You're not going to put this road through our community and not give us anything in return' and 'Some of the children around here can miss out on a lot of experiences and can suffer from what is known as poverty of opportunity.'



Fig.24. *African Dancing for Keep-fit, Westway (2013)*

Hammid El-Ouahabi the sports mentor at Oxford Gardens School comments on the diversity of the pupils, 'In our school you can have in one class a member of the Traveller community, children whose parents are influential editors of a national newspaper and kids from local estates.'

In contrast, the research findings from the Traveller community are less positive as they feel marginalised and discriminated against. Travellers have been protected in Law since the Race Discrimination Act 1976 but little seems to have changed since then. A Parliamentary Enquiry (2019), described the situation for the Travellers as the 'Last respectable form of racism.' This phrase has evolved, the word respectable being replaced by acceptable and is the title of Aidan McGarry's book *Romaphobia: The Last Acceptable Form of Racism* (2017). The book describes how these people have been persecuted for centuries and traces the origins of this discrimination. *Urban Gypsies* through the photographs, captions and in *Marti's Story* show they are still treated unfairly today. The research reveals that the wasteland below the road has given this group a place to shelter and connect with local services, such as education and health care. However, this has accelerated the loss of their cultural identity and ultimately may lead to their community's demise as they become assimilated into the wider community. In this way, the project may be recording the last days of this group.

Urban Gypsies (2019). records the lives of a particular micro-community and their attempts to remain together as society applies pressure for them to conform. The images show the crowded nature in which this group live with no room to expand. Large families live side by side in multiple caravans and each new generation parks their caravan beside their parents. The research records cramped conditions on the site far from what most people would consider acceptable living standards. The photographs demonstrate how the families live a life in which space is a premium and green space does not exist. The photography depicts an ironic situation in which

the Travellers are surrounded by thousands of commuters whilst the Travellers once nomadic, are forced to live settled lives. Under pressure to conform to aspirational consumerism norms of a house, car and numerous possessions, the Travellers comment on wider society that 'we are obsessed with owning everything' (ibid p. 34).

Ten of the *Urban Gypsies* series was shortlisted in the World Photography Organisation Awards 2013 and this brought their story to a global audience. This resulted in The Sunday Times Magazine and online features in which supporting text added to the impact, for example, 'traditional way of life is changing, children from the site go to local schools and later marry outside of the Traveller community, settling rather than wanting to travel like their ancestors.' (Allende, 2013).

In a large feature in Marie Claire, the article highlighted the Traveller's view that they were experiencing the 'last form of acceptable racism' in the UK. Each image is captioned with a point to raise awareness, for example, in the image of John in the children's play area, 'There is a sadness to this image as the boy sits in a broken toy car going nowhere, beneath a giant concrete highway. Rained on by diesel particulates from the thousands of cars driving overhead.' (de Romarate, 2019, pp. 46-49).

In a twenty-minute BBC Radio London interview on the Robert Elms Show, I discussed the troubled history of The Westway Travellers and raised awareness of their plight, hoping to inform the public and encourage an acceptance of diversity. *Urban Gypsies* evidences how people can be forced to live in the shadow of our primary transport network because their lifestyle is considered to fall outside of social norms. They have to accept this undesirable low-cost land with all its associated pollution.

Urban Gypsies has made a significant contribution to photography by representing the lives and challenges of a group of Travellers that will perhaps soon disappear as they are assimilated into the wider population. This important historic record has been recognised by the Museum of London and other archives and media contexts (see Summary of Research Contributions p.69).

My research contributes to the field of issue-based photography by applying a hybridised advertising and documentary photography methodology to promote significant public engagement with topics overlooked or considered difficult. As mentioned above, the two iterations of the research *Westway* and *Urban Gypsies* have been disseminated widely. This success suggests that the hybridised approach is highly effective in communicating to wide audiences. In addition, the collaborative approach has built high levels of trust with the participants which have encouraged them to speak out and these views have been disseminated widely. In this way, the research visually explores the complex links between aspirational consumerism, the automobile, the home, cultural identity and the urban environment and disseminates the findings to mass audiences.

9. PROJECT 3 – Sacrifice the Birdsong

Research Period: Sept 2012 – Sept 2013

9.1 Outcomes: See Appendices (p.86)

9.2 Introduction

The project is a practice-based investigation of the impact of the automobile and road network on British wildlife as it struggles to survive and highlights the unnatural imbalance generated in the ecosystem.

I have had a lifelong interest in nature and as a teenager I was a member of The British Trust for Ornithology's ringing group that placed identity rings on birds to record their movements for scientific purposes. Over the decades, I became knowledgeable not only on British birds but on the organisations and debates associated with that field. As a result, I have felt compelled to bring roadkill to the public's attention. In 2013 as I started making this work, Tony Juniper's book *What has nature ever done for you?* (2013) introduced a new debate that suggested that we should put a price on all the individual aspects of nature. He thought that by commoditising nature, we would be more reluctant to destroy it. This publication was a significant influence on my thinking and through a combination of image and text, this project encourages the public to engage with it.

'In our commercialised world, everything is given a value, but what price would you put on birdsong?' *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, (2013).

9.3 Context

The quantity of roadkill is proportional to traffic volume and has drastically increased since 1950, when there were 4 million vehicles in the UK to 2010 with 34 million (Department for Transport, 2011). However, it can be argued that the abhorrent nature of the subject prevents the public from fully engaging with the issue and the works of Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva provide a good insight into our relationship with it.

As discussed earlier in the Averted Gaze section Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* explores the symbolic meaning of dirt, she describes 'dirt as matter out of place' (1966, p. 36). This implies two states, ordered and disordered; in this case, the order is the human system of the road network, and disorder is the accidental deaths of the wildlife which are then consumed by natural processes. This is disturbing to us as it is occurring in the human domain.

In the 1980s, Julia Kristeva investigates this topic in her seminal essay *Powers of Horror: An essay on abjection* (1980). She describes the abject as the human visceral response to a collapse in distinction between subject and object, as experienced when encountering abhorrent natural substances, such as vomit, blood or excreta. When we encounter a corpse, we are confronted by traumatic materiality which in turn emphasises our mortality. The abject is considered to be something in between, such as the entrails of a creature ground into the surface of the road.

Neither animal nor material, but clearly illustrating the connection between the organic and the physical.

A creature struck by a car is instantly transformed from a stunning living system of billions of interacting cells into a shattered dysfunctional mass, becoming a source of energy to be recycled by other life forms. Viewing a decomposing corpse can initiate extreme irrational fears and phobias as we face the abject. Boundaries become blurred as the corpse breaks down, 'It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4).

Due to the abhorrent nature of the topic, there have been few photographic exhibitions or publications on the subject. A notable exception is Clive Landen's *Familiar British Wildlife* (1999), which was made on large format 5X4 film in a forensic style. In these high-resolution analogue images, the graphic detail of the carcasses and their injuries are captured, as they lay on the verge and make difficult viewing. Carole Baker's (2000) research explores the representation of animals in photography and includes a series of roadkill found still life images and echoes Landen's approach. I considered that a crime scene aesthetic was abhorrent to the viewer and engenders a negative association with nature; for example, some people only see real badgers as dead decaying carcasses to be avoided.

In Emma Kisiel's work *At Rest* (2011), she creates roadside memorials with the corpses as the central element, surrounded by circles of stones and flowers. However, the bodies have gruesome injuries which are still abhorrent to most viewers. Both Landen and Kisiel make their images at the roadside, and I felt that this was also important to my work to maintain a causal connection.

Reviewing the representation of animal mortality within art led me to investigate the works of painters commissioned to represent hunting scenes and dead game. The artists Frans Snyder's (1579-1657), Jan Weenix (1641-1719), Paul de Vos (1591-1678), and Jean-Baptist Oudry (1686-1755) were particularly relevant as they painted species that today are killed on British roads. When making the paintings, the consumption of small birds was commonplace, and they were portrayed as objects of beauty and desire. Many of these creatures would be consumed in luxurious banquets that celebrate nature's bounty and the landowner's wealth. Similar to today's consumerist culture's representation of food in advertising photography, the range and the exotic nature of the dishes depicted signify social status. This contextual and visual research led me to the realisation that the creatures included in the photography should be treated similarly. They should be seen as beautiful objects of desire, not objectified in the consumerist sense but considered priceless gems.

9.4 Field Work

The project consists of several short series *Kerbside Memento*, *Predator and Prey*, *New Habitat*, but is interspersed by single images, *Barn Owl Wing*, *In the gutter*, *Tree of Life* and the final image, *One for sorrow*. The outcomes were visual representations of research findings made through my contextual research and

discussions with naturalists. I worked with a range of independent wildlife rescue organisations and individuals, including Raven Haven, Birds of Prey Trust, Hart Wild Rescue, Hawk Conservancy Trust, Kevin Lunham, a wildlife photographer working with The Wildlife Trusts and as a warden for Natural England and the well-known naturalist and taxidermist Jonathan McGowan. They supported the project as they felt the public overlooked the issue which they faced every day. Amongst the naturalists, there was a consensus that the ecosystem was unbalanced due to a continual cull of wildlife on our roads. Historically all the top predators in the UK have been hunted to extinction. The automobile has filled this ecological vacancy through an accident of design, randomly killing numerous creatures every day.

From the contextual research and discussions with naturalists, I became aware of the ecological conditions that artificially benefit the corvid family of birds (crows). Some species, such as rooks and magpies congregate around our major roads and the naturalists thought a significant reason was the bountiful supply of roadkill. They have taken advantage of this new ecological niche in the habitat, so I considered they needed to be represented within the project.

9.5 Visual Language

In the Methodology section, I compare the methodology to a rope comprised of three strands, fieldwork, construction and dissemination. In this project, a much higher load is placed on the construction strand than in the two social-documentary projects. Within this work, the visual language of memento mori, vanitas art, and rococo painter Jean-Baptiste Oudry act as inspiration and are reimaged in a contemporary kerbside context.

Advertising photography is a complex form of visual rhetoric blending text and image, and this issue-based project appropriates its visual language to create impactful tableaux that invite close inspection. Each of the images is constructed from a series of carefully selected objects and backdrops and are as Linda M. Scott in her research on advertising images argues, 'symbolic artefacts constructed from the conventions of a particular culture' (1994, p. 252). In this way, I have selected objects that reference memento mori and vanitas art that speaks of our past cultural beliefs in which the natural world was highly valued. In contrast, the tableaux are constructed in locations that speak of our consumerist culture in which nature is seen as disconnected from of our lives.

In test images for the series *Kerbside Memento* (Fig.26, 27, 28) I made a connection to one particular painting by Oudry, *Stilleben mit Vögeln und Insekten* (1713). The painting depicts dead passerine birds on a mantelpiece, and I realised that the kerbstone of a road could replicate this. Pointing the camera directly down, the road surface appeared vertical, and the kerb appeared to be a shelf. Similar to a taxidermist, I could pose the birds using hidden supports to emulate the living. This constructed kerbside set on a closed private road was then flash-lit and photographed using a medium format high-resolution digital camera, achieving studio-like results.



Fig.25. Oudry, J. *Stilleben mit Vögeln und Insekten* (1723)
Available: <https://www.meisterdrucke.com/kunstdrucke/Jean-Baptiste-Oudry/65132/Stilleben-mit-V%C3%B6geln-und-Insekten,-1713.html>



Fig.26. *Kerbside Memento, Sparrowhawk, House Sparrow and Chaffinch, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)

In Lisa Dracup's work *Collections* (2017), she describes how photography can reanimate taxidermist specimens as if they have been frozen by high-speed photography. This 'animated stillness,' (ibid, p. 85) as she names it, applies to my images. Responding to Barthes's assertion in *Camera Lucida* that the figures represented are 'anesthetized and fastened down' (2000, p. 57) by photography. Dracup argues that photography can not only 'fasten down a subject but can also liberate it' (2017 p. 88). However, here in my images, there is a clear duality, as we are in no doubt the creatures are dead. The images function in the same way as the Victorian memento mori portraits of deceased family members in that they commemorate the dead.

The series *Kerbside Memento* (Fig.27, 28) includes minor post-production manipulations, such as the candle flame and drip from the goblet. Although small details, they are essential to maintain the deception that the image is in another orientation. Shot on a Hasselblad H5; these incredibly high-resolution images record detail that could only be seen on the actual set with a magnifying glass.



Fig.27. *Kerbside Memento, Goldfinch & Bullfinch, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)

Prof. Vincent Mosco describes in *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace* (2005) the awe-inspiring effects of computer technology on our human experience of space, time and power that he calls the 'digital sublime.' Julian Stallabrass says that the data created by hi-resolution cameras is overwhelming and creates a modern form of the sublime he calls the 'data sublime' (2007, p. 82) He argues that these images provide 'the viewer with the impression and spectacle of a chaotically

complex and immensely large configuration of data, these photographs act much as renditions of mountain scenes and stormy seas did on nineteenth-century urban viewers' (ibid, p. 82). His comments review the hi-resolution large-format analogue work of Rineke Dijkstra's *Beach Portraits* (1992-94). However, there has been a digital imaging revolution since then and image quality has massively increased. Discussing this potential development, Stallabrass says new digital technologies 'offer photographers the opportunity to make view-camera quality photographs with handheld cameras' (ibid, p. 82), and this has indeed proved to be the case. In this way, the theories of Mosco and Stallabrass combine to describe the contemporary situation in which super hi-resolution digital imaging creates a photographic 'digital sublime.' In the image *Kerbside Memento: Adder, Kestrel, Nuthatch, Buzzard and Wryneck* (2013) a live bluebottle fly settled on the snake and was included in the final image. When this frame was exhibited at AO size (84.1 x 118.9 cm), the detail was overwhelming and elements that seemed insignificant when making the image, such as the fly, became fascinating. Every minute detail rendered; we even see the light gleaming on the fly's metallic iridescent body. As our eyes move around the whole image, the viewer experiences the sensation of the 'digital sublime' as we see the world in a new way.



Fig.28. *Kerbside Memento, Adder, Kestrel, Nuthatch, Buzzard & Wryneck, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)

In the series *Predator and Prey* (2013) (Fig.29) I visualised the distorted ecology as described by the naturalists. The car parts are used to symbolise the predator and the bones are the prey. However, some of the bones are from predators and the

viewer is asked to consider this new ecological relationship in which the car is top predator.

In *Tree of life* (Fig.30), all the creatures I collected for the project are brought together on location in the New Forest. The lighting is allowed to drop off to maximum black in the background which in historic painting symbolises the unknown, mystery, and fear, but in this image is intended to symbolise a dark future for our ecosystem.



Fig.29. *Predator & Prey, Buzzard Claws & Fox jaws, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)



Fig.30. *Tree of Life, Sacrifice the Birdsong (2013)*

The series *New Habitat* was intended to emulate the studio car photography I once made in my earlier career. In this series, the birds interact with signifiers of the road network, such as traffic cones and barriers. A studio set was constructed in an aviary at Raven Haven and left for the birds to become accustomed. Bait was placed regularly at strategic points and the birds were photographed as they searched for it.

In an expression of the digital sublime, multiple hi-resolution images of the Magpies are combined in post-production, so the birds appear in one carefully composed frame. In the context of the project, the logical conclusion for the viewer is that the scene is a constructed taxidermist's tableau. In this way through photography, Dracup's state of animated stillness is reversed as the living are transformed into the dead.

The *New Habitat* series (Fig.31, 59, 60) represents nature's ability to adapt and respond to change. The corvids tear at the traffic cone like an animal carcass and perch on manmade plastic shapes as if they are natural objects. The intention is to represent the sublime, an uncanny side to nature that could fight back. The cone is an abstract mathematical shape that we use to signify order where there is disorder. Distinctly anthropogenic, these plastic shapes have no significance for non-humans and are once again matter in the wrong place.



Fig.31. *Carcass, New habitat, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)

The last image *One for sorrow* (Fig.32), acts a link to the underpinning work *When Lives Collide* by bringing the loss of human life to the same site as the loss of animal life, reminding us that we are all part of one system. In the same way as the other images, this was a constructed scene on a closed road and the magpie was added digitally.

The text used contrasts with the social-documentary projects as it is simple yet provocative. *For example, Tree of life, New Habitat, Predator and Prey* and *Kerbside Memento*, are intended to prick the viewer's curiosity. Each is an adaption of a well-known phrase or an unexpectedly different visual representation of a phrase. This advertising approach of image and tagline is intended to act as a catalyst that encourages the viewer to see this very familiar subject from a different perspective. Through my knowledge of wildlife, advertising photography and observations of old master paintings, the work revisualises an abhorrent subject in a form that encourages public engagement.

The hybridised approach allows us to imagine the creatures in their living form and the viewer avoids the usual instinctive reaction to roadkill. Instead, the photography encourages a considered gaze that takes in the scene and contemplates the beautiful and diverse lives lost.



Fig.32. *One for Sorrow, Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013)

9.6 Dissemination

Nineteen images were printed, framed, and displayed in Centrespace Gallery in Bristol, a gallery with its own group of resident artists. The wildlife charities were contacted to help promote dissemination, but many of these charities were unreceptive. The RSPB commented that they do not display images of dead birds as their members found it too distasteful. This was a big blow, but fortunately, [The People's Trust for Endangered Species](#) supported the work and promoted the exhibition through their website and social media. David Wembridge, their Mammals Survey Co-ordinator, provided a supporting statement (Appendices). This was a great help as it validated the work and strengthened the points presented.

The work was shared through the [Centrespace's](#) network and social media and featured on [Flak. Photo](#) and [Bristol Creatives](#) website.

When exhibited as part of my retrospective exhibition *The Dark Highway* (2014), a publication was created with a run of 2000 copies. Available through [Amazon](#), this has now sold out.

The exhibition engaged with the gallery's regular audience and with regional groups, but unlike the social documentary work did not reach national or international

audiences until the Hasselblad Awards eighteen months later. The work was exhibited in Bristol rather than in London as *Hard Times* and *Westway* had been, due to a lack of large charity support. The subject's abhorrent nature was the main problem in acquiring funding. However, the work received a very positive reaction from the visiting audience. Interestingly, many of the images were purchased which confirms the level of public engagement achieved. The lack of dissemination through major charity websites and social media led to relatively low levels of media dissemination. The exhibition was a success but did not connect with wide national and international audiences as the social-documentary projects had done. From the perspective of charities that may have funded the exhibition, their membership comprises amateur naturalists who are themselves in the majority car owners. Therefore, any such message would challenge society's love of the automobile and be very unpopular with the charity's membership. Perhaps for many organisations, this could be an activist step too far?

The work was shown a year later as part of a very successful exhibition *The Dark Highway*, a retrospective of my work at Arts University Bournemouth and the *Text + Work* (2014) publication was created and distributed via Amazon. As mentioned above, the work was shortlisted in the Hasselblad Masters Awards 2016 which brought international coverage in the photography media.

9.7 Contribution

Through participant collaboration with expert naturalists, the project has investigated the impact of a consumerist society on the environment and developed photographic strategies utilising a hybridised approach to represent abhorrent subjects in a form that encourages public engagement. However, due to the lack of a significant charity support, the project had limited success in connecting to wide audiences beyond the photographic community. When evaluating the project against the research aims the work has succeeded in five out of the six (p.15).

The project was an experiment to assess the effectiveness of an advertising aesthetic to be applied to an abhorrent issue-based topic to encourage public engagement. In this respect, I consider the experiment to be a success as it demonstrated that a topic considered so abhorrent could be transformed in a way that invites prolonged engagement, the complete reverse of most people's response to the subject of roadkill. David Wembridge (2014) from the People's Trust for Endangered Species picked up this point in his comments below which were displayed as part of the exhibition at Centrespace, Bristol.

Conservation is a matter of life and death, and the subjects in Paul Wenham-Clarke's pictures starkly embody this.

We cannot afford to be squeamish. We should look at the world around us unblinkingly, at our relationship with it. The memento mori in *Sacrifice the Birdsong* are an extraordinary way of doing that.

(Wembridge, 2014)

Renowned writer and curator Aaron Schuman, who has written for Aperture, Foam, Frieze, Time, Hotshoe, Magnum Online and The British Journal of Photography, reviewed *Sacrifice the Birdsong* as part of the Text + Work (2014) publication when exhibited as part of my retrospective exhibition *The Dark Highway*, saying

Wenham-Clarke infuses his photographs with the painterly traditions of still life, vanitas and memento mori, and draws attention to the additional sacrifices made in the name of contemporary culture and its car-dependent lifestyle; namely that of wildlife.

(Schuman, 2014, p. 7)

The contrast created - between the decadent, tapestry-like Feathers, the sculptural ivory-like bones and the glistening, jewel-like crowns of the birds, and the harsh, dark asphalt upon which they have been placed-serves as a stark reminder of the beauty, richness, rarity and diversity of the natural world, and of its fragility in the face of our ever-encroaching modernity.

(Schuman, 2014, p. 8)

Capitalism and the promotion of consumerism have determined our society's choice of the primary transport network and the research visually links this to the resulting environmental consequences of that choice. My research contributes to the field of issue-based photography by applying a hybridised advertising and documentary photography methodology that has promoted public engagement on a regional scale with a topic overlooked or considered abhorrent.

The aspirational consumerist paradigm drives the economy through its never-ending thirst for growth. As we have seen, this places massive pressure on the individuals who compete in this capitalist system and in turn, there are huge consequences for the environment. In the images of *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, the views of environmentalists and animal rescue workers are represented in a still life form and illustrate the ecological imbalance created by anthropogenic pressures.

The series *Kerbside Memento* and *Predator and Prey Sacrifice*, *Sacrifice the Birdsong* reinterpret the visual language of memento mori and vanitas painting which is not unusual within contemporary still life photography. However, the hybridisation of this visual language with advertising photography aesthetics applied to a road roadkill-related environmental theme is likely to be unique. The series *New Habitat*, *Sacrifice the Birdsong* applies advertising studio-based techniques and aesthetics to a theme of ecological imbalance and once again is likely to be a unique contribution.

10. Summary of Research Contributions

This photographic research visualises the complex links between aspirational consumerism, the automobile, the home and the environment and records the social and environmental consequences. The critical commentary below identifies the contributions the three projects make to the field of issue-based photography.

The hybridised methodology applied brings the aesthetics and techniques associated with advertising into the realm of issue-based photography and as previously discussed, is unusual but not unique. The constructed aspects of advertising photography are appropriated through the careful consideration of location, composition, pose and use of light, to create imagery with a high-quality aesthetic that emulates aspects of mainstream advertising photography and promotes public engagement through this familiar visual language. This is applied to social documentary subjects shot on location and still life imagery made on location and in the studio.

Constructed approaches have often been applied within documentary photography including one of the most iconic images of all '*Migrant Mother*', Lange (1936). Lange's image (discussed p.21), was politically motivated and applies a documentary aesthetic to capture a sense of the real but could be considered to have commercial intent, as it is designed to meet the FSA's brief. Whereas my work has a documentary intent informed by in-depth research and conversations with the participants and the messages conveyed are a consequence of that research. Lange can be seen to be constructing images in a documentary aesthetic to answer a client brief. In contrast, I am constructing images using an advertising aesthetic to represent issue-based topics informed by the participants themselves. The two methodologies have very different origins and traverse the photographic landscape from opposite directions but arrive at a very similar destination.

In addition to this constructed, high quality-aesthetic, a collaborative process is applied (discussed p.30) which mimics the advertising photographer and client relationship. The messages conveyed in the work are informed by the research undertaken with participants and becomes the intent of the work. Although a collaborative methodology is not unique, one in which the participants effectively simulate a client is highly unusual. This methodology promotes high levels of trust and, as Ariella Azoulay suggests (see p.30) this type of collaboration gives participants powerful agency. In this way, their opinions are clearly heard and through the wide dissemination methods applied reach broad audiences.

These two elements of an advertising methodology are layered one upon the other and simulate an advertising commission but are in fact an issue-based enquiry. In this way the contribution to the field is made by appropriating an advertising gaze and intent, in order to explore the consequences of aspirational consumerism as viewed through society's relationship to the automobile and road network and in this respect is most likely to be unique. In effect the advertising gaze has been turned upon itself to critique the consequences of its own actions.

The two social documentary projects contribute to the field of issue-based photography by recording significant periods of modern times. *Hard Times* captures

the lives of individuals on the frontline as the capitalist economy ground to a halt during the Credit Crunch (2007) and the future of banking is in question. *Westway* is an important photographic record of a multi-cultural inner-city London community made just three years before the historic Brexit 'No' vote in 2016. The research reveals that a Traveller community sheltering under the road feels marginalised and discriminated against and under pressure to conform. John Thomson (1877) made some of the first images of Gypsies encamped at Latimer Road, but *Urban Gypsies* may well photographically record the last generation and so capture the story's end. *Sacrifice the Birdsong* visualises the opinions of naturalists who are dealing with the consequences of our society's dependency on the automobile in the age of the sixth mass extinction when the scale of biodiversity loss is becoming tragically apparent.

These three bodies of work have created a lasting legacy through a variety of institution's archives, including The National Portrait Gallery, Association of Photographers Awards, The World Photography Organisation, The Sunday Times, The Times, BBC and when confirmed, the Museum of London (see p.92). Detailed records of all three projects are held in the government Research Excellence Framework archives and on Arts University Bournemouth Research Excellence and Impact Repository and are available to academics and the public to engage with (see appendices p.91).

The combined research has uncovered unexpected narratives that shine a light on important and sometimes difficult issues associated with aspiration consumerism and our society's relationship to the automobile and the road network. Through life stories and commentaries from frontline individuals seldom heard, wide audiences have engaged and gained new perspectives.

11. Reflection on research aims:

The contribution is mapped against the research aims in chapter one.

RA1

All three projects investigate the wider socio-political issues associated with consumerism and the automobile and their impact upon the environment and human life. In each project, a wider perspective was obtained through conversations with stakeholders and those on the frontline to gain an informed approach.

RA2

All three projects test out participant collaboration which simulates the 'advertising photographer and client relationship' but applied to an issue-based subject. By treating the participants as clients, they acquire agency. This collaborative methodology effectively gathered new insights, operated ethically, and articulated authentic narratives through to the final outcome and dissemination.

RA3

All three projects explore the potential for an advertising and documentary photographic hybridised approach to represent issues and topics considered difficult in a form that encourages public engagement. The high-quality

aesthetics of advertising speaks to the audience in a visual language they are familiar with, circumvents preconceived impressions, and encourages public engagement.

RA4

The degree to which each project effectively communicates to wide audiences the consequences of our consumerist society's dependence on the automobile and road network varies. The dissemination operates in the public domain rather than in art circles and shares the work widely through exhibitions, books, magazines, radio, television and online. The projects closely linked to charities or trusts (*Hard Times and Westway*) could generate national and international dissemination, whereas *Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2013) achieved predominantly regional dissemination.

12. Peer review and recognitions

Michelle Bogre, Professor Emerita, Parsons School of Design renowned writer and expert on documentary photography reviewed two of my projects, a very recent project *Our Human Condition* (2020) (see continuing contributions section p.74) and *Urban Gypsies* (2019), in her recent book *Documentary Photography Reconsidered* (2019, p 230). She comments:

Wenham-Clarke brings the disciplines and technical expertise honed during a 30-year career as a commercial and advertising photographer to documentary work.

Wenham-Clarke's portraits of the Gypsies serve the same purpose as his other portraits: to preserve a moment in time that might disappear forever.

(Bogre, 2019, p. 230)

Michelle Bogre gave a supporting statement for the Research Excellence Framework (2021), in which she reviews my work in general, saying:

Wenham-Clarke is expanding the genre of documentary photography and challenging the traditional canons with his mixture of portraiture and constructed images. He chooses mostly local projects that highlight broad important social or environmental issues, so the images resonate beyond the photographic or art world, as most outstanding documentary photography does.

Wenham-Clarke has a unique ability to market his work so his images reach a wide audience, so his documentary photography can be a service to society.

(Bogre, 2021, REF)

Urban Gypsies is currently undergoing (2021) the submissions process to be considered for the permanent collection of the Museum of London and Jilke Golbach, Curator of Photographs, also comments on the work in a supporting statement for the Research Excellence Framework (2021).

The project is a strong contender for the Museum of London's permanent collection as it captures a community on the brink of disappearance, faced with increasing pressures to assimilate into wider society. Wenham-Clarke's work might well capture the last of a generation of Irish Travellers, and raises important questions about identity, belonging, the future of the city of London, and who gets to live in it. The project makes an important contribution to the documentation of a historically marginalised group in London whose representation more often than not plays into negative stereotypes.

(Golbach, 2021, REF)

Hard Times was submitted to the Research Excellence Framework 2014 and both Lord John Bird, Big issue Foundation founder, and Alison Hargreaves, the executive Director of St Martin-in-the-Fields, were asked for supporting statements as they were interested parties but not directly involved in the conception or making of the work.

Lord John Bird:

Paul's work, photographing and then exhibiting, promoting, and espousing the images created of homeless people were profoundly important. One hundred thousand people cannot be wrong in taking the lead from his example and going to look at his work.

He is almost unique in his thirst to promote and proselytise about this work, so that it can resound and have the desired effect.

Get it out and about beyond the usual audiences to the world at large. Paul helped our work and aided many homeless people in the process and opened the eyes of thousands.

(Bird. 2014, REF)

Alison Hargreaves Executive Director, St Martin-in-the-Fields:

The empathetic and insightful visual presentation of the individuals themselves raised awareness of a major and continuing social problem in an advanced western economy. It also impacted on the individuals themselves who thus became beneficiaries: it gave them a sense of empowerment to communicate beyond the street.

(Hargreaves, 2014, REF)

As previously noted, writer and curator Aaron Schuman, reviewed the project for Text + Work as part the retrospective exhibition *The Dark Highway* (2014, p. 8), saying:

By incorporating such a wide and yet surprisingly consistent array of styles, strategies and subjects into his work-and doing so with a determined sense of commitment and consideration -Wenham-Clarke offers us a powerful, and at times, unsettling insight into that which lies at the edges of both our daily

journeys and general experience. Ultimately, *The Dark Highway* represents one man's discovery of how that which we so often ignore- the edges, the verges, and the means by which we exist and commute - can be transformed into an opportunity to both question how we live, and perhaps more importantly, to commune with the world at large.

(Schuman, 2014, p. 8)

13. Media Reviews

In most media coverage and the photography press, the articles engage with the issues covered rather than my methodology. I consider that this confirms its effectiveness to connect with an audience on topics that matter.

Selection of quotes below:

Jonathan Briggs reviews my social documentary work in two editions of *The Photographer Magazine* (2011), the first was a double-page spread June 2011 and the second was an eight-page feature in Oct 2011. Some extracts are below:

With job losses and home repossessions escalating, we face an inevitable upsurge in the numbers of people on the streets or at risk of homelessness. You could measure the success of Paul's work if just one person realises that life is not like the movies or celebrity culture. Turn off 'The only way is Essex' and go and glimpse the real world.

(Briggs, 2011a, p.5)

With a bit of effort and blatant disregard for what friends might tell you, it is possible to do photographic work that has a positive social impact,

(Briggs, 2011b, p. 28)

If anyone knows the ins and outs of working on difficult long-term project, its Paul. He has been there, got the T-shirt, and gone on to come up with the next one, and the next...

(ibid)

Urban Gypsies was reviewed in 2019 by arts writer and author Rachel Segal-Hamilton for *CNN Lifestyle*; the feature was titled *The Private world of London's Traveller community*, extracts below (2019):

This isn't documentary photography in the candid tradition. It's clear from the hands on sparkly hips or heads tilted towards the lens that they're conscious of the camera, and Wenham-Clarke's use of lighting give the shots a sleeker feel. But this makes it no less authentic, perhaps more in a way.

Through this close collaboration the Travelers are deciding how they want to be represented. And who can blame them for wanting to take control of their own image?

There's poignancy in shots in which the huge road looms above, or a young boy sits in a broken toy car. No longer able to live the nomadic life, the Travellers find shelter in the shade of society's more sanctioned form of travel.

What Wenham-Clarke's pictures show is that Traveller life is fundamentally about community. Freedom isn't just the freedom to escape. It's also the freedom to be together.

(Segal- Hamilton, 2019)

14. Continuing Contributions

Further explorations of the advertising/documentary hybridised methodology include [*The Rock: above and below \(2016\)*](#) which investigates the consequences of industrialisation and globalisation on the people and culture of Portland in Dorset. Exhibited as part of the B-Side Arts Festival in Dorset 30th Sept – 30th Oct 2016, the work was displayed on billboards and bus shelters in Dorset. More recently, [*Our Human Condition \(2020\)*](#) investigates siblings' lives in which one has a genetic condition. The project explores the families' views and feelings set in the context of revolutionary medical science discoveries and therapies that herald an era in which humanity takes control of our genome and people with genetic conditions may virtually disappear. The work was exhibited at Gallery@OXO, OXO Tower, South Bank, London, 8th - 19th January 2020 and The Scottish Parliament Holyrood, 3rd - 7th February 2020. Both projects explore the consequences of technological advancement on society and investigate the local, highlighting the global.

15. Long Term Research Aims

My photography research has demonstrated the power of a hybridised approach to connect with wide audiences on social and environmental issues that matter. The methodology has considerable potential to be applied on other topics close to home that reflect our consumer-led economy. I am currently in the process of creating a photography research network based at AUB that addresses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of organising large collaborative projects that link several educational institutions to produce impactful research and generate public engagement.

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Appendices

18.0 Project Outcomes

18.1 Hard Times

Exhibitions:

- *Hard Times*, 3rd March to 30th June 2011, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Crypt Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London. (112,000 visitors).
- *Hard Times*, 1st to 30th September 2011, St Martins Church Gallery, Birmingham.
- *Hard Times*, 29th Sept to 29th Oct 2012, Bournemouth Central Library, Bournemouth.
- *Hard Times*, 10th Aug - 7th Sept 2013, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Scotland.
- *Hard Times*, 14th Sept – 12th Oct 2013, St Fergus Gallery, Wick, Scotland.
- *The Dark Highway*, 20th Nov to 18th Dec 2014. The Gallery, Arts University Bournemouth. A Retrospective exhibition of four previous works: *The Westway*, *Hard Times*, *Sacrifice the Birdsong* & *When Lives Collide*.

Awards:

- Association of Photographers Awards 2010, Documentary Series Winner & Gold Award.

Book Publications:

- Association of Photographers, 27th Photographers Awards Book (2010).
- *Hard Times*, (2011) exhibition catalogue, 2000 copies.
- *Hard Times*, (2011) self-published, 150 hardback copies.

Book Contributions:

- Bogue, M. (2019) *Documentary Photography Reconsidered: Theory, History and Practice*, London: Focal Press.

18.2 Westway

Exhibitions:

- *Westway: a portrait of a community*, 9th Jan – 28th Feb 2013, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Gallery in the Crypt, Trafalgar Square, London.
- *The Dark Highway*, 20th Nov to 18th Dec 2014. The Gallery, Arts University Bournemouth. A Retrospective exhibition of four previous works: *Westway*, *Hard Times*, *Sacrifice the Birdsong* & *When Lives Collide*

Awards:

- *Urban Gypsies*, shortlisted Sony World Photography Awards 2013.

Book Publication:

- *Westway: a portrait of a community*, (2013) Self-published.
- *Urban Gypsies*, (2019) Hoxton Mini Press.

Book Contributions:

- Bogre, M. (2019) *Documentary Photography Reconsidered: Theory, History and Practice*, London: Focal Press.

Group Exhibitions:

- Gypsy, Roma History Month, Victoria & Albert Museum (2013).
- Sony World Photography Organisation Awards Show, Somerset House, (2013)
- Taylor-Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize, National Portrait Gallery, (2013)

18.3 Sacrifice the Birdsong**Exhibitions:**

- *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, 4th – 15th Oct 2013, Centrespace Gallery, Bristol
- *The Dark Highway*, 20th Nov to 18th Dec 2014. The Gallery, Arts University at Bournemouth. A Retrospective exhibition of four previous works: *Westway*, *Hard Times*, *Sacrifice the Birdsong* & *When Lives Collide*.

Awards:

- *Sacrifice the Birdsong*, The Hasselblad Masters Awards, Shortlisted, (2016).

Book Publications:

- *The Dark Highway, Text + Work* (2014), available [Amazon](#).
- *Sacrifice the Birdsong* (2015), Self-published available [Amazon](#)
- Hasselblad Awards book (2016).

18.4 Awards List:

Hard Times, The photographers Awards, The Association of Photographers, Gold Award Winner & Winner of the Documentary category (2010).

Urban Gypsies, The World Photography Organisation Awards, Documentary Series, shortlisted (2013)

Urban Gypsies, Taylor-Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize, shortlisted (2013).

Urban Gypsies, Royal Photographic Society International Print Awards, shortlisted (2013).

Sacrifice the Birdsong, The Hasselblad Masters Awards, Shortlisted, (2016).

18.5 Media Coverage:

Television:

BBC South Today, (2013) BBC South Television, 6 Feb.

The Culture Show, (2013) BBC2 Television, 7 March.

Radio

Midday News (2011) BBC Radio London, 3 March.

Six O'Clock News (2012) BBC Radio Solent, 29 Sept.

The Afternoon Show, (2013) BBC Radio Scotland, 10 Aug.

Evening News (2013) BBC Radio West Midlands, 1 Sept.

Robert Elms, (2019) BBC Radio London, 4 June.

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'Hard Times,' (2011) *Digital Photographer Magazine*, 4 Feb.

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'Photo show keeps focus on homeless,' (2011), *Birmingham Mail*. 13 Sept.

'Getting to the heart of the Big Issue,' (2011), *The Birmingham Post*. 15 Sept.

Briggs, J. (2011) 'Street Scenes', *The Photographer Magazine*, 4 Oct, pp. 26-35

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Segal-Hamilton, R. (2019) 'Inside the private world of the Gypsy Traveller community,' News.com.au. July. Available at:

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<https://kwerfeldein.de/2019/06/04/paul-wenham-clarke-urban-gypsies/> (Accessed: 10 October 2021).

18.6 Solo Exhibitions

The Dark Highway, 20th Nov to 18th Dec 2014. The Gallery, Arts University at Bournemouth, Retrospective including: *The Urban Gypsies*, *Hard Times*, *When Lives Collide* & *Sacrifice the Birdsong*.

Sacrifice the Birdsong, 4th – 15th Oct 2013, Centrespace Gallery, 6 Leonard Lane, Bristol.

The Westway: A portrait of a community, 9th Jan – 28th Feb 2013. St Martin-in-the Fields, Gallery in the Crypt, Trafalgar Square, London.

Hard Times, 14th Sept – 12th Oct 2013, St Fergus Gallery, Wick, Scotland.

10th Aug - 7th Sept 2013, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Scotland.

Hard Times, 1st to 30th September 2011, St Martins Church Gallery, Birmingham.

Hard Times, 29th Sept to 29th Oct 2012, Bournemouth Central Library, Bournemouth.

Hard Times, 3rd March to 30th June 2011, St Martin-in-the Fields, Crypt Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London.

18.7 Group Exhibitions

Cindy & Shirley, Westway, Taylor-Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize, The National Portrait Gallery (16th Nov 2013 to 6th Feb 2014).

Westway (Series of 10 images), The World Photography Organisation's Awards 2013, Somerset House (26th April to 12th May 2013).

Westway (series of 15 images), The Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month, Victoria and Albert Museum (June 2013).

Cindy & Shirley, Westway, The Royal Photographic Society Print Exhibition, UK Tour (2013).

Sian & Charlotte, Hard Times, Gold Exhibition, The Association of Photographers Gallery (Sept 2011). A group retrospective exhibition of all the Gold Award winners from the entire history of the organisation.

18.8 Book Publication:

Hard Times, (2011) Self-published.

Westway: a portrait of a community, (2013) Self-published.

The Dark Highway, Text + Work (2014), available through [Amazon](#).

Sacrifice the Birdsong (2015), Self-published available through [Amazon](#)

Urban Gypsies (2019) London: Hoxton Mini Press.

Book Contributions:

27th Photographers Awards (2010), Association of Photographers.

Taylor-Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize, (2013), National Portrait Gallery.

Hasselblad Awards (2016).

Bogre, M. (2019) *Documentary Photography Reconsidered: Theory, History and Practice*, London: Focal Press.

18.9 Archives:

Below are archives containing images from the projects presented.

Research Excellence Framework (2014) Impact Case Studies: *Hard Times*. Available at: <https://impact.ref.ac.uk/casestudies/CaseStudy.aspx?Id=1890> (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

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[https://results.ref.ac.uk/\(S\(ry3qx5e3idbtnxxkpvrfnjxh\)\)/Submissions/Output/992771?searchId=102065&searchPageNumber=1](https://results.ref.ac.uk/(S(ry3qx5e3idbtnxxkpvrfnjxh))/Submissions/Output/992771?searchId=102065&searchPageNumber=1) (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

Research Excellence Framework (2014) *Westway*, Available at: [https://results.ref.ac.uk/\(S\(hrfxfufjbgghrmfpino5cua5g\)\)/Submissions/Output/992768?searchId=214301&searchPageNumber=1](https://results.ref.ac.uk/(S(hrfxfufjbgghrmfpino5cua5g))/Submissions/Output/992768?searchId=214301&searchPageNumber=1) (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

Research Excellence Framework (2021), Available at: <https://www.ref.ac.uk> (Accessed: 14 September 2021). AUB.

Arts University Bournemouth Research Excellence and Impact repository <https://research.aub.ac.uk/cgi/search/simple>, Available at: https://research.aub.ac.uk/cgi/search/archive/simple?screen=Search&dataset=archive&order=&q=Urban+Gypsies&_action_search=Search (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

NPG Taylor Wessing Past winners. Available at: <https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/taylor-wessing-photographic-portrait-prize-2019/exhibition/prize-winners>. (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

Association of Photographers Award Winners Archive. Available at: <https://www.the-aop.org/awards/awards-archive/the-photographers-awards> (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month Archives. Available at: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F215145> (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

The Times Archive. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/this-month-in-the-times-photographic-archive-may-2021-2whnpkt2l> (Accessed: 14 September 2021).

18.10 Supporting REF Statements:

Below are statements submitted to the REF 2014 and REF 2021 that are pertinent to the projects presented:

Jilke Golbach, Curator of Photographs, Museum of London,

The Museum of London is currently considering the acquisition of Professor Paul Wenham-Clarke's photographs from the Irish Travellers project as published in the book *Urban Gypsies* by Hoxton Mini Press (2019). The project makes an important contribution to the documentation of a historically marginalised group in London whose representation more often than not plays into negative stereotypes. Wenham-Clarke's considered approach takes great care to avoid such tendencies and is driven by a desire to understand the everyday lives of this community who have carved out a difficult existence in the most unlikely of places.

The photographs testify to Wenham-Clarke's ability to build long-term relationships of trust with a group of people particularly wary of photographers, journalists, filmmakers and other outsiders equated with misrepresentation or mockery. The collaboration was built on the premise that any photographs were taken on the

Travellers' own terms, which not only enabled Wenham-Clarke to gain access to the community but to observe private events and spaces that would otherwise have been off-limits. The photographs are strengthened by Wenham-Clarke's research, accompanying texts, and oral histories conducted as part of the project. In combination, they encourage viewers to challenge their prejudices and perceptions of Travellers and to look beyond the common stereotypes.

The project is a strong contender for the Museum of London's permanent collection as it captures a community on the brink of disappearance, faced with increasing pressures to assimilate into wider society. Previously nomadic, this community settled down on a site under The Westway four decades ago. But their need and desire to obtain jobs and education in the local area and to form social relationships beyond the community has led to the gradual demise of their culture. Added to this are further pressures from the local council to rehome and disperse the residents to make way for commercial redevelopment of the site. Wenham-Clarke's work might well capture the last of a generation of Irish Travellers, and raises important questions about identity, belonging, the future of the city of London, and who gets to live in it.

(Golbach, REF 2021)

Michelle Bogre, Professor Emerita, Parsons School of Design, New York.

Paul Wenham-Clarke is expanding the genre of documentary photography and challenging the traditional canons with his mixture of portraiture and constructed (or recreated) images. He chooses mostly local projects that highlight broad important social or environmental issues, so the images resonate beyond the photographic or art world, as most outstanding documentary photography does. For example, in *Urban Gypsies* he photographed Travelers (Roma) who live under the A40, but he avoids the photographic clichés that often plague documentary photographers. He uses his commercial skills to create technically flawless, but intimate, portraits that present the Travellers as modern people, not as society's problem. He also chooses projects not obviously visual, including *When Lives Matter*, in which he recreates car crashes, and most recently in *The Human Condition*, an esoteric investigation into DNA and the role that genome mapping will play in eventually (maybe) eliminating genetically transmitted conditions. His visual solution was to make remarkably raw, but nuanced portraits of siblings when one has a genetic condition, perhaps the last generation to be so impacted, and the other doesn't, subtly uncovering the sibling relationship. The rawness of the portraits is evidence of Wenham-Clarke's ability to gain the trust of the people he photographs (in all his work), which also forces the viewer to reflect on her own biases and perceptions of people who are not 'normal.' Finally, Wenham-Clarke has a unique ability to market his work so his images reach a wide audience, so his documentary photography can be a service to society.

(Bogre, REF 2021)

Pat O'Donnell, Head of the community, Westway Traveller Site, London.

I first met Paul when he came to meet me about his project The Westway and he was keen for the Traveller site to be included in the project as it's in the heart of the area. Paul spent months getting to know the community and visited very regularly

and photographed lots of different family events like parties, christenings, first communions and weddings.

He was very open about what he was photographing and showed us the pictures and shared prints. Paul asked our opinions of the pictures and he asked which ones we thought should be shown in the exhibition and book. When designing the book he included our views and opinions and we were able to speak about our way of life that has changed so much over the years and about what might be our future. We talked about all the difficulties and racist attitudes we have faced and still face. Life is difficult for our community as we are being forced to live in a different way to our traditions and the book has helped to make non-travellers realise what we are going through.

It's been a good experience being able to say what we feel knowing it won't be edited out which is what normally happens when we deal with the media. Paul has become a trusted friend of the community and we expect to do more projects with him in the future.

It's great that the last part of the book is the history of the site as told by Martin Ward who has sadly passed away now. Travellers have lived on this site for a very long time, long before The Westway was built and now we are the very last of them and Marti's Story records our struggle to maintain our community and identity.

(O'Donnell, 2021)

Phil Regan, Westway Trust support worker.

I first met Paul whilst undertaking a piece of Research and Development consultancy work for the Westway Development Trust (now Westway Trust) between Dec 2010 and May 2014. He approached me regarding a documentary photographic exhibition he was pulling together and was interested to know whether the Traveller families on Stable Way would be involved. At the time, there was an active Residents Association on the site, so I referred him to the Chair, Patrick O'Donnell. From the start Patrick and Paul hit it off and the Residents Association agreed for the project to move forward.

Paul spent the first few months getting to know families, visiting them on a weekend and on evenings, to fit around their schedules. He approached the visits with empathy, understanding and a great deal of professionalism. As he got to know the families he started to photograph 'stuff' that they wanted capturing. Becoming a conduit to capturing life of modern-day Travellers through imagery they wanted to convey. In effect helping give the Traveller community a voice. Whilst I personally never visited the exhibition, I heard from many families and professionals in Kensington and Chelsea that did, and they valued it a great deal.

Around early 2018 Paul contacted me again regarding a book he was authoring and to explain that he was speaking with families on Stable Way. Having worked with Gypsy and Traveller families for more than two decades, I am very aware that this level of trust is rare. And it is only because of Paul's approach to his work, that people were willing to be involved. The book 'Urban Gypsies' was released in

Summer 2019. It is precisely this kind of personal insight that is needed to raise the understanding of contemporary Traveller and Gypsies, and to highlight the levels of inequality and injustice they face on a far too regular basis.

From a social cohesion perspective, It is important for bridging and bonding that relationships don't end when the funding runs out and 'projects' stop. Paul has been great at getting to know the families over a long period of time and on their level and I do hope the relationship continues and further works are produced.

(Regan, REF 2021)

Lord John Bird, Founder of the Big Issue Magazine.

Paul's work, photographing and then exhibiting, promoting, and espousing the images created of homeless people, was profoundly important. One hundred thousand people cannot be wrong in taking the lead from his example and going to look at his work.

Paul is a photographer of infinite levels of patience, skill and creativity. But he is almost unique in his thirst to promote and proselytise about this work so that it can resound and have the desired effect. By all means, might run his argument, make the art; but then get it noted and noticed. Get it out and about beyond the usual audiences to the world at large. Paul helped our work and aided many homeless people in the process. And opened the eyes of thousands.

(Bird, REF 2014)

Stephen Robertson, Chief Executive, The Big issue Foundation.

The 'Hard Times' exhibition was an incredible success. Across a 4 month residency well over 100,000 people saw the exhibition at St Martin's, educating and informing a diverse audience; many of whom would not have encountered Big Issue vendors in this manor before.

I would like to commend Paul for all the work, care and attention to detail that went into the process of pulling the exhibition together. There have been countless exhibitions that present 'homeless people' in a clichéd manner. Paul invested the time to get to know each person that he photographed. The personal accounts that arose as a result formed a crucial part of the show.

The images are far from clichéd. They show homeless people as 'people' first. I know too well the consequences of stereotypes and negative opinions. 'Hard Times' was, in some respects, a campaign to change perceptions using photography and oral history to grab the attention of the audience and encourage the audience to enter their own internal debate about how they think about marginalised and excluded citizens in the modern world.

(Robertson, REF 2014)

Allyson Hargreaves- Executive Director- St Martin-in-the-Fields.

The combination of photographic image and the choice of biographical details transmitted in texts incorporating the 'Subjects' own words informing viewers of the subjects' recent histories was powerful and hard hitting.

The empathetic and insightful visual presentation of the individuals themselves raised awareness of a major and continuing social problem in an advanced western economy. It also impacted on the individuals themselves who thus became beneficiaries: it gave them a sense of empowerment to communicate beyond the street and St Martin's was particularly pleased to be able to welcome some of those people whose stories were told to the opening night.

(Hargreaves, REF 2014)

Sarah Cooper, Head Teacher, Oxford Gardens School, London.

Oxford Gardens is a community Primary school in the heart of North Kensington. There are currently 314 pupils on role, 187 who are PPG (60%) and 177 who are FSM (56%). In 2017, The Grenfell Tower tragedy significantly impacted on our school and community.

The school has a culturally diverse population with a significant number of pupils from minority ethnic groups; 27 different ethnic groups were represented in the Autumn Term 2020– the 6 ethnic groups with highest representation across the school are Black African (18%); White British (18%); Traveller of Irish Heritage (7%); Black Caribbean (6%); Moroccan (6%); White and Black Caribbean (6%).

I have been at the school for 24 years, starting in 2007 as the Deputy Head Teacher since 1997. The Travelers have always been a big part of our community. Over the years their numbers have steadily increased and currently we have 25 on role.

Oxford Gardens provides these families with access to support services and an education for their children which they value highly. Strong relationships with school staff are well established, widening their support networks to ensure that the families are given the opportunities offered to others, and that they are an established part of our school community.

In my role as Head Teacher, I have had the honour of being part of the Traveller's lives. I have seen families grow and have been able to share their lives as children have passed through the school. It has been delightful that subsequent generations have returned and sent their children to Oxford Gardens, following in their footsteps.

This rich and varied community have been beautifully represented in Paul Wenham-Clarke's book *Urban Gypsies*. Each page demonstrates to the wider world that there has been integration and acceptance of diversity within our community. The Travellers have had many challenges over their time on The Westway site, but the greatest has been to maintain their cultural identity. The book clearly records the community's struggles and helps the reader look beyond the stereotypes and see the world from a Traveller's point of view.

(Cooper, REF 2014)

David Wembridge, Mammal Survey Coordinator, People's Trust for Endangered Species.

Conservation is a matter of life and death, and the subjects in Paul Wenham-Clarke's pictures starkly embody this. Conservation efforts are led by an understanding of how wild populations are changing, but for mammals, that are typically nocturnal and unshowy, surveys over any sizeable area are difficult. But the toll exacted by traffic collisions – many millions of birds and mammals each year – provides a way of assessing numbers in the wider landscape. The dead were once the living, and counting them on road journeys in surveys such as PTES' Mammals on Roads is invaluable to conservation. The help of thousands of volunteers has underpinned efforts to save hedgehogs, whose numbers are falling rapidly.

We cannot afford to be squeamish. We should look at the world around us unblinkingly, at our relationship with it. The memento mori in *Sacrifice the Birdsong* are an extraordinary way of doing that.

(Wembridge, 2014)

19. Project Portfolios

Portfolio 1- Hard Times



Fig.33 Acey



Fig.34 Kim



Fig.35 Eddie



Fig.36 John



Fig.37 Wayne



Fig.38 David



Fig.39 Anna



Fig.40 Anna

WEB LINK

<https://www.wenhamclarke.com/hard-times>

Portfolio 2- Westway: a portrait of a community



Fig.41 Oxford Gardens School- Sports Day



Fig.42 Ishmael-Oxford Gardens School- Sports



Fig.43 Jon- Westway Sports Centre Centre



Fig.44 Hammid-Oxford gardens School Sports mentor



Fig.45 Westway Stables



Fig.46 Westway-five degrees below Stables



Fig.47 Paddington Central new developments

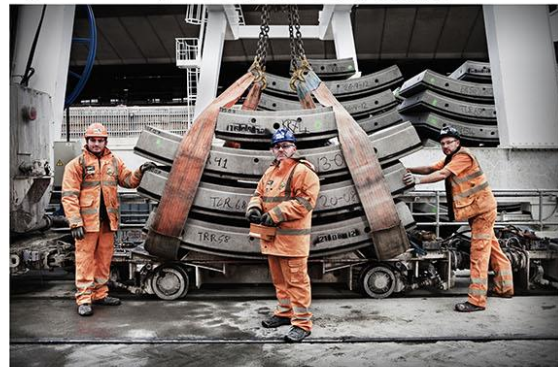


Fig.48 Construction of Crossrail

WEB LINK

<https://www.wenhamclarke.com/westway-community>

Portfolio 2- Westway: a portrait of a community
Urban Gypsies Series



Fig.49 1st Communion Day



Fig.50 Westway Traveller Site



Fig.51 Terry's Christening Day



Fig.52 John O'Donnell - Champion Boxer



Fig.53 Star of the party



Fig.54 Birthday pub party

WEB LINK

<https://www.wenhamclarke.com/portraiture>

Portfolio 3 - Sacrifice the Bird Song



Fig.55 In the gutter



Fig.56 Predator and Prey



Fig.57 Barn Owl Wing



Fig.58 Predator and Prey



Fig.59 New Habitat, Motorway rooks



Fig.60 New Habitat, Perch.

WEB LINK

<https://www.wenhamclarke.com/new-gallery>

20. Acknowledgements

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