1   *The Evening Hours: Ben Cauchi,* ed. Aaron Lister (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2013).

2   For a short history of the collodion process in relation to Cauchi's work, see Geoffrey Batchen, "The Way of All Things," in Lister, *The Evening Hours,* 12.

3   Rosalind Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 41.

4   Lister, *The Evening Hours.*

5   See Hayden White, "Introduction: The Poetics of History," in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973), 1-42.

6   Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton,* ed. Bruce Jenkins (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2009), 136.

7   Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 218.

8   Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film," 136.

9   Ibid., 137.

10 Hollis Frampton, "Some Propositions on Photography," in Jenkins, *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters,* 6.

11 Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea,"* 9-10.

12 Ibid., 10-11.

13 Ibid., 7.

14 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in his *Iluminations,* trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Shocken Books, 1969), 225-26.

15 Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing,* 144.

16 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 48.

17 See David Solkin, "ReWrighting Shaftesbury: The Air Pump and the Limits of Commercial Humanism," in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property (Consumption & Culture in 17th & 18th Centuries),* ed. John Brewer (New York: Routledge, 1995), 599.

18 Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea,"* 24-25.

19 Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film," 138.

20 Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea,"* 25.

21 Vivian Sobchack, "The Active Eye: A Phenomenology of Cinematic Vision," *Quarterly Review of Film & Video,* 12:3 (1990), 25.

22 Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in his *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media,* trans. Edmond Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, eds. Michael W Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y Levin (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press, 2008), 280.

23 Batchen, "The Way of All Things," 14.

24 Hollis Frampton, "Eadweard Muybridge: Fragments of a Tesseract," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton,* ed. Bruce Jenkins (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2009), 27-8.

25 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: MacMillan, 1954), 322.

26 Ibid., 322-3.

27 It can only be a "precursor" insofar as for Deleuze the time image depends on montage, which exploits the interval between frames, whereas the photographs within *The Doppler Effect* series compress intervals through montage *within* the frame. For a discussion of Deleuze's concept of the "time image," See D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Image* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

28 Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Image,* 236 n.13

29 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 20-21.

30 See Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 43-48.

31 Ibid., 96.

32 Ibid.

THE OLDER PHOTOGRAPHY GETS, THE YOUNGER IT FEELS[1]

Courtney Johnston

We live in an age of near ubiquitous connectivity, of computer/camera combinations that we carry around in our pockets, of liking and retweeting and pinning, of documenting and publishing our lives online, specifically through photographs. What underlies this seemingly primal need to capture and share our own likenesses and our impressions of the world?

In 1970, Edwin Land, the founder of Polaroid and the inventor of the instant camera, recorded a promotional film for the company. Laying out an idea he'd been working on for quarter of a century, he stands in front of a brand-new, empty factory.

> "We are still a long way," he says, "from the camera that would be, oh, like the telephone: something that you use all day long… a camera which you would use not on the occasion of parties only, or of trips only, or when your grandchildren came to see you, but a camera that you would use as often as your pencil or your eyeglasses."[2]

This camera will be "something that was always with you," he says, and it would be frictionless. Point, shoot, see. It would be as simple and as natural as – and here he reaches into his coat – as taking a wallet out of your pocket, holding it up, and pressing a button.

In the late 1940s, cameras still only went with you on special occasions. You took your photos and sent your film to a processing plant, and received your prints in a week. In November 1948 Polaroid released the Land Camera. It developed its own film inside the camera in about a minute, the back of the camera popping open and letting you peel the negative away and expose the print. The first batch of cameras, expected to meet demand for weeks, sold out in hours. By the 1970s, amateur photographers were shooting over a billion photos a year.

Polaroid didn't just invent a new technology: they introduced us to a new style of casual documentary photography. In 1974 Land wrote:

> A new kind of relationship between people in groups is brought into being… when the members of a group are photographing and being photographed and sharing the photographs.

> It turns out that buried within us… there is latent interest in each other; there is tenderness, curiosity, excitement, affection, companionability and humour… We have a yen for and a primordial competence for a quiet good-humoured delight in each other.[3]

We live, of course, in the future Land described. We carry computers in our pockets that let us take photos wherever and whenever: we are photographing and being photographed and sharing the photographs, effortlessly. Every day, we are consciously crafting and embellishing our self-image, our personas, through the images we make and share. We have come to see every moment of our lives as something we can capture, record, pin down, pass on. More than this: the act of framing up our view is the way we grant our attention to a moment, mark it as and make it memorable.

Artist and technologist James Bridle has described how digital photography has changed our perception of events, and of time itself. Once, there was distance between the image-making process and the image-viewing process. No longer.

> This is instant now. There's this kind of instant review. You can take a photo and see back instantly. It instantly makes that moment that just passed a thing that happened, a thing in the past, a memory. If our bodies are machines for negotiating space, our minds are machines for navigating time, and digital photography and technology in general is aimed squarely at our idea of time and our place in it. And there's no stronger view of that than photos and the ways in which they're presented back to us and change our perceptions of ourselves in time.[4]

In the same talk, Bridle touched on a topic of much discussion and derision: the instant filter effects available through various phone apps and social media sites, but exemplified by Instagram.[5] The dozen or so filters available through Instagram tend to add a nostalgic haze, a beaten-in vintage effect, to these digital snapshots. You can add pinkish or goldish overtones, turn your photo sepia, make the colours super-saturated and add a scratchy border, all with a few dabs of your finger. Suddenly, an empty bus stop is the saddest place in the world, a sunset is the harbinger of the apocalypse, your bare feet with their painted toenails standing on the green grass look better than bare feet have ever looked. The ease of the filter – the way that with a grasp of the basic fundamentals of composition and a few dabs of your finger you can produce works that rival, in visual effect, those of trained photographers – has attracted the ire of those who value the traditional challenges of photography.

Author Teju Cole, writing about the cheapness of these post-processing effects, stated: "The result is briefly beguiling to the senses but ultimately annoying to the soul, like fake breasts or MSG-rich food." He continued:

> All bad photos are alike, but each good photograph is good in its own way. The bad photos have found their apotheosis on social media, where everybody is a photographer and where we have to suffer through each other's "photography" the way our forebears endured terrible recitations of poetry after dinner. Behind this dispiriting stream of empty images is what Russians call poshlost: fake emotion, unearned nostalgia. According to Nabokov, poshlost "is not only the obviously trashy but mainly the falsely important, the falsely beautiful, the falsely clever, the falsely attractive." He knows us too well.[6]

It is precisely this false nostalgia that makes Instagram fascinating. Digital photography eliminated the elapse of time between image taking and image viewing. It is truly instant. And this immediacy has thrust us into an era not only of instant broadcasting ('Look at me NOW'), but also instant archiving.

Exactly as we fix our attention on the present moment, we are recording it and assigning it to the past. Social media – and the social sharing of photographs, especially these tricked-out insta-retro images – now makes us see the present as a potential documented past. We move through the world like butterfly catchers of experiences and events, plucking them from the air and pinning them down, admiring them in flight only insofar as we're trying to get the light right.

Some commentators argue that the rise of the faux-vintage photo points to an attempt to harness the power of the past – the emotional punch of nostalgia – to make our photos, and by extension, the moments of our lives they record, more important, more substantial. There is for some a sense that this is *cheating*. But recently Aaron Straup Cope, previously an engineer at Flickr, suggested that if the team behind the photo-sharing site (renowned for its strength of community) did anything wrong, it was to let people think their photos weren't 'good enough' to upload. Reflecting on this, he wrote:

> … all it took to get all those people excited about the art and the craft of photography again – in ways of seeing the world as something more than a mirror – were those stupid filters.

Those stupid filters are really important because they re-opened a space in which people could maneuver. These are new things not least because I'm guessing that a sizable chunk of Instagram's user base was born after the 1970s and so there is no nostalgia to be asserted. The past is just a medium.

Sometimes the past is not a rejection of the present but a good and useful screen through which to look for patterns, to look for things we'd never have been able to see in the past.[7]

I think these photos are important. I think they are important not for what they depict, necessarily, but for what they say about the culture that took them. If we don't capture the mundane and inane alongside the important, we lose the texture of people's everyday lives.

I have had some vigorous conversations with colleagues in the web and cultural world about collecting and preserving and re-presenting the world's digital photos. Admittedly, this is a firehose that no-one is quite sure how to suck on. But when it comes to collecting the digital world, I think it's better to collect and then figure it out than to fear the complexity and risk losing out.

I also think that our heritage institutions generally do a poor job of collecting the present moment. It is hard to tell what will be important in 50 years' time, and grabbing the present requires energy and fleetness of foot. It is easier to hunt the slow-moving past than the blink-of-an-eye present.

So here's my wish. I want to be able to tweet my photos to the National Library, and have them automatically passed through to the digital collections. We can have a little code phrase, if you like – we can sign up in advance and agree to a nice open Creative Commons license too. And who cares if what I've shot is my coffee or a carcrash, a sunset or a street fight. If I bother to send it to you, you can assume I've decided it says something of some importance. Just make it easy for me to help you build a picture of tomorrow's past.

But let us circle back to the starting premise of this train of thought. Has the internet killed photography? And what does it mean to look at Ben Cauchi's determinedly analogue photographs in light of the digital photography explosion?

The more I reflect, the more I wonder whether the tsunami-like nature of digital and social photography has any relevance to Cauchi's work. What I think it *does* do is accentuate one of the major critical risks for his career, which is to fetishise the process.

Cauchi himself is very aware that this aspect of his work – a highly seductive physical process that is skilful, laborious, alchemical – is both the hook that brings people in and a potential sinkhole. An extended version of an interview Guy Somerset did with him for the *Listener* had 80 questions: over a quarter were about his process, equipment, cameras, chemicals.[8] In the interview they do discuss this trap – where the process becomes the end, the point of discussion and focus and interpretation, rather than a means to an end.

A friend said to me, when I was talking to him about all this, that it feels to him that the older photography gets, the younger it feels. We have the cameras Edwin Land talked about, the cameras we use as often as we uses pencils – arguably far more often – but also we have the curious, affectionate, humorous network he spoke of. In an article I read recently, a professionally trained photographer went with a naysaying journalist to an Instagrammer meet-up in London, centred on an exhibition of printed Instagram images. And the photographer said this:

> Looking at all the images together like this, you notice a huge repetition. And it's not as if the repeated images are even particularly interesting, they're things you see every day – a London phone box, or a burger – only everything's in black and white, bar the red of the phone box or the logo on the plane wing, or whatever. What you do start to see is examples of the basic principles of photography.

It's as if acquiring the app is like taking the first couple of months of my GCSE photography course. Users start learning to use the Rule of Thirds and depth of field and that kind of thing, which is why everything looks like a college project. For example, we were told to take pictures of tube walkways in college because they're full of straight lines, which are pleasing to the eye, and you see thousands of photos of tube escalators and platforms on Instagram all the time.

… What I don't think most users understand is that, to create a good image of something millions of people see every day, you have to go the extra mile and approach it from a different angle, rather than just standing in front of it, buying a new £3 filter and snapping away.[9]

First, it was a lightbulb moment for me to think that Instagram has encouraged millions of people to master the basic vernacular of photography: to educate themselves in why certain set-ups are harmonious or jarring; to explore how the affect of an image can be manipulated through colour and tone. But second, I disagreed with his conclusion. I would argue that these photographers — amateur, vernacular, social, call them what you will — are engaging with the world in a more observant and intense manner than they used to. Just as teenagers today write more than ever before, our contemporary camera-brain is learning to see the world differently, and our visual databases are expanding.

1   This article is a version of a talk given on the occasion of the exhibition "Ben Cauchi: The Sophist's Mirror" at City Gallery Wellington, 19 October 2012 – 17 February 2013, http://citygallery.org.nz/exhibition/ben-cauchi-the-sophist-s-mirror. (The talk's original title – only ever intended to be a throw-away – was 'Has the Internet killed photography?') A fuller version of this talk, which includes more about nostalgia and also delves into projects that play with this idea and also what technologist and writer Robin Sloan calls the 'digital flip-flop', is available at http://best-of-3.blogspot.co.nz/2013/02/photos-nostalgia.html.

2   Cited in Christopher Bonanos, "It's Polaroid's World – We Just Live in It," *The Wall Street Journal*, 9 November 2012, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324439804578108840573155684.html.

3   Ibid.

4   James Bridle, transcript of "Waving at the machines," keynote lecture given at WebDirections South 2011, http://www.webdirections.org/resources/james-bridle-waving-at-the-machines/#transcript.

5   Instagram is a social photography app that lets you take photos, apply filters to them, then share them in various ways. Distinctively, it confines photos to a square format, reminiscent of Polaroids, rather than the rectangular format native to digital cameras.

6   Teju Cole, "Dappled Things: Pinkhassov on Instagram," *The New Inquiry*, 23 September 2012, http://thenewinquiry.com/blogs/dtake/dappled-things-pinkhassov-on-instagram.

7   Aaron Straup Cope, "Stories from the New Aesthetic," notes from a panel discussion at the New Museum, New York, October 2012, http://www.aaronland.info/weblog/2012/10/08/signs.

8   Guy Somerset, "Ben Cauchi Interview – The Long Version," *New Zealand Listener*, 3 November 2012, http://www.listener.co.nz/culture/art/ben-cauchi-interview-the-long-version.

9   Jake Lewis, quoted in Clive Martin, "I Still Don't 'Get' Instagram," *Vice Magazine*, January 2013, http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/i-still-dont-get-instagram.

Perspective

HALIDES OR DOTS AND DASHES?

Brian Scadden

Silver, the bane of countless indigenous South Americans who happened to be living on mountains of the stuff when the Spanish conquistadors arrived, became the miracle metal to early photographic pioneers who found that its properties heralded an amazing era which has lasted over 150 years.

The wet-plate process invented by Englishman Frederick Scott Archer was a negative/positive process which utilised silver halides with glass as a support for the collodion light-sensitive layer. This gave sharper, clearer negatives than the paper negatives produced by the calotype process, in a fraction of the time. The main drawback with this process was that the sensitised collodion lost sensitivity very quickly. This meant that a portable dark tent had to be close at hand for preparing and developing the image. Plates were coated, sensitised, exposed, developed and fixed all within a few minutes — hence the name 'wet plate.'

Negatives produced by this method could be contact-printed back onto albumen paper, or if slightly underexposed and viewed upon a black background these ambrotypes would appear as a positive image.

The advent of dry plates in 1880 spelt the end of the wet-plate era. Glass plates could be loaded into double holders, and exposed and developed weeks or months later with no adverse effect on the image. The wet-plate process lived on into the twentieth century in technical applications or as a seaside novelty, but its heyday was over.

The revival of the process really began in the early 1980s, along with many other 'archaic' processes such as platinum, cyanotype, kallitype, gum bichromate and daguerreotype. Although digital photography was in its infancy, photographers worldwide were already beginning to explore the origins of traditional image-making.

I began dabbling in the 'black art' of wet-plate photography in the 1980s, as I worked for the National Film Unit laboratory and had ready access to an endless supply of chemicals. Although I had trouble sourcing all of the necessary ingredients I slowly obtained enough to be able to make passable images. One book was all the literature I had to teach myself this demanding process. Slowly I gained experience in the process, but even now after nearly 30 years of practising the art I still can't claim to know all of its secrets.

Equipment was another problem which needed to be overcome by a budding collodion artist. As a collector of early cameras and equipment, I had plate cameras which I could adapt to take wet plates without any modifications impacting on the value of the apparatus. This solution was fine to get me started, but later I started making cameras and equipment purpose-built for my needs. A portable dark tent, followed by a darkroom wagon, was my answer to having a darkroom on location. Several cameras followed, with the largest being a 20" × 24" 'Behemoth' built for Ben Cauchi, a collodion artist and long-time friend from Wanganui. This camera is so big that it needs a trailer to transport it to the chosen location. Really only designed as a studio camera, it is currently with Ben in Germany while he attends a 12-month residency in Berlin. I joked with him when it was completed that if ever he was caught in a blizzard, he could always take shelter inside the camera.

People who want to pursue this process must be prepared to either source original cameras or purpose-build equipment to suit their needs. The same applies to the chemicals required. Collodion, the key ingredient in the wet-plate process, is highly flammable and cannot be transported by air, making supply a problem. Many of the necessary chemicals are volatile or toxic, so extreme care must be taken in their use. One cannot journey along this road without expecting many pitfalls and frustrations along the way.

Over the past year, I have been amazed at the interest generated worldwide in wet-plate photography. When I started, there was only a handful of 'crazy' folk worldwide practicing the process. Now that number has increased to hundreds, and interest is growing at an amazing rate. Last year I ran one wet-plate workshop, whereas this year the number will be at least eight. It seems that every week I am fielding enquiries regarding tuition or the availability of chemicals.

Social media sites abound with groups dedicated entirely to wet-plate photography, and instruction in the process can be had through any of the countless sites on the internet. Although there can be no substitute for hands-on tuition, budding wet-platers can access online tuition via sites such as YouTube, with this sort of exposure to the process only serving to fuel the growing interest in the medium.