Photography, Identity and *Photo-ID*

At the core of the Photo/ID exhibition is the presentation of new selected work from the ten commissioned photographers. The intertwining of photography and notions of identity is as old as photography itself. We once relied on our name and face, with corroboration from friends and family, to say who we were. In the seventeenth century we began to use identity papers, but with the invention of cheap and reproducible photographic images things changed forever and photographs became the standard for recording and assigning identity. From the carte-visite to the passport photo, from Hello to Eastenders, and now from Photoshop to Facebook, we are immersed in images that say what we look like, who we think we are and who others say we are.

Photography is the medium most deeply rooted in identity. Its theoretical concerns, with issues of representation, stereotypes, marketing, documentation, and portraiture, make it the obvious choice for a re-exploration of current issues of identity. Photographers have always been engaged with the visual representation of sex, age, race, and appearance. The difficult relationship between the image and the real, the nature of social documentary, the search for local, regional and national identity, the exploration of place, history and time, of displaced or lost identity, of memory and remembrance, of immigration and migration; these have all intrigued and occupied photographers for more than a century, and all are intimately related to our social construction of identity.

Recently, however, it might seem as though the photograph has been losing some of its authority in the depiction of identity and the sudden simultaneous ascendancy of biometric data as the guarantor of identity has been dramatic. Fingerprints have been with us a while, but iris scans and DNA fingerprints in this context are more recent, and they raise questions about accuracy, confidentiality and misuse, while at the same time subtly altering our relationship to the original photographic image as the bearer of identity.

In this context, we believe now was the perfect time to commission a group of rising photographers to reclaim/redefine/rediscover the construction of identity. The short-listing and selection process was overseen by a selection panel, chaired by Martin Barnes, curator of photography at the V&A, and consisting of Gilane Tawadros - founding

director of inIVA, Board member of Photoworks, Lynda Morris - Curator, EAST*international*, Richard Denyer - Norwich University College of the Arts and myself. About 250 photographers, from over 30 different countries around the world, were finally reduced to ten commissions.

Early on in the commission, at a one-day event in Norwich, the ten photographers talked about their ideas, interests and practice (while also being exposed to current thinking about genomics and identity) and engaged in a dialogue about the project as a whole. Our overriding aim was to ensure that the final work shown was challenging, original, exciting and innovative, while at the same time allowing visitors to make connections with the various ways we construct identity and how modern biomedical science affects this. A tough call for the photographers, but they rose to the challenge!

I now want to turn to a brief discussion of the ten photographers in the exhibition, all of who had worked previously in an area (broadly defined) of identity. All have taken different and individual approaches to the project, but in order to talk about their work and their background I have, for convenience, divided them into four groups, which to me show certain affinities in their photographic concerns and ways of working. Kim Cunningham, Evi Lemberger and Paul Sucksmith all work largely within a documentary tradition, with a strong interest in recording the construction of group, social or national identity in a particular community. Mark Edwards and Simon Terrill are both interested in the role of locality and of the past and how we feel about how place, and the people who have been there, inform and inflect our sense of who we are. Dave Lewis, Carl Jaycock and Åsa Johannesson take a more personal slant on identity, using research and reflection about their own personal histories to construct commentaries on who they are and why. Lastly Joanna Kane and Marlene Haring, in their very different ways, are both more interested in the specifics of the complex links that developed between photography and identity and in the nature of photography as a medium.

Kim Cunningham
From the series Holy Joe's
2009

Kim Cunningham has deep Irish roots, but moved to London about ten years ago. Still embedded in her own Irish identity, in recent work she has affectionately chronicled the vanishing heritage and sense of cultural identity of an older generation of Irish immigrants in London. In particular, her series of photographs, Holy Joe's, documents the habitués of St Joseph's Irish Social Centre in London's Highgate. Immigrants have used the centre since the sixties, but as they get older, and numbers decline, there is just a core left, dedicated to the customs and traditions they brought with them and preserved. Even as their world shrinks around them, their sense of cultural identity is still fed by their activities (see photo) and by the comfortable familiarity of the well-known faces in a circumscribed community. Her calm and reflective images are warm, affectionate and penetrating, and they manage to achieve this while avoiding

the sentimentality and nostalgia that could so easily creep in. She has enough of her own identity invested in this tradition and her calm, square, formal images reflect this engagement and identity with the subjects. Ireland always has been a land of immigration and emigration and Cunningham's project for *Photo-ID* is a fascinating extension of her previous work, concerning itself now with questions about displaced identities, national and cultural identity and the state's identification of individuals. Cunningham worked as a young girl in Mosney, County Meath, the first Butlins holiday camp outside mainland Britain. This was a huge camp, catering for 4,000 holidaymakers a day, that operated from 1946 to 2000 and it had a huge impact on the collective Irish psyche. It is said that 80% of Irish people had some kind of contact with the camp.

It's new use, as an accommodation centre for asylum-seekers, verges on the surreal, with refugees from about 20 different countries waiting, sometimes up to 8 years, to find out if their asylum claims are upheld. In many cases their verdict may well rest on DNA evidence of kinship! It could be argued that these transplanted individuals exemplify the complex debate about the relative contributions of nature and nurture to personal identity. They have a genetic and a cultural identity from one place but are not free to engage in some of the ways in which we would normally construct a sense of self. Many choices, about language, place, family, friends, culture and job, are simply unavailable to them.

And yet, under the constant gaze of the surveillance cameras, their tenacity and adaptability mean that new 'identities' are fluidly re-formed. Their kids go to local schools, they establish new friendship groups, they manage to get TVs, satellite dishes and mobile phones and, even though they are not allowed to, many have cars. Belonging and identity are not set in concrete, or even soft-mix. The ability to renegotiate that belongingness (there are language and other classes and a Mosney support group) and to re-invent aspects of themselves so fluidly is a key aspect of identity in the era of globalization. Zygmunt Bauman has repeatedly emphasised this aspect of identity and its liquid and provisional nature.

The social structure of the original Butlins was documented in a famous set of images, used largely for promotional postcards but shot on a large format camera on Ektachrome, and organised by the photographer John Hinde. These staged, kitsch images, with their frozen holidaymakers, elaborate lighting, and their saturated colour palette, convey a clear sense of the class and community identity of the Butlins happy-campers. How strange it must seem now to the asylum seekers to be incarcerated in this largely unchanged environment. The image of Bahroz, from Kurdistan, is taken, 50 years later, in the very same swimming pool, now converted, as the Hinde postcard. And other Butlin's remnants convey a strange sense of incongruity; the glitter-ball and disco lights of the old ballroom can still be seen in the background of the photograph of Bolanle and Isaac from Sierra Leone, the

Elmar Ludwig
Butlins Mosney, The Indoor Heated Pool
copyright John Hinde Ltd.

original Mosney mugs are visible in the shop at the side of Christina and Zoca from The Congo. Even the old Butlin's staff all transitioned over to the new management.

Cunningham was allowed access for a period of four weeks in total to talk to and engage with the refugee community before spending two weeks taking photographs of individual asylum seekers in their chosen environment. Her documentary background, her strong sense of Irish identity and her prior engagement with Mosney as an employee all mean that she brings quite a lot of her own concerns and identity to her choice of image. It is the environmental context that marks these images out and raises the question of what effect physical place has on how these people dismantle and rebuild their sense of personal identity, a question we are asked with very little interfering sentimentality and nostalgia.

These are noticeably images without a strong political or social agenda; they are not campaigning photographs about the 'plight of the refugee'. At one level she is nodding to the strong documentary tradition of Brassai, Walker Evans, Brandt, but the big difference, and what makes these images so compelling, is her concerned and careful engagement with the individuals concerned, and the level to which her own identity creeps into the picture. Small surprise that one of her only stated influences is Diane Arbus, an outsider observing outsiders. These photographs may be detached and formal at one level, but they are also clearly the result of conversations and dialogue, and they invite us to consider very carefully who these sitters are, what their back-story is and what their fate will be.

It is tempting to see parallels in the work of **Evi Lemberger** and Cunningham. And it is true that they share some of the same concerns, the nature of national identity, the impact of a loss of cultural context, displaced religious and language affinities. The images themselves, square, formal, quiet and reflective, also have similarities. But there are significant differences too. In a recent project, Lemberger documented people and place in a rural area of Bavaria. The series that resulted, *Between Then And Now*, was a poem to memory, a link between the past and the present, and the impact of change. The group of small villages in the forested area she stayed in is remote and slowly undergoing the transition between a traditional rural existence and the complexity of life in the 21st century. She listened and talked and documented the people, as well as the places where they lived, in a series of quiet, affectionate and intimate images. At the same time as honouring an older way of life, with its hardships and rituals, she tackled the ways of change, the incorporation of the new, the pact with the future that crept into their style of dress and the way they made their homes. In this way, listening and understanding, she became, in part, a folklorist, a chronicler of these people. Like Cunningham's work there is no direct political use or agenda envisaged, but again

Evi Lemberger
From the series Between Then And Now
2008

these are far more than just documents of record. The inherent banality of the subjects, the extreme ordinariness of the interiors contrast with the care and the insight that shines out of the images of them, like the touching juxtaposition of traditional clothing with the latest sneakers. These carefully composed images reveal an interesting juncture of formal older-style documentary photography with a social critique and an involvement in the subject that is much more modern.

Evi Lemberger
From the series Between Then And Now
2008

For *Photo-ID*, she has expanded on the same set of concerns to produce a remarkable series of photographs documenting people and place in one of the places in Europe where issues of identity are possibly at their most acute. In the series, *Ein Nichtort, or The Fairy Tale About the Galoshes of Fortune*, Lemberger has travelled, with a translator, to Transcarpathia, or Zakarpattia Oblast, a place that probably doesn't register with most Westerners. In the far west of the Ukraine, nestled up against Slovakia, Romania, Poland and Hungary, it has only been an administrative province of Ukraine since 1991. Mountainous, multicultural, multilingual and multi-faith, the region's largely unemployed population of 1.3 million has been batted back and forth between many different states and has failed in its bid for independence.

Lemberger has created her own visual fairy tale, about the resilience and adaptability of the local people in creating 'home' and 'homeland'. How can individuals and families construct a meaningful social and personal identity while living a daily existence without a shared cultural context, language, faith or nationality?

The fairy tale, *The Galoshes of Fortune* is a little known work of the Danish writer, Hans Christian Anderson, in which Fortune brings to earth a pair of magic galoshes. All who happened to wear them can be transported to whatever 'time, place and condition of life' they wish. A yearning for riches, for the past, or indeed for the future, all turn out to be less than they wish for and happiness is what they make of it in the here and now! The detailed vernacular of the images that resulted from Lemberger's research comments on this search for 'home', for the happy local personal construction of signs, icons, colours and space that reveal the strength and fluidity of identity.

The series splits into two halves that juxtapose quiet, intensely personal interiors, like Vermeers without the people, with the exteriors, still close to home, but this time peopled with individuals whose interiors we have been, voyeur-like, allowed to glimpse. Attention is focused on the external trappings of clothes and footwear and on wall hangings and furniture, the domestic minutiae of home life. Through these juxtapositions we build up a sense of the significance of a 'home' in such a place. The longing for the past, the reality of the present, the yearning for a future are distilled in her fairy tale narrative of the visible.

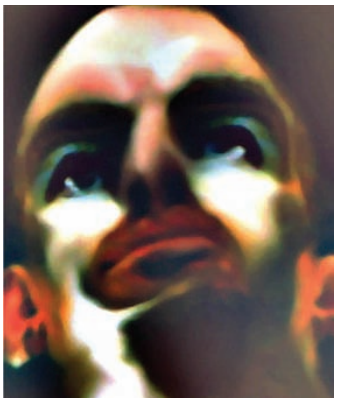
Right:
Paul Sucksmith
Untitled
From Dirty Marks *series*

Far right:
Paul Sucksmith
Untitled
From Miserable Northern Towns *series*

For the Transcarpathians we see here, their identity has lost certain anchors, in jobs, a language, a nation, hauled up in part by the state. It seems their reconstruction of new identities is re-anchored instead in the small, the local, the domestic, the home. This process is reinforced by the frustrated ambitions and resignation of the young. The assertion of their cultural identity is manifest in the subtle changing detail of their domestic environment, the emphasis on vividly coloured interior walls, on wall hangings, painted fences. Lemberger's careful and intimate research, reflected in this remarkable series of photographs, forces us to think again about how we construct our own local and domestic identity and how surprisingly touching and important that turns out to be.

While still clearly in a documentary tradition, **Paul Sucksmith** explores very different terrain, where documentary meets street photography and a personal trajectory. His earlier projects, like the *Dirty Marks* series, were more formal outdoor documents that record and reflect on, but also embrace, urban decay and desolation. Not in a critical way, but with a dry, witty acceptance of the detritus and fragments of the landscape. Another series, *Miserable Northern Towns*, includes a caustic look at the state of the town of Wigton, a small market town in Cumbria, known more now for its associations with Melvyn Bragg and Anna Ford than being the first town to impose a curfew on teenagers under 16! That was in 2004, long after Sucksmith had left home, a fact that does however, have a bearing on his work.

Paul Sucksmith
Up Close and Personal



In his short book, *The Dysfunctional Life of a Dylexic Waif and Stray: Place - Identity - Memory*, Sucksmith alerts us to key events in his background and the effect they had on his sense of identity. He was adopted from a children's home at the age of four and only became aware of this later on, "Perhaps I do not know my own identity, I do not know my biological parents I have never met them.." Self-reliant, inventive and reclusive, he was also diagnosed with dyslexia, a problem that luckily did not really interfere with his spatial awareness and his artwork. "The only times that my identity has been questioned is visits to the doctors, who always ask, Is there any history of this illness in your family, I always reply if you can find them you can ask them yourself." He knows he has two twin sisters though he has never met them. He started out as a painter and indeed still calls himself "an artist with a camera rather than a photographer".

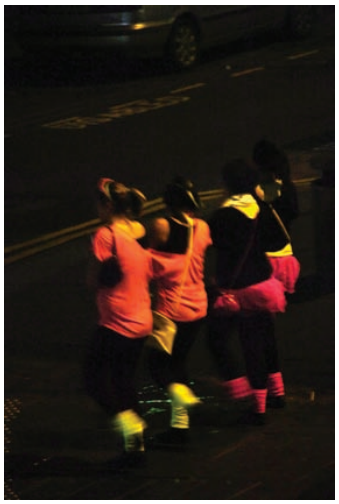
But the work he has produced for *Photo-ID* could only have been made using a camera.

Sitting in his flat in Newcastle's Grainger Street he watched the recurrent trail of young people each weekend, dressed up and ready to go, off to the drinking places in town, only to wend their way past the window the worse for wear late at night. His images that capture this weekly ritual are not straightforward. Their apparent simplicity and low-tech feel is deceptive, and distinctly postmodern rather than the straight in-your-face documentary they first project. This is a knowing approach, deliberately using lo-fi, desaturated colour and long exposures to create a surreal sense of the outside as a dreamlike, floating, shifting world that somehow mirrors his own mental state. These are deliberately de-skilled images with the casual look of the mobile phone images that the protagonists themselves are taking.

The antecedents for such images are few and far between and this is no ordinary version of street photography. Further back, Brassai's *Paris de Nuit* is perhaps the closest, but there the camera was overt. And Brandt and Ronis took similar images, but again overtly. There are also echoes of Weegee with his nighttime reportage. But there are two crucial differences between the Sucksmith series and these others. The first is the overriding sense of the gaze being that of the voyeur. They create the same frisson that I get from Edward Hopper's paintings, peeking into neighbour's windows, but without the sexual overtones. There is no flash and the photographer is invisible, and perhaps safe, hidden away in his room. The images are uncannily like those surveillance camera photographs that illustrate news stories about adolescent drinking and behaviour, and with the same enforced viewpoint. This sets up a formal distance from the action, so the experience is more like watching a play in which the characters metamorphose over time. And that is the second key difference; time. This is a series of images, and together they constitute a dramatic narrative that is played out many times over the short time period of an evening's drinking.

These are vernacular photographs of the mundane and the ordinary, taken with fondness, irony and wit, and with an eye for the telling detail, the colour of a shoe, the tilt of a hat, the reach of an arm, the group dynamic. Blurring precludes that they could ever be used as evidential records, and the actors are dressed for the part, despite the intense cold that they, famously in Newcastle, seem to be able to tolerate. So what parts are they playing? The dressing up, the use of costumes and the dark surrounding penumbra make us feel more as though we are watching a circus, invoking the same sense of detachment and unreality. The actors are assuming new identities, as all actors do, adopting new personae, overcoming their innate shyness through the disguises of costume and alcohol. And like a long run in the West End, the play is repeated every evening with a big turnout at weekends, repeating the same old ritual, the cold and the pain, only to forget it all in time for the next run. Sucksmith said, "Identity, or who the feck are you". I feel there is a lot of him in the forgiving, acute and unseen gaze that we see here.

Paul Sucksmith
Untitled



Mark Edwards
River Trowse
2007

From the drama of the northern bars to **Mark Edwards** and his quiet, contemplative, metaphysical landscapes of Norfolk is a big jump, but although we are still in one sense in the realm of the documentary tradition, it is a concern with the role of place and history in identity that now takes centre stage. Edwards has established a ritual way of working over many years, walking or running through nearby but overlooked and everyday landscapes, slowly developing an attachment or empathy with a specific place. It can often be some time before he finally commits to a photograph, and when he does it is with a large format camera, slow film, overcast light, a very high viewpoint, deep focus and a very long exposure, typically 90 seconds (with complex reciprocity corrections!). Intriguingly both Edwards and Terrill have both experimented for the first time in *Photo-ID* by combining two or more images from multiple exposures.

In conversation he told me "Normally I work very slowly, I look at a landscape for about a year before I even photograph it, then I keep re-photographing it until I get what I want. I have to have a calm day with even light and those days are few and far between". The result is typically very large final prints with astonishing detail that draws the viewer into the picture for some time. These are like Durer's *Large Turf* writ so much larger. He has 'neuroxed' the detail in the particularity of a place over time and we are drawn in and encouraged to spend a corresponding time lost in the image, seeing it and relearning it for ourselves. For such clarity and apparent objectivity in the final image it may seem surprising that his approach is far from detached. He says, "When I am actually looking through the ground glass the heart is pounding really, I just have to tell myself to calm down."

Mark Edwards
Raspberry Shoots and Black Poplars (evening)
2004

What kind of landscapes is he looking at with such excitement, and why? He has focused on the overlooked and everyday places that exist on the outskirts of built-up areas, marginal lands, often neglected or overrun and always revealing the presence of human activity: disturbed ground, often gardens, that preserve the traces and the memories of the past. In a time of globalization, of overpopulation and urban expansion, it is these no-man's lands that evoke our spatial history and our memories.

There are two clear reference points for these links that emerged in conversation with Edwards and both are concerned with personal identity. The first involves his previous incarnation as an archaeologist, a physical involvement with the cultural aspects of the landscape that encouraged his thoughts about his sense of who he is and where he comes from. The second is more

complex and personal and hints at what Edwards is trying unconsciously to recapture in his work. He said, "the crux of it is, I used to live with my grandparents just outside Liverpool and the landscape of my own childhood is that landscape. I am trying to find references to really early things that I don't even remember; they only become apparent after I have photographed it …. for years I didn't know how it was going to manifest itself, I had that kind of feeling about it. I used to go out collecting wood for my grandparents, my granddad used to build a fire, so I have a picture of him by the fire and its got a railway track in that picture and we used to go down to the railway, to a bit of waste ground and watch the trains go by. Its that work... that's where it comes from. My dad was a photographer, so I have always been around photography. He was in the RAF so photography has always been a natural way of expressing myself."

The photographic apparatus

This psychological landscape, deeply private, is partly a romantic vision and partly a metaphysical exploration of his personal identity and his past. As so often, the so-called deadpan school of photography hides other concerns, "..people just think deadpan means cold but it doesn't to me, deadpan is just a way of working. Buster Keaton said that." His inspiration at one level comes from the German lineage of the Bechers' New Topography and their pupils like Gursky, Struth and Stromberg. The concerns with landscape, deep focus, large format and immaculate large prints would agree. But at another level the influences are more from the literary, fine art and film worlds. He mentions as inspirations both W.G.Sebald (who happened to live in the same village), Constable and the late Soviet Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, whose long takes, dreamlike worlds and metaphysical themes certainly resonate. Edwards builds his images on familiarity and, although not immediately apparent from looking at them, they contain a history and a narrative about identity that is subtle and persuasive. Edwards says, "..the other thing about photography which I really like is you can rebuild yourself at arms length."

I asked about the absence of real humans in his work. "..there are no people in it, you are right, they are traces. People could have walked through that landscape before and often they have, but they are only traces; it's just the landscape I am interested in, I'm not interested in the landscape if it becomes anything else. I have thought about it a lot, what it would be like and I have tried it. It's difficult I think." We shape the landscape and it in turn shapes us and our identity, and it is curiously comforting that these large visions of disturbed land should produce such a visceral response and conjure up 'the loneliest melancholy' in the face of such objective detail.

In contrast, people are an essential ingredient of the large-scale work of Australian photographer **Simon Terrill**, who has for several years now been engaged in a long-term project revolving around the nature, meaning and relationships between crowds, places and identity. He has been working on this relationship for more than five years and it is a rich vein to mine. The idea of the crowd and the nature of one's identity within it have been of interest to many. There are arguments about

Simon Terrill
Swarm*, 2005,*
C-type print, 1.8 x 2.4 m

whether you are or are not who you normally are within a crowd and whether there is a loss of identity. Arguments rage about whether you bring your identity to a crowd or whether it is because you are bringing similar identities that you become a crowd, or whether new properties emerge from crowd behaviour. Freud, Marx and Jung have all written on crowds, but it is Elias Canetti (Crowds and Power, 1962) who is at the centre of Terrill's interest.

Terrill says about Canetti, "I can relate to where he described the crowd as the ultimate liberation, the one space where you were free; he talks about the fear of being touched as one of our most fundamental fears. As we all know in a public space we bump into someone, and an apology follows so quickly afterwards. He describes a crowd as the one situation where that apology does not follow, and those barriers between people drop away. The crowd situation is the one social sphere where there is genuine apology and where what he's described as 'the stings of command' become neutralised because all those things about ethnicity, class, gender, they vanish."

To translate this obsession into images has involved much research, notably in two series of photographs of 'found crowds' and 'constructed crowds'. In the former, for example in *Swarm*, a high camera on a tower, and a long exposure investigate the complexity and self-organising principles of a crowd at Sydney's Big Day Out concert. The deliberately constructed crowds in the series *Crowd Theory* extend this research, balancing the stagecraft from his earlier theatre interests with the arbitrary and unplanned movements of the assembled players. These five enormous works (the prints are 1.8m x 2.45 m) were commissioned by the Footscray Community Arts Centre in collaboration with the Port of Melbourne Corporation and are characterized by their elaborate staging and lighting. People with a connection with the particular place are assembled before sunset and 'become' a crowd, who, Breughel-like, mingle, engage, and randomly group themselves for the key exposure, that 'crowd moment' that Terrill is seeking. He says, "I see the hour of making the picture very much as a ritualized hour."

Simon Terrill
Crowd Theory - Southbank*, 2007,*
180 cm x 245 cm, C-type print, produced in association with Footscray Arts Centre and City of Melbourne

The issue of identity within a crowd scene is intrinsic to his way of operating. As he says, "as soon as you have the camera on people in front of the lens, immediately you are in the territory of identity, as well as whatever else you may be bringing towards it. I still try and seek a performance of self. That's why I invite people in to *their* place. If I can invite someone to their own place, to be themselves, to do a performance of self, there is a layer that is very theatrical but there is another layer where I am not directing, I am saying well it's over to you to script

La Recoleta cemetery
Buenos Aires

your own performance within this set because you are the author of your own relationship with this place, I am not." He has referred to this arena of activity as 'psychogeography'.

For *Photo-ID*, Terrill has engaged with another crowd-related issue, that of identity, death and memory. What happens to your identity when you die? He has considered the similarity of cemeteries and family photo albums; both act as identity-recording mechanisms for a possible future; both have a systematic way of naming and dating the traces of our transient existence. Actual portrait photos are even etched into the headstones of many graves now. Critics have long pointed out the close links between photography and death, the idea of photography as embalming, or the practice of *memento mori*. Before photography we only had memory to rely on, now photographs can substitute.

Cemeteries are strange places. It was only in the late 18th and early 19th centuries that the big move from graveyards to cemeteries took place in Western Europe, culminating in such extraordinary places of social and political hierarchy as Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris (over 300,000 bodies buried) and La Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires (*above*). The thought of that vast crowd, waiting silent beneath the sod, is a rich one, brought literally to life in myths as diverse as the Resurrection at the Second Coming and Count Dracula. Stanley Spencer famously used the theme as the basis for several paintings. Bizarrely, one of the recent uses of cemeteries online is in genealogy, lists of names linked to family identities.

Terrill's two photographs, of Abney Road and Rosary cemeteries, although smaller than some of his previous work, are still large enough in scale to immerse yourself in. He comments, "I just love the scale. Like I say to my partner, what are you compensating for; but they are so you can see, and it's also something I sort of *offer* to the people who are in the picture. I am not going to give you a small print as some photographers do, as a gift for being involved; I will guarantee that it will be at that scale where you would see yourself, so I think I justify the scale in that way." The Rosary photograph is an interesting departure in that it is composed of more than one image taken at the session, presenting the 'real people', the above-ground human crowd, as shadowy insubstantial presences, ghostly reflections that comment on their transient identity.

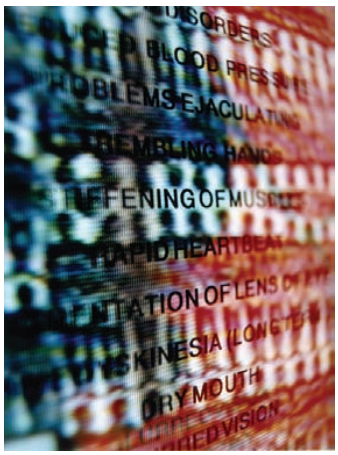
Above left:
Dave Lewis
From Archives, Cambridge University
1997

Above right:
Dave Lewis
From In the Palm of my Hand
1997

Identity is largely socially constructed, as is the concept of race, and in *Photo-ID* **Dave Lewis** takes a process-oriented approach to present the results of his research activity in this area. Photography here is neither the means nor the end, but simply the most convenient way of providing the provisional documentation of his research into the making of images about identity. The visual vehicle is digitally constructed and documentary images. There are no 'finished works' to present; just the results so far. His research is in many ways science-like, a clean unbiased start, multidisciplinary, investigative, provisional, experimental and critical. But then, crucially, it diverges, and the process becomes instead a metaphor for the laboratory. The product is not a laboratory notebook, for a key element in Lewis's works, on race, identity and representation, is the way his own personal history and trajectory are inserted into the ongoing process.

Lewis was a member of D'Max, a black photographic collective in the 80s and is now a member of the Association of Black Photographers. His parents are from Grenada, West Indies, and his early heroes in the 70s included Bob Marley and Steve Biko who typified struggles against prejudice at that time. Lewis acts more as a social anthropologist, with interests in sociology, philosophy, geography, psychology, politics and the history of science; a broadly-based but self-confessed autodidact, who brings a rare independence of insight and breadth to the research he does. Anthropology and its revelatory history have provided the raw material for several previous projects on the representation of race and identity. *Archives, Cambridge University* and *In the Palm of my Hand*, an investigation into Negrobilia, collections of racially stereotyped black figurines, are good examples. As he says, "when I was in college, I spent some time at the Royal Anthropological Institute and that's where I met someone called Chris Pinney who let me go through the archives and I started thinking about race, not just in terms of Africa, but race in terms of Eastern Europeans, Asians and then I realised this was like the classificatory system. It's like this pyramid that builds up to the Western European male, and when you go to places like the Cambridge Archaeological Museum you see that and it is really clear. I'm still quite astounded about the links between anthropology and science in terms of classifications of man and types." His community-based activity has

interfaced with these concerns to result in shows like *Black Youth and Mental Health* and a project based on the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry.



Dave Lewis
From Black Youth and Mental Health
1992

In discussion he mention to me numerous influences, from Zurbaran and Rauschenberg to Jeff Wall and Stuart Hall, from Sonia Boyce and Jacob Lawrence to Augusto Boal and David Levinthal. This is an eclectic and varied ambience, typical of Lewis's breadth, but it seems to me that the tradition of photomontage, of Heartfield and Hausmann, is the true antecedent of the politically aware and socially critical digital collages we see on his light box. The deconstruction of the research inputs, the approach of 'narrative, experiment, research" and the idea that science can be implicit and complicit infuse the complex contact strips. Linguistically the work is complex too. As a scientist, Lewis's gentle play on the terms *culture* and *colony* really brought me up short. I was so used to thinking about these terms in biology that I was completely oblivious to their cross-resonance in the world of race and anthropology! These cross referencing and fluid contact sheets map such contrasts and contradictions, inviting the viewer to think more carefully about words, identity, ethnicity, genealogy and the surveillance society (Norwich, it turns out, has more police surveillance cameras per head of population than anywhere else in the UK! See Introduction).

In a direct contrast, the other component of *Identity, The Making Of…* is a set of black and white portraits. Lewis has described the selection criteria as "If I was lost who would I ask directions from?" Talking about one of the models chosen he remembers, "he said what are you doing, why are you photographing me? Well I am photographing you because you are the sort of person that I think people would come up to and ask directions, whatever, you have a really nice face, you've got lots of stuff, you seem really approachable; you are personable, which you are. He happens to be a DJ as well."

And they are all men. We are forced to put ourselves in his position and ask whether they are also the people we would ask for directions, and if not why not. When asked about this he says, "One of the things that I have been thinking about is men and men of a certain age, men who are fully mature who were meant to be in control of their actions and in some ways the men who run the world, and I have been thinking about them; I have been thinking about that 'Y' chromosome as well and what is it, what is distinctive about that, what does that mean and that's been one strand which I have been following which is why there is a series of pictures of men." In some ways we could think of these portraits as an extension of street photography, but the real concern is how little we can really tell about someone from a photograph, even from such a detailed full-face image. They emphasize that our biographical data are simply not mapped onto our face (any more than they are in our genes), and that our eyes are not the proverbial window onto our souls.

Lewis's interest in multimedia, multiples and montage are shared by **Carl Jaycock**, whose practice has for a long time involved the use of found

Above left:
Carl Jaycock
Eternal Tourist 2008
Media: cut-up postcards bought at auction of one person's life-time of postcards from his travels around the world. 120 x 220 cm.

Above right:
Eternal Tourist 2008 (detail)

imagery, photographic reproductions and archive materials, processed in various ways and re-presented, often after various craft-based interventions such as weaving, shredding or fabric printing. Like Sucksmith, he does not consider himself a photographer, rather a multimedia artist, although, like his earlier influences such as the Malayan artist Simryn Gill, photographic reproductions of various kinds are at the core of his work. He also speaks warmly of Christian Boltanski, the French artist who started out as a painter but then became wedded to a multimedia approach using film, installation, performance, video and photography.

Jaycock is interested in the idea of the cultural construction of identity, a process embodied in most of his works (including the many large scale community based projects he has completed). *The Eternal Tourist* displays key characteristics of his approach. This large collage of postcards, made from one man's collection, works at several levels. At the macro level we see the 'landscape', with one person, as a silhouette, looking through a telescope (the sort that tourists looks at 'views' with) possibly at a woman, possibly with a camera. At the micro level the figures now vanish and we are submerged in a sea of small images from all over the world, glimpses of messages once sent, half remembered addresses, only fragments of views seen now, as the trips fade in the memory and the cards fade in their shoebox. This is about the role of mass produced imagery, memory and nostalgia in creating the transient, labile identities that we are constrained to assume in our late capitalist society. But it could equally as well be about the past, the nature of forgetting and the way that photographs, madeleine-like, can evoke submerged memories and events of the past. Photographs are triggers of remembrance, what Proust called 'involuntary memory'. It is about what we share in our collective memories, and what we don't, that matters. Another work, *Nostalgia is Fragile* focuses in on this idea. Prufrock-like, I have measured out my own life in 45s, sewn to my memories by a few guitar chords. Here is a display of vinyl from when vinyl was king, the familiar sleeves

Carl Jaycock
Nostalgia is Fragile 2008. Cut and shaped record sleeves and records blanked out for people to play at random to trigger memories. 210 cm x 240 cm with table and record player.

that can carry you all on their own back to a specific place and time. But the discs have been blanked out and the route to memory may be more complex!

For Photo-ID, Jaycock has produced two very different works, but both continue the concerns already developed. *Lost Signs Found* is the result of time spent collecting and recording, archiving a host, a crowd, of tiny fading messages to people unknown. With the addition of images around Norwich and Norfolk the collection is now displayed for the first time. The same interest in how images work at different scales is apparent, and these "personal interventions in public spaces" are now more public, piled high on the wall as though in a Victorian gallery. Most of the 'signs' are fading or decaying but collectively they create a multilayered narrative woven about private and public identity. Jaycock said, "I think somewhere Prunella Clough may have influenced this artwork development a little. She often found inspiration in small details of the urban environment, a piece of rusty gate or decayed cloth hanging on a gate where she recorded the passage or evidence of people, reflecting there identity. Eugene Atget's 1890s images of trade shops has always been in the back of my mind, where he photographed shops and signs that soon came to pass away and where the photographic record is the only evidence now."

Darwin and the Same Emotions is more personal and at the same time more political. This work operates again at several scales. It is large, constructed from a series of 315 passport photo strips, each of which consists of processed images of the artist, either alone or morphed to different degrees with a stereotypical set of other facial 'types' from around the world. This is shifting identity in strips, the last throw of the dice for the photograph as the international standard for identification at state borders. The work, at one level, is borne out of the uncomfortable experience Jaycock had, while living in Malaysia, of overt racial prejudice. At another it is the bearded face of the older Darwin we see, wisely and calmly asserting the equality of all humans across the world. And at yet another level, it is the Union Flag, now no longer made in one man's image, a single face, but a new layered cultural landscape made of hybrid faces in their hundreds. Jaycock has said that Sigmar Polke, the German artist and photographer, was a major influence, and this richness of layered meanings bears this out.

If their own personal history formed the backdrop for Lewis's and Jaycock's work, for **Åsa Johannesson** it is the backbone. Her photographic project to date has been an ongoing exploration of how gender and sexuality affect identity and its perception. She once described her work as 'an ongoing self portrait'. When I asked her about this, she said, "When I speak about my work as on-going self portrait people always ask me 'why don't you photograph yourself' but I think it is much more interesting, it makes more sense for me to look at other people; it opens much more and I am very interested to look at who we are to ourselves, and who we think we are to others and maybe this strongly links to who we want to be in the future, or maybe we think back about a

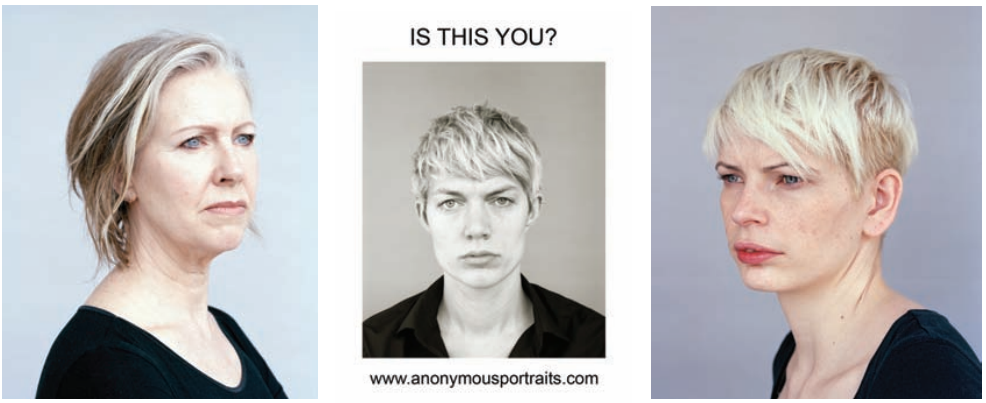
Åsa Johannesson
From the Portraits of Her *series. 2006*
Chlorobromide print
40 cm x 85 cm

period of time in our life when we were happier and we think about who we were then, so that's why I work with other people."

An earlier project, in 2006, was called *Portraits of Her*, in which she presented a series of black and white diptychs of women, taken in the historically important style of the French policeman Alphonse Bertillon (the man who developed the conventional mug-shot as part of a flawed physical measuring system to catalogue and measure peoples faces). These images of women, powerful but outside the conventions of femininity, question such fictional categories and stereotypes and provide a "comment on the use of woman as a muse in the image". She says, "they all have different interests and all they have in common happens to be they have a face that falls outside of the norm of how women are expected to look like." Johannesson asks questions about 'who we feel we are, who we want to be, who we want be perceived as, and who we never became but could have become'. Her project in the following year investigated these questions further.

In *Is This You?*, she advertised, asking for people who identified with her self portrait to contact her. Some of the respondents did so because they felt they looked like her, others because they felt they really were her and yet others because they felt they were her 20 years ago! The question of how gender relates to identity is a big one, and her project *Portraits of*

Åsa Johannesson
From Is This You?*, 2007*



Him moves into the vexed area of biology and gender. In what respect is our genetic inheritance gender-determining and what effect does nurture have on our gender identity? These tender, formal elegiac portraits are all of females who identify as male transgender, either because they simply identify that way or because they have undergone testosterone treatment. She says they attempt to portray "a longing, culminating in the desire to become *Him*". This moves us into the interesting territory of how biology copes with the social and cultural production of identity. As she says, "the photograph is a space where identity is dismantled, but also a space where it is created". Her recent show at the RCA, Boy, explores the same theme but with a single individual, trying to understand how we might be seen through the eyes of others.

Åsa Johannesson
From the Portraits of Him series*, 2008*
C-type print
50 cm x 50 cm

In the latest series, for *PhotoID*, her questions about the cultural origins of identity and the role of the past and gendering all come together and become more personal. *The Twins* is a complex series of images that explore how memory is both generated by images and how images in turn trigger memory. Memories are often generated during family gatherings, looking at family photograph albums. In general the events in the album are organized around female spaces and women do much of the memory work, mining the text and images for meanings and interpretations. But men usually document the events. And in general 'family' events of the album exclude deaths and funerals, feuds and fights, and work and sickness!

In Johannesson's case she grew up in Sweden with a fraternal twin sister in the presence of male photographers, father, grandfather and great grandfather. She says, "between my dad and my granddad, there were always cameras around and because I have a twin sister it became this kind of amazement with these two twin girls who were born, we were the only kids in the family as well, so all the cameras came out, and they were always there, and so I got really used to it, being photographed…..me and my sister were spending a lot of time with my granddad and grandmother so we ended up just being there and being the subjects and he had this particular eye for it because he just had this little camera in his pocket."

Åsa Johannesson researching her grandfather's archive of negatives

Researching her grandfather's archive represented a treasure trove of 'found' images. Photographs and memory can both substitute for accurate knowledge of events, and her memories and those of her sister are augmented by the existence of the photographs, and question how these images relate to who she felt she was both then and now. "The first journey with these images was I was going through old albums at home and I bought a scanner and I scanned the images as I looked through them and then I went back again looking for the negatives, hoping the negatives were there somewhere."

Her grandfather, Ove, is comfortably complicit in this re-authoring of the past, "when you start speaking about the work, he kind of wakes up a bit and he can have these conversations for a while, so we were talking about this and he is really, really pleased I am using them and he is really grateful in a way, they are not just being wasted, lying around in some album somewhere and no-one looking after them." The selection process and the hand printing secure her ownership of the images, "it's found photographs, but at the same time it is my images, I'm in the images you know!"

Her sister in this series is the other half of her forming identity, her Doppelgänger or double, a device used frequently in fiction. Johannesson has pointed to her love of Nabokov's *Despair* where the double is key to the plot. The overriding feeling looking at these images is of two handsome tomboys, inseperable, with not a care in the world. But is that true? As Jeff Wall says, there are "two prominent myths about photography: the myth that it tells the truth and the myth that it doesn't." Her sister and her were clearly close, "We have been growing up together obviously and we don't have any other brothers or sisters so it has always been a strong and intimacy about, always sharing, almost every moment when we were kids we were always together, and I think that shows a lot as well in the images because it seems almost like it's just us there; there is no-one else around…… when we were kids I was so quiet and she was outgoing. When I think about who I was when I was little, my sister is always there in the memory." But they may not always agree about the past, authentic memory is elusive, "Since we spent almost every minute together it is quite interesting how we can remember different things, or when we talk about things we say no, no that's not the way it was." How *did* she used to look and feel and think about herself?

Other artists have tackled the nature of gender roles and their origins in youth, indeed Johannesson has picked out her admiration for Collier Schorr, but this series represents a major investigation into their cultural origins. She has hinted that one of the triggers for this interest in gender stereotyping came from her early experiences after moving to London. She says, "I came to England and I noticed a lot of changes that I remember when I was growing up, like I had the feeling that we were all just kids - that was number one, you were a child and then you were a boy or girl, that was number two; but when here in England I feel a lot that first you are a boy or a girl and very, very gendered and it doesn't leave that openness for kids to have their own idea of what gender is for them."

Marlene Haring
Secret Service
Vienna 2009

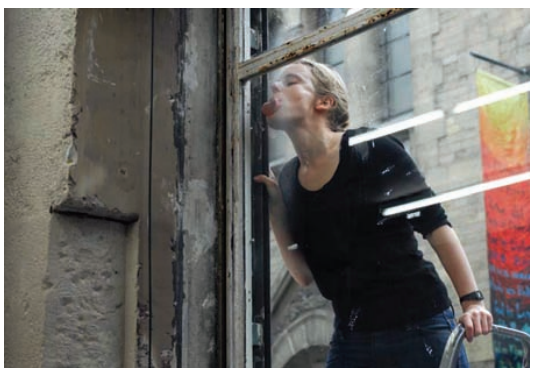
The issue of identity, however, is not just about personal identity. There are also larger theoretical and philosophical interests in the area, and that is where our last two photographers come in. **Marlene Haring** is a Vienna-based artist who has been involved in numerous performance pieces, interventions, installations and trans-actions, all of which address questions about the construction of our social and sexual identity and the constraints that society and the state choose to impose on them. This is performative art, involving the artist and her body as well as either participants or an audience, more or less in the 60s tradition of Bruce

Marlene Haring
Marlene Hairy or In My Bathtub I am the Captain
Vienna 2005

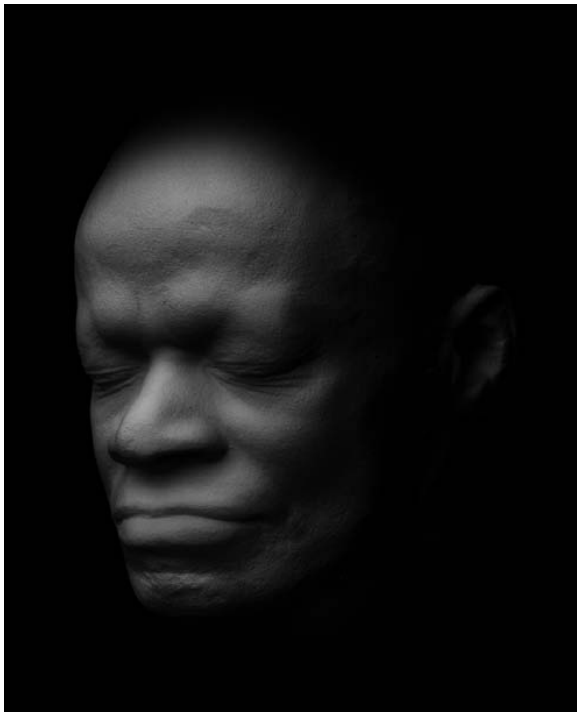
Nauman or Joan Jonas or Yoko Ono, but very much now within a post-Thatcher environment of rampant consumerism. Many of her works involve exchange rituals, literally trans-actions. She might draw up a contract that will buy you her silence about your interaction with her over a fifteen minute period, as in *Secret Service*, or, as in *Sucking Marks*, Haring 'hereinafter referred to as the Sucker', might sell you for a modest sum, and with a binding contract, a love bite. This nexus of exchange in our current commodity culture has deep resonances; everything is for sale, everything can be bought and everything can be (de)-valued.

Her performative acts extend further, however, than commodity culture. In one of her earlier works, *Marlene Hairy*, she crawled through different areas of Vienna, covered with hairy builder's felt, on her way to her flat and the safety of her bathroom, where if you joined her in the bath you could converse with her. Such ritualized performances touch on many taboos, both sexual and social. The scary nature of 'hairy' women, fear of our animal nature, proximity, shyness, modesty and reticence underpin much of her work. In *Show Me Yours I'll Show You Mine*, this transaction typifies these concerns. As she says, "I asked people to show me theirs and offered them to show them mine in exchange. If they asked what, then I said they should pull down their trousers, back there in the little room. It was in between aggressive flirting and creating an intimate and/or at the same time awkward situation, which prompted a lot of conversations behind the curtain while having ones trousers pulled down. Around seventy persons let down their trousers with me inside the mirrored wardrobe."

Marlene Haring
Lickingglass
20-minute performance at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 29 October 2006



Numerous works involve the contractual covering and/or removing of Nivea cream from mirrors, touching on the obliterating and corrosive influence of fashion, cosmetic products and appearance in the worlds of media and advertising. These interventions into either social or private spaces question the nature of social and sexual exchange. The Secession building was closed due to pubic hair curling terrifyingly down the stairs and entrance, preventing Haring from delivering her advertised lecture to the Secession's lecture Series *whichfreedom?* She licked



Above left:
Joanna Kane
Portrait of a Woman: Unknown Woman
Phrenological life cast, early nineteenth century
From The Somnambulists *series*

Above right:
Joanna Kane
Portrait of a Man: Eustache Bellinore Bellin
Phrenological life cast, early nineteenth century
From The Somnambulists *series*

clean the shop window of a perfumery/gallery while a reception was hosted inside.

In her contribution to *Photo-ID*, *Choosing is Losing*, Haring has expanded on the notion of social exchange to consider the nature of the photographic process itself, the power of the unseen, latent image and how our free-will interfaces with the 'art object'. The contractual exchange with the punter is still there, you can buy for £1 an undeveloped cassette of 35 mm Kodak Gold film from a vending machine. It is alleged that this will contain an authentic set of images, signed and numbered and taken by Haring in and around Norwich. The dilemma of what is on the film can only be solved by you the punter, by making the decision to develop and print the nascent images, or to keep the film undeveloped and to think about the latent images slowly fading. What is the artwork, and what value can we put on it today? Are we always buying blind? What narratives are we missing out on in the other cassettes? In the age of mechanical reproduction can we even re-find what a photograph is anymore? All this has the disturbing side-effect of calling into question the identity of photography itself.

It is the photographic process though, and what it is capable of in the 21st century, that forms the subject of enquiry for **Joanna Kane**. Her work for Photo-ID is a logical extension of the interests she developed during the research for *The Somnambulists* series. Life casting and death casting were immensely popular activities in the early nineteenth century, spurred on by a popular (and research) interest in the pseudo-science of phrenology. While exploring her interest in early photography, Kane came across and researched a large collection of casts in Edinburgh, eventually

re-presenting them as subtle life-like series of black and white photographs that captured the ghost-like photographic portraits of faces from a time before photography was invented. The series includes remarkable images of some of the key Romantics, Blake, Keats, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Kane points out that several commentators, including both Burgin and Sontag, have noted the correspondence between casting and photography; the need first for a negative followed by the possibility of multiple positive versions.

The cast as memento mori
Blanche Ana Eliza Stothard died on 2 February 1822, aged seven months, and John Flaxman made death casts of her face and hands.

Kane worked from analogue originals, digitally processed in multiple layers and she comments that the idea of identity being 'layered' comes up again in the composite series she has produced, but she also remarks that Balzac had a fear of being photographed as it would remove layers from his identity! Nadar records this in 1900, "According to Balzac's theory, all physical bodies are made up entirely of layers of ghostlike images, an infinite number of leaflike skins laid one on top of the other. Since Balzac believed man was incapable of making something material from an apparition, from something impalpable - that is, creating something from nothing - he concluded that every time someone had his photograph taken, one of the spectral layers was removed from the body and transferred to the photograph. Repeated exposures entailed the unavoidable loss of subsequent layers, that is, the very essence of life." After the Somnambulists, Kane began, as she says, to look for, "parallels within contemporary imaging and photography and scientific imaging…. new questions were always there about where the new archives of the 21st century would be, what might be the equivalent, are there equivalents, are there distinct differences in particular scientific or sections of identity embedded within scientific discourse, and scientific tools for imaging?" She noted two technologies in particular, the facial composite and 3-D imaging in the forensic and medical sphere and also realized that, "if there are equivalent archives they are likely to be data archives." This led to the two distinct lines of work that have emerged for Photo-ID, a series of facial composites and a series of 3-D portraits, both of which are fragments from a larger future work, an *Invisible Archive of 21st Century Identity*.

Arthur Batut
(1846-1918)
A 'Portrait-Type' composite of the Batut family made from five images; Arthur Batut, his wife, his grandmother and his two sons.
(from: www.espacebatut.fr/)

The two series rest on the idea that identity is encoded, whether in sixteenth century miniatures, or biometric ID cards. Nowadays, that encoding would be digital, and our coded identities are in data banks, data banks that can be used for profiling, usually without the knowing consent of the 'encoded', for consumer profiling, genetic and health profiling and criminal profiling. Who controls the data banks and who does the data mining? Kane has worked on giving visual expression to this encoded identity. *Re-Cognition*, the facial composites, derive in part from the historical precedents like Galton and Batut who both produced composite photographic portraits in the nineteenth century, some of families, some to try to prove theories of particular facial 'types'. Kane introduces the idea of composites along a time series, either the same face imaged over a series of short time intervals, or images of family members of different ages. She says that, "there is some recent research which

Joanna Kane
Study for Data Profile 1: from 3D Generated Image

suggests that it is easier for a facial recognitions officer to recognise composites, composites of the same person in different orientations and different lighting positions, so that was a starting point for experimenting with composites of the same person over time." The different starting images are combined, like Balzac's layers, into a digital composite.

Data Profiles, the 3-D composites are even further removed from the 'real person' portrayed. In principle there are three ways in which 3-D portraits can be generated and Kane describes them, "One is modeling in 3-D from scratch, which is almost like sculpture; there are also ways of translating photographic images into 3-D, which is the approach that I would use; and there are also 3-D laser scanners which I have also experimented with." The digital technology creates essentially fictional portraits; the geometry and the poses are mathematically generated, as are the surfaces. It is curious that however detailed, there is always an uncomfortable sense of unreality about the faces. Kane explains, "One of the problems with creating a convincing 3-D portrait is that there is a known phenomenon which has been identified, particularly in relation to 3-D film characters, or syn-thespians, as they are called. There's a phenomenon called the *uncanny valley effect*, which is that the closer you approach realism through 3-D imaging there is always going to be something that subverts that and particularly with the human face or the human figure or human movement. Perhaps our brains are so hard-wired to recognise the human face and human movement that the smallest thing that isn't quite right will really stand out." Her experiments on the way to her 'invisible archive' are an intriguing if dystopian vision of our digital future.

"Do not take the portrait at face value!"