Extended Essays —
Featuring

1. Catherine Annabel
2. Cath Badham
3. Tamsin Crowther
4. Sally Eales
5. Martin Elms
6. Emily La Trobe-Bateman
7. Ian McAfee
8. Kirsty Surgey
9. Momoko Uchisaka

An exhibition of photography of PhD research by
Andy Brown
Catherine Annabel
School of Languages
and Cultures (French)
When the young French writer Michel Butor arrived in Manchester in 1952 to work at the University as a lecteur, he experienced what he described as a ‘climatic shock’. Fresh from working in Egypt, and ‘inundated with sun’, he found the constant fog, the near-constant rain, the darkness, soot and smoke profoundly oppressive. These conditions also triggered memories of his adolescence in occupied Paris – the city of light transformed into a city of darkness, of fire, and of violence. These responses permeate his Manchester-inspired novel, *L’Emploi du temps* (*Passing Time*), in which Manchester is renamed Bleston and becomes a mythical place, of labyrinths and sorcery, as well as of night and fog.

In 1966 a young German writer arrived at the University of Manchester, this time to work as a lektor in the German department. W G Sebald read *L’Emploi du temps* shortly after his arrival, and it clearly had a profound impact on him. This is evidenced both in the copious annotations in his copy of the novel, and in the long poem, ‘Bleston: A Mancunian Cantical’, which the book inspired. Subsequently his experiences of Manchester, heavily influenced by Butor, formed part of *The Emigrants*, and *After Nature*, two key works.

Both writers draw upon the mythology of Manchester. From the beginnings of its rapid growth in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, the real city was mythologised by the many from around these islands and beyond them who came to see the miracle or shock city of the age. Some saw it as an industrial Jerusalem, the very symbol of civilisation, a new Athens. Others described a new Hades, a foul labyrinth, in which men toiled like demons to feed the monstrous industrial machine.

Manchester’s dark waters were a powerful symbol and the focus of many of the descriptions of the city in its industrial heyday. Its rivers and canals were ‘as black as ink or the Stygian lake’, like ‘the stream thrown out in eruption by some mud-volcano’. The river Irwell is ‘the Styx of this new Hades’ (the Styx being the river that forms the boundary between earth and the Underworld). The fumes in the air and rising from the waters are likened to the waters of Lethe, one of the rivers of the Underworld, and also identified with the spirit of forgetfulness and oblivion.

For both Butor and Sebald these images are linked to the notion of trauma and memory. Butor described how in the aftermath of the Liberation of Paris there was a desire to shroud the events of the Occupation in fog, to treat those years as a nightmare from which they had woken. Butor himself was haunted by that period, and the need to remember and record is a constant theme in *L’Emploi du temps*. Sebald’s work is haunted by the Holocaust and he transforms the post-industrial decay of Manchester into a melancholic post-Holocaust landscape, in which he explores the loss and the recovery of memory.
Cath Badham
School of English

2.
Behind every live performance is a group of people whose work is rarely made overtly visible to the public. Unlike the performers, we work in the shadows, on the periphery. As a stage manager my physical work is concealed behind the scenery, shrouded by the shadows of low light or disguised as a member of the cast. The documentation I produce is rarely shown to the audience before being hidden away in a private archive and is seldom revisited.

I discovered my research subject, the plays of contemporary British writer Philip Ridley, when I was ‘on the book’ for The Fastest Clock in the Universe and The Pitchfork Disney at The Octagon Theatre in Bolton in the mid 1990s. The person ‘on the book’, usually the Deputy Stage Manager but it can be any member of stage management, sits in all rehearsals notating the actors’ moves in a copy of the script. They are also the conduit for information in and out of the rehearsal room. Cue points for lighting, sound and any other backstage actions are also placed in the book which are then ‘called’ during the show ensuring its smooth running from a technical perspective. When the run of a production is over the book, sometimes called the prompt copy, and all the production paperwork is, usually, archived. My research has demanded that I revisit the material I deposited in Bolton’s archive over twenty years ago.

The words projected on the screen are part of the fight notation from The Fastest Clock in the Universe. A clear description of the order in which the actors made moves during the fight, it was used every day at the health and safety fight call. This document was never seen by the public and, until excavated from the archive, had not seen the light of day since packed away on Saturday 26th November, 1994.

Searching through archive production material to evidence my PhD has allowed me to rediscover my own archive, as well as that of the live performances. Freud, in an essay from 1919, suggests that the bringing to the surface of thoughts, ideas or memories that had previously (and perhaps should have) remained hidden results in a feeling of unease, termed ‘the uncanny’. This experience has been uncanny for me at times, revealing my past in my present. It has been strange and unnerving to glimpse my younger self in the naivety of the documentation.

In my position between the projector and the screen my work is imprinted on me, and, through the shadow I am imprinted it. Looking at the words I engage with my past in the present, acknowledging its place in the intertwined histories of my work and Ridley’s. But the shadow obscures part of the document reflecting the knowledge that the original is back in its folder in the archive. Its only public appearance is fragmented and obscured, only brought out of the shadows for a fleeting moment.
I am interested in how women writers constructed female subjectivity and identity in the mid-nineteenth century, an era described as “the advent of female literature.”¹ In particular, I am interested in the relationship between women and domestic space and objects and how the house is positioned as a microcosm for both the social and the psychological. As female experience has itself been historically pushed to the margins, my research focuses on the liminality of windows, mirrors and paintings in the literature of the Brontë sisters to uncover their transfigurative and emancipative potential for framing female thought, experience and self-creation.

I was drawn to The Image Speaks project through a desire to express some of the wider complexities and questions that have arisen from my central research inquiries. I figured a photograph could provide a fresh and less definitive space for expressing thoughts that originate from but perhaps do not belong within the context of my thesis. Namely, where do I stand in relation to my research and writing, and what could be said, if anything, of the wider relationship between my texts, their subjects, their authors, and myself? Andy Brown has managed to capture a nesting-box of ‘framings’ in this image that I feel suitably reflects these musings.

Overall, I think Andy’s photograph exudes a womb-like intimacy and warmth tinged with Gothic tension and claustrophobia that, when putting my own motives for this image aside, encapsulates simply yet wholly the fraught relationship between women and domestic space in the mid-nineteenth century that remains at the centre of my research. Yet whilst my research considers how women writers construct female subjectivity, I too am a woman contemplating the Brontës as female subjects in my own writing. It is this notion of ‘construction’ that I find particularly troubling as I begin to question to what extent I am, as a ‘critic’, creating as much as I am uncovering.

This photograph of me reading Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) whilst encased within a replica of the novel’s famous box-bed thus feels appropriately meta in many ways. Firstly, it figures me as a reader outside the fiction and looking in, immersed in the book that symbolically frames my subjects and that, in turn, frames theirs. However, positioned within the box-bed I become somewhat of a subject myself, residing both inside and outside the ‘text’, I question my motives and the experiences I seek as I enter in.

The second chapter of my thesis looks at windows as transcendental spaces that are implemented to explore and bridge gaps between the psychological and the physical, between male and female gender, and between temporal dimensions. The window in this image also feels as though it depicts a symbolic bridging between the temporal space of the fiction and my own position as a twenty first century reader. On the other hand, the light shining through feels unavoidably like the selective lens of the critic looking in on the image/text and illuminating its chosen subject, leaving the bed and the wider ‘framing’ of the photograph shrouded in darkness.

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Servant bells give us clues to how nineteenth-century servants were at the beck and call of their masters. Before servant bells were introduced into homes servants would either wait outside their masters' rooms or hand bells would be used to summon them. This was easy in earlier centuries as it had been more common for servants and masters to live in the same spaces. This began to change throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the idea of the nuclear family began to grow and families demanded more privacy from their staff. There was also a growing interest in the efficient running of large country estates and the homes of the landed gentry, which resulted in a greater number of rooms, each with a specific function. This, alongside the desire to keep the operational parts of the house invisible, meant that servants were more difficult to find when needed.

Plans for keeping one part of the house separate from the other started to be included in the designs and alterations to houses with servant spaces situated further away from the main hub of the house. Back stairways, networks of hidden passages, and baize doors were installed in the homes of elite families to ensure the armies of domestic staff were hidden from view. As this division grew, a more sophisticated system was needed to ensure that masters could still summon their servants with little inconvenience.

The introduction of servant bells meant that distant parts of the house could be connected via a mechanical system of wires and pulleys. Family members just had to pull a bell cord, in whatever room they were in, which rang a bell downstairs in the servant quarters. A number of bells, sometimes over 80 depending on the size of the house, were fixed to a board, often in a hallway adjacent to the butler pantry, each with a label indicating to staff where they were needed.

Some bell boards had different sized bells and servants would be expected to distinguish between the various sounds but it was more usual that they would have to run to the board to see which bell was ringing and which room they should go to. An advice manual from the nineteenth century advises servants that they 'never should let the bell ring twice' and it was therefore not unknown for footmen to sit on a bench beneath the row of bells waiting to be called. As changes in technology were gradually introduced into homes towards the end of the nineteenth-century, the old mechanical system was gradually replaced by an electrical system and buzzers were used rather than bells.

Nowadays, we might imagine that being summoned by an employer is thing of the past and it is true that the servant bells of the nineteenth century are mostly gone. Modern technology, however, has meant that today, employers can simply message their domestic staff by mobile phone and so domestic staff remain at the beck and call of their employers.
Martin Elms
School of Languages and Cultures (French)
My research evolved from an interest in how contemporary artists relate to identity and community in their art as they move through their careers. One might have thought that these themes had been replaced in the work of many artists by highly conceptual forms but it seemed to me that the work of many artists continues to be grounded in how they think about themselves and the situation in which they live. We are all engaged with identity, culture and community through our daily lived experience. This is such rich and complicated terrain that it is not surprising that many artists frequently examine how we are what we are, and how we relate to each other and our interactions with our environments. Artists often draw on what they know and are interested in as a frame for their art and their life experience is a good source of such material.

I needed to find a manageable example to illustrate my thesis. I decided that Algerian and Franco-Algerian artists represented an interesting example because it was, and remains, an under-researched area. It would have made little sense to consider only artists born and living in Algeria. The contemporary art infrastructure of Algeria is very limited and there is therefore a strong historic tendency for artists to leave the country and develop both their art education and their careers elsewhere. Moreover, the intimate intertwining of the histories, cultures and politics of Algeria and France provided a rich transnational terrain within which to explore the ways in which the artists explore who they are and their various lived contexts as individuals and artists.

The research is on-going but at present I am looking at how identity and community are framed not just from the general idea of the artists’ interest in who they are but also in terms of:

- How cultural diplomacy and its streams of funding influence the shape of artistic responses;
- How pressure to be a spokesperson in one’s art for the group, the ‘nation’ or a particular religious point of view may arise from feelings of personal obligation or from social pressure.
- How artists may be influenced in this respect by the demands of the international art market.

Artists need to earn a living and are frequently driven by the need to succeed within the art market and this means they need to become marketable within that market as a brand. In this drive to success greater or lesser prominence may be given by artists to issues of identity and community. My thesis looks at how some of these pressures derive from the local situation of the artist and some from more global influences. An artist born in Algeria may explore identity and community differently living in Paris or Berlin than someone of an Algerian background born in France. An Algerian artist in Algiers is likely to respond in another way. My research looks at this diversity of responses and attempts to make sense of them.
Look closely at the image on the right and you will spot a regular pattern of later prehistoric field boundaries and the distinctive curved shapes of enclosures and round houses. This fieldscape survives on the slopes below Garreg Fawr, a rocky outcrop visible in lighter relief on the right of the image. By contrast, little of the landscape’s ancient history can be seen in Andy’s photograph of the same area, taken from a vantage on Garreg Fawr. The vegetation and later stone walls almost entirely obscure features created when the uplands were first enclosed more than two thousand years ago.

Far from being an isolated example, the early fieldsapes shown here are part of an extensive distribution pattern in Snowdonia which I am mapping using data from LiDAR, a survey method that uses pulsed laser light to measure distances between a plane-mounted sensor and a target (usually the ground surface). LiDAR has become a powerful tool in archaeology because it can produce very detailed surface maps of landscapes, revealing archaeological features that are difficult or impossible to detect on the ground or using aerial photographs.

Whilst the early fieldsapes of Snowdonia are among the best preserved and most complex in Europe, our understanding of them is very limited. Were enclosures used for corralling stock? Did field boundaries partly develop as land was cleared of large stones to allow cultivation? How does the layout and distribution of fields relate to the way land rights and access were organised?

It is not known whether enclosure took place as part of a subsistence economy where animals were central to the life of communities living in the uplands, or if nutrient-rich soils in newly deforested areas were planted with crops. Agriculture at this altitude and on these soils may seem unlikely, but archaeological evidence and historic documents show that rye, oats and barley were grown here hundreds of years ago. If you look carefully at the LiDAR image, you will see small areas of distinctive gently curved stripes - ‘ridge and furrow’ - that attest to the use of ox-drawn ploughs in the medieval period.

Making connections between people and places millennia ago is difficult without falling back on assumptions that are based on the way we relate to land and food production in the modern world: settlement and farming invoke permanence; land enclosure is linked to ownership; the concept of economic viability and ideas of marginality influence explanations of change. Challenging these preconceptions is important to understanding early land use in north west Wales. Mapping the extent and character of early fieldsapes will contribute to a better understanding of their initial development, how they changed over time and in what ways they influenced later landscapes. I hope my research will also inform debates about the future of Snowdonia’s uplands, demonstrating that social, economic and ecological change have always been inextricably linked.
Ian McAfee
Department of Archaeology
Many individuals will experience back pain, whether it is acute back pain that goes away, or chronic pain that lasts longer and occurs more often. Back pain has a variety of causes, many of which fall under the generic term of joint disease. The photograph shows lumbar vertebra with a few markers of a joint disease or seronegative spondyloarthropathy known as ankylosing spondylitis. Ankylosing is derived from the Greek word ankylos meaning bent or stiffening. Spondylitis has two roots, the Greek word spondylos meaning spine and the suffix -itis denotes inflammation. Therefore, the literal translation of the name suggests an inflammatory condition which can cause stiffening to the spine.

The photo helps to display what my research is trying to ascertain: whether the varying stages of development can help researchers determine activity and lifestyle patterns of our predecessors. Seronegative spondyloarthropathies are a form of joint disease, which mainly affect the spine, that are unable to be detected through standard blood tests. Ankylosing spondylitis is one of the many seronegative spondyloarthropathies and is more common in younger adults, affecting approximately 1 in 200 people. Ankylosing spondylitis is characterized by the development of corresponding enthesophytes, abnormal bony projections, more commonly forming on the lower vertebrae, which will fuse together over time on continuous vertebral bodies. The fusion of the vertebral bodies restricts movement and causes stiffness and when the condition affects the upper vertebrae can create a bent or hunched appearance.

I chose this photo because I am fascinated by vertebrae and how such seemingly simplistic structures can have complex purpose and present such interesting pathological change. The vertebral column is a support structure within the axial skeleton with distinct functions and features. The lumbar vertebrae are the section above the pelvic girdle, and so they are, essentially, the base and foundation of the upper body. As the base of the column, the lumbar vertebrae are load bearing and therefore more robust. These vertebrae fit with the corresponding skeletal elements like a puzzle piece and cannot function properly without correct stabilization.

This photograph helps to demonstrate how risk factors may not be significant on their own, but when pieced together, in much the same way as the vertebral column, a much clearer picture of the past begins to appear. No single risk factor appears to directly determine risk or rate of developing joint disease, but when multiple risk factors are present, a perfect storm of pathological changes can occur within an individual. Our body is a complex structure, and with better understanding, we can potentially learn how to avoid conditions like this.
8.

Kirsty Surgey
School of English
A family photograph in the university. Family stories that make a research project. My project – Sharing Stories – is about bringing personal histories into the public sphere.

My research project is practice-led. I am investigating the possibilities and implications of making performance using family histories.

In my research the image often does not speak. The photograph is found stuffed into an envelope. It is pasted into an album. It is stuck fast into a wooden frame. These are pictures of relations, of objects, of places and of animals. They were taken with care, selected when film was limited to 12, 24, or 36 exposures. They are the family archive.

Andy and I have created a new family portrait. An impossible portrait of two related women connected, occupying a single space, separated by lifetimes.

Without labels photographs are often unmoored from their intention. The identity of the subject is lost. The significance of decisions made by the photographer are forgotten. The location can be guesswork.

This photograph can speak because I know the subject is Constance Mary Nichol. My grandfather’s sister. She is Aunt Connie, although she did not live to be an aunt. I know some of her history. She went to Brampton County Secondary School and trained to be a nurse. She became a member of Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service. Nicky, as she was known to her friends when she worked in Nigeria, died of malaria aged 22 in 1945. She is buried in Lagos and remembered on her father’s tombstone in Cumbria. History texts are archived in public records.

This photograph can speak because my grandmother remembers Connie, who she would have loved to have had as a sister-in-law. It speaks because there are other photographs with labels in albums. Personal memories that can give a photograph meaning.

The photograph we have made speaks of absence, but it also speaks of continuity.

Connie looks like me.

I look like Connie.

I looked like her when I was younger. I am older now than she ever was.

Connie’s is a studio portrait; posed and poised. Formal clothes. Connie is the solo performer. She is watchful, her gaze seems wary, but she looks to be on the edge of a smile. Its ghost dancing on her lips.

I have brought Connie into the university, into my research and into my story. I descend the staircase, hidden behind a mask. I choose when and what to reveal; I hide, anxious about my responsibilities.

In the creation of a performance using this image, it is given new meaning. It is used to tell a new story. Today we share the space. Her face masks mine. Her story has precedence, but needs me to tell it. Photographs are taken so that we can remember. The image looks back, but the photograph speaks of belief in the future.

This essay and photograph are produced with grateful thanks to my grandmother, Paddy Nichol, whose contributions are invaluable to this project.
My PhD research investigates the *commedia dell’arte*, and its adaptation to various musical and theatrical productions in late Renaissance Italy, including early opera. The commedia dell’arte is an Italian theatrical form which flourished in Europe from the mid sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Troupes traveled around the Italian peninsula and beyond, performing improvised plays based on stock characters and plots, at places from streets to piazzas to royal courts. This image invites Isabella, one of the commedia dell’arte characters, to the Peace Gardens in the Sheffield city centre.

Working on the Image Speaks has made me recognise the elastic nature of the *commedia dell’arte* characterised by imitation and improvisation. The *commedia dell’arte* performers usually mimicked figures associated with particular regions, occupations and dialects. For example, the character Pantalone is an old lustful merchant and speaks Venetian, the dialect of Venice known for trade. The *innamorata* is a fickle, self-conscious young woman in love who usually dresses in the latest fashion. She speaks Tuscan, the dialect of Tuscany, used by eminent poets such as Boccaccio and Petrarch. *Innamorate* are usually known by typical female names such as Flaminia, Silvia and Isabella. The character Isabella is slightly different because it is probably modelled on Isabella Andreini (1562–1604), one of the most renowned actresses of the *commedia dell’arte* in late Renaissance Italy. In her later years, she also became famous as a poet for her pastoral play and lyric poetry. As Isabella Andreini specialised in the *innamorata* on stage, the character Isabella retained this characterisation. But the character is more independent and daring. To get together with her lover or change her undesirable situation, she sometimes attempts to find her own way, against her father or husband, although it does not always succeed. Imitation was thus the core of the commedia dell’arte which helped enrich its characters and performances.

Improvisation was another source of variety and flexibility. The *commedia dell’arte* actors did not have fully written scripts, but improvised their performances based on brief plot outlines, called scenarios. This enabled them to adapt to different settings and audiences. For example, the *innamorata* demonstrates her love by elegant speech with excerpts from the literary and dramatic works of the time, such as Torquato Tasso. Otherwise, she uses a stage prop, a handkerchief for instance, which she drops to attract a man she is interested. Improvisation offered a chance for actors to show their linguistic and dramatic virtuosity and creativity. Importantly, it also allows us to imagine their performances beyond the given scenarios, and to add new ideas and inspirations when adapting them to our time and region.

Now let’s return to the Peace Gardens. Andy and I obtained a handkerchief nearby and created images with different poses at several places in the Gardens. We agreed this image best portrayed the character of Isabella and I hope that it gives the viewer a small insight into the *commedia dell’arte*.
Like most exhibitions, The Image Speaks wouldn’t have happened without a colossal effort from many different people and organisations. Photographer Andy Brown and the 8 PhD students involved have worked tirelessly to understand each other’s perspectives and produce work that has both artistic and intellectual integrity.

The aim of the project, to give PhD students in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities a chance to work with an external partner on a public engagement project which both showcases their research to a wider audience and provokes reflection on their own work, can be seen both in the exhibition photographs, their labels and in the essays that accompany each piece of work. Every student has engaged with the process of working with Andy on many different levels and it is testament to the collaboration that the exhibition produced stands alone as an art show and has also provoked deeper reactions and thoughts about research and public engagement.

We are grateful for the support of Arts Enterprise in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and funding provided by the Higher Education Innovation Fund, without which this exhibition would not have been possible.

Lastly, from a Faculty point of view, it is a privilege for us to work with students who are sure of the value of their research but are also willing to be challenged, confronted and provoked by those within and outside the academy. The resulting exhibition, I hope you’ll agree, has been worth their risk.

Amy Ryall,
Sheffield,
April 2018
The Image Speaks

An exhibition of photography of PhD research by Andy Brown