



16th INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE AND FASHION CONFERENCES

PROMOTING PHOTOGRAPHY IN 2016: NEW INTERFACES AND TRADITIONAL METHODS

Saturday, the 23rd of April 2016 / 5.30 pm

Moderated by **Raphaëlle Stopin**, Artistic Director

Speakers:

Chris Littlewood, Photography Director, Flowers Gallery, London ;

Lesley Martin, Creative Director, Aperture Foundation, New York ;

Clare Strand, Photographer, Brighton ;

Chantal Webber, Agent, Webber Represents, London

Raphaëlle Stopin

This talk is about new interfaces and traditional methods in photography. We are going to explore the different types of platforms which are available today and gather the viewpoints of our four speakers, who also are jury members. Thank you for being with us.

Let me introduce them:

Clare Strand, photographer – Brighton; Chantal Webber, Photo and stylist Agent, Webber Represents – London & New York; Lesley Martin, Creative Director, Aperture Fondation - New York; Chris Littlewood, Photography Director, Flowers Gallery - London.

We will discuss what the possible publishing interfaces are in 2016 – how the book form and the exhibition form have been challenged and explored by most artists and curators. We will also talk about the inevitable use of the Internet and the social media and how they may influence the evolution of the book and exhibition form.

Chris, could you explain what your position is at the Flowers Gallery and how do you explore ways of programming?

Chris Littlewood

I have been working at this art gallery for about 10 years. Flowers Gallery is not only representing photographers, it is a group of 30 plus artists from across all media, sculpture, painting, video, etc. For the past 8 to 10 years, we have been developing an international program in photography.

We have a set of installations, pictures from recent exhibitions at the gallery, this being a South Korean photographer, Boomoon. It illustrates how the program is very international compare to artists we usually work with who tends to be British. Here the artists are coming from Germany, from Brasil, from Italy, from Korea, from China, from America, from UK. We had to manage the addition of copy numbers as this exhibition was shown in different galleries, in different cities around the world, and in one time.



Installation view: Boomoon, 2014

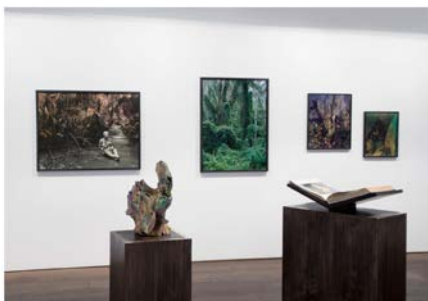


Installation view: Boomoon, 2014

Boomoon is working on an exceptionally large scale. He represents this idea of a format that is complex but also simple. It is a very pure, straight but also romantic approach to photography. He is looking at vast expanses of sea, sky and land and works on infinite variations.

In contrast to this main group of photographers we are showing, I wanted to expand and open the program to more experimental approaches. Since 2008, we established a dedicated space in one of our galleries where we are showing only invited artists, invited curators who are using different materials and practices.

This is Esther Teichmann. She is German, she makes a lot of works in Florida, she also teaches. She is based in London. This exhibition she also curates is comprised of C-Type prints, black and white prints, hand painted prints – she paints and she applies pigments and ink on the top of her photographs, sculptures, she incorporates lot of art and historical materials within her work in a sort of collage way. This installation is a huge painted backdrop, painted on a wall and then photographical framed. When you enter into the space, it becomes a very immersive experience, the images bleed into one another.



Installation view: Esther Teichmann, Fractal Scars, Salt water & Tears, 2014



Installation view: Esther Teichmann, Fractal Scars, Salt water & Tears, 2014

Group exhibition is something that we do occasionally, maybe twice a year.

In 2012, we focused on constructed photography using post-Photoshop – the artists were deploying quite physical interventions. It's hard to tell from those images. The little black piece

you see is the photograph of a wooden axle, the axle is taken and pushed through the image itself as the mean of displaying quite a violent gesture.

The piece on the left is like breaking away from the wall, it has a kind of vacuum form, and the artist repeats the image over and over again.

Raphaëlle Stopin

Although you are on the commercial side of the Gallery, how do you manage with new techniques and ways of showing works?

Chris Littlewood

Some of what we show are indeed more ephemeral and trickier installations, that are obviously not immediately commercially viable. Let's say that we have our bread and butter artists who already have an established market for their work. They have built up a following throughout the years. We rely very much on them because they are able to sell work in-between exhibitions. We are also working with museums, on touring exhibitions, and art fairs as well... To show experimental approaches really is part of the program; it opens us to a wider audience and tends to get a lot of publicity and a lot of press. You never know where these things can go after a couple of years. The return is rarely immediate.

There are art fairs now, like the one in Amsterdam, "UNSEEN" especially designed for entry level collectors and previously unseen works: It's a very dynamic platform which avoid the same names and the canonized work that you see everywhere. So there are ways out there to sell.

We also run a program every summer called Artist of the Day: It is a two week program of one-day exhibitions. We reach out to established artists in the field of photography, painting, etc. and we ask them to nominate a lesser known artist. They come up for a day and then at the end we do a group show. It's a great way to be introduced to new artists that we can show in our gallery or in other galleries.

Again, it's not an immediate commercial idea we have in mind, but it's an aspect of the gallery which is important.

Raphaëlle Stopin

At Flowers, you have a program that is very inclusive towards the young scene. You actually represent Lorenzo Vitturi who was a photography winner here two years ago. Lorenzo who also explores different scenography in his shows and also at your gallery...

Chris Littlewood

Absolutely. Here is an example of someone who can deploy, either here, in other museums, a very installation-based approach, with different materials. He made a very colorful and chaotic project that had to do with a market place in East London: it's a mixture of observed photography with studio assemblages. He knows how to recreate this environment in the space of a public venue. It is not a traditional form of photography. When we apply that to our program, we have to be a little bit selective. He would not present it in always the same way. We might take a set of small prints, mounted to an art fair.

We also reach out to young curators. Tim Clark, who is the Editor of 1000 Words Magazine, curated an exhibition called Rebecoming. He got funded for this show, that he entirely put together. It had to do with immigration and was very well done.



Installation view: Uncommon Ground, Tom Lovelace, 2012



Installation view: Edward Burtynsky, Water, 2013

Continuing with the group shows, here you have Tom Lovelace, one of our emerging artists, who is becoming more and more well-known in London. It is exciting to see his work exhibited along a celebrity like Edward Burtynsky, one of the most prolific photographers in the world, selling at very high prices, doing major touring exhibitions, having five or six publications. I love to see what happens when different photographers hold a dialogue with each other, sharing the same wall on a thematic exhibition, in this case the state of environment called Uncommon Ground. Young artist add freshness to the more established one, and then this one lends a quality to the young artist. This kind of shows can give a boost to the younger artists.

Tom Lovelace also did an installation of photos which was a set of found objects – notice boards from inside a shop window, or later another from outside a theatre in Italy. There are fascinating objects, notice boards with sheets of paper being painted to this kind of fabric that, overtime, light bleached the outskirts of the boards and you end up with this kind of minimal, simple, abstract images. It is, to me, a very primitive form of photography in terms of light affecting surface.

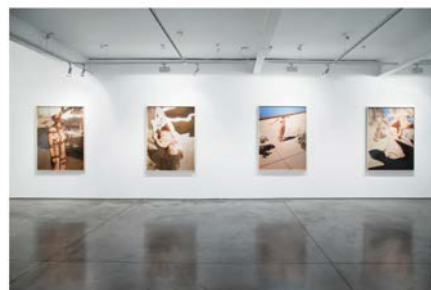
We are somehow known for having large format photography shows, big expansive projects. Burtynsky did his latest encyclopedic series on water for us. He is showing how resources are controlled, modified, and the sort of cultural, human relation we have with them.

As you can see, I am trying to branch out those experimental shows and try to find other new photographers who fit in this group of people we have assembled. We are thinking at our regular clients and collectors who are coming to the gallery for a particular fame. Lesley and I were talking earlier about China photography seen by western eyes. We realized that there were only 2 or 3 shows or photographers that we have exhibited that had a look at China. We never did it in a group show.

For not repeating ourselves in terms of selecting photographs, we try to bring different perspective to similar subjects, such as urbanization, the environment, life in cities, etc.



Installation view: Simon Roberts, Pindon, 2014



Installation view: Mona Khun, Acido Dorado, 2014

Simon Roberts, a British photographer who joined the gallery in 2009, is a good example of that. Mona Khun, as well. Michael Wolf is also breaking away a little bit from this two dimensional pictures on walls. He did a show made up of images of architectural façades using also physical objects, found chairs on the streets of Hong Kong, a series called Bastard chairs. We combined those with a video installation or framed photographs...



Edmund Clark is another very interesting artist, very political. He just released a publication with Aperture on the CIA's program of secret prisons that had to do with control and surveillance. That is an installation he made in Afghanistan in a background airbase. Postcards were part of this show called *The Mountains of Majeeds*, a reflection on the end of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in Afghanistan. It's a combination of his photographs versus paintings of a local anonymous artist. We reproduced these paints as postcards distributed freely at the exhibition.

July Cockburn is an artist working with embroideries and different collage techniques – she is embellishing found images, paintings and photographs, in places like flea markets, auction web sites, etc.



It's really a unique, mixed work that can give an overview of what we do.

Raphaëlle Stopin

We are talking about the way the exhibition could be explored in new forms.

Chantal, you opened a gallery space next to your agency. Could you tell us how you manage that space and maybe what is the relationship with the photographers? What kind of projects are you interested in pushing in your gallery?

Chantal Webber

It's been very interesting to see how things changed over the last few years within the commercial side of photography. There is a much stronger emphasis on photographers having a broader practice. Younger photographers in particular seem to have a 'multi-practice' way of working. So, to us, it was a natural progression to have a space that would really encourage and facilitate the personal works of artists, but also to support the artists we were interested in. It gave us a lot of freedom to have this gallery in order to collaborate with different artists and photographers. We did something with the *Wandering Bears*, an exhibition for which we invited 15 professionals to have their Instagram followed. After one month, they exhibited their work at the gallery. It was an interesting way to see what they were looking at, what the trend was. Having everything in one space together, you discover how overwhelming and accurate the works are definitely.



We went to Unseen Festival with four of our artists - Gregory Halpern, Thomas Albdorf, Daniel Shea, Mark Peckmezian, it was all based on books. This is also what we exhibit at the gallery.

Raphaëlle Stopin

Could you say a word on your strategy as an agent to push their personal project?

Chantal Webber

The gallery is a natural progression to celebrate the works of our artists, to have books launches, exhibitions, etc., and it is also a great way to have people together. It encourages the production of those works as well.

Raphaëlle Stopin

Clare, regarding the use of Instagram, what would be the role of this media in your practice as a photographer? Would you consider including this kind of pictures in a show?

Clare Strand

For every theme, every project I work with, I use what I consider the most appropriate method to deliver what I want to say. I am close to the photographer but recently, I worked with machines, I have also made photographic paper constructions, I have worked with archival pictures, with my own pictures, with films... I am a cross disciplinary artist I guess. It is all about using the most appropriate mechanism to get what I want. There are things I don't particularly like, but it is all about how it fits, how the concept, the outlook fit to what I am going to say.

I am using Instagram in a very particular way. If you go on my Instagram - Clare Strand Stump - you will see that I only photograph stumps! It started out a long time ago when I took a stump from my brother-in-law's house. I had it in my car for a very long time, till the day my husband asked to take it out. So from then on, I kept taking photos of something new on my stump. It can be anything or anybody, boots, a cup of coffee, my daughter, my husband... I did a hundred of those. I still continue to photograph stumps. When I went on holidays in America, I did stumps of America. It led me to develop a stump book. By now, I have a computer program that goes through the Web, and when anyone mentions stump, it puts out a picture. He tweet and I retweet with my stump book. So it is now something that has nothing to do with me - it's mechanical and it goes on and on. To me, I don't see the point of putting out photos of everyday stuff. It's not my practice, that is why I am using Instagram, what is created through Instagram stays on Instagram. I am not going to publish a book about that work. Anyway, I like to use the right platform for the right piece of work.

Raphaëlle Stopin

And what do you think of that sort of Instagram platform, Documentum, curated by Stephen Shore and David Company, which led to the publication of prints taken from the Instagram photos?

Clare Strand

I know nothing about David Company curating on Instagram. I know he puts out his own works. It's his ways, for others it's other ways...

I think what Chantal is doing is interesting; you really go across the platforms : magazine, gallery and then the scene...

Chantal Webber

It is really important indeed to choose the right platform, the right interface, the right outlet for a particular work, whether it's a book, an exhibition, Instagram photos... The biggest decision at the end is being selective. That is also incredibly exciting.

Raphaëlle Stopin

In that respect, Clare, could you tell us about a collaboration you made in the fashion field?

Chantal Webber

A couple of years ago, I was asked to do a fashion series. I worked with a stylist called Cathy Edwards. It was just one day in a studio and post production was a huge part of the project. What I did was inspired by surrealist images and the famous Black Dahlia murder case. A lot of my work is about chance and serendipity and with what's going on at a particular time. So at the time, I was reading a book called Exquisite Corpse about Surrealist imagery and the murder of Elizabeth Short in Los Angeles. So if a fashion magazine, an agent, a student, asks me to do something, I am going to do it, I take it as a possibility, an opportunity to give it a shot and do something personal. I have a very free way of feeling with my work but sometimes you have to straighten people.





This project was made and it went into the magazine and the originals, that were messy and not perfect at all – everything is very cut, it's falling off from the back of the page –, were even exhibited. So it jumped through a few platforms, mediums and show, and I was very pleased about it.



Chris Littlewood

Clare, if you work across these kinds of media and outlets, do you ever think about people being able to identify exactly your work? Or do you try to avoid that?

Clare Strand

It's been in my intention to avoid it, yes. Because, as I said earlier, I am very much keen to challenge my own tastes – I don't want to feel comfortable with the things that I do. I want to constantly challenge myself, to a point that, if I go to a gallery to see my work, I don't want to know it's mine. I'm happy to run away from it as soon as possible. Again, if I look at what I do objectively and I don't immediately see it as mine, that's success for me. It's completely an uncommercial way of working! But in the end the principle that guides my work is always the same; it's just the aesthetic that's different.

Raphaëlle Stopin

Let's talk about the book form now, a form that has been challenged over the last years. The best person to speak about is Lesley Martin, who's been doing a great job at the Aperture Foundation.

Lesley Martin

At Aperture, I am taking care of creative strategies and thinking really about books. Aperture Magazine has a very long history of putting photography on the printing page. It was founded in 1952 by a group of photographers, including Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, historians and

curators like Beaumont and Nancy Newhall. The founders wanted to create a forum to talk about photography as an art form. That dialogue continues today, and I think it is very important to talk about book making, curating exhibitions and holding events in today's world including commission works. What is also important is to connect the history of photography to contemporary practices.



For our 60th anniversary, I asked 10 artists to choose one book Aperture had done and to create a new work from it. Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs did a camera made of books, the Book Cam, that is also functional: The metaphor is pretty obvious; you always see through the lens of the past, the ideas of the past.

Another participant was Vivian Sassen who chose a 1977 book by Edward Weston called Nudes. I was very surprised as Sassen is a very contemporary artist pushing the forms forward; she had the same references as Edward Weston speaking of his sculptural approach to the body. To look at the two works, side by side, in her intervention directly into the book form and in the print, is the sort of connecting the dots I think is the mission for what we do.



Over the last 10 years, there's been a tremendous change in the appreciation of the book as a part of the photographic practice. There are multivolume and original histories of the photo book, there are exhibitions that reflect the relationship between the reproduction and the object, etc. The great thing about these original histories is that you are contributing information about photographers you will never know otherwise.

A curator and photography aficionado, Markus Shaden, took one book, Love on the Left Bank by Ed van der Elsken, and diagrammed it on the wall, image by image, to show what the history of it was, what were the influences... Even the book in process has been unpacked, to show how it comes into being and how it is received.

And concurrent to all of this, there's been a tremendous growth in festivals and fairs that celebrate the book form. Spaces have become places where you truly can interact with self-published book makers, independent book makers. It has become easier and easier to make books oneself. These fairs have become sites of micro-distribution where books can be bought and information can be traded, along with the growing collector base for historical books like Robert Franck's "the Americans".

A book that was self-published by a young Spanish artist, done in 50 copies only, was sold out immediately after she won a prize. You can see it now on a couple of web sites, for 2000 dollars or 1500 dollars depending where you buy it.

It's a particular kind of fetishization of the art book, which is the far end of the spectrum of appreciation but it also means that there is an understood value for what the book can do and that people actually are willing to invest in production and spend money to buy them. For the publishers, it is important; it means that, as Quentin Bajac of the MoMA, said, the book form is now basic to photography, it is no longer only what you see on the walls in a gallery space.

All of these activities have led to different ways of exploring what a book can be. There is **Michael Nichols** ? American photographer who makes these gigantic books, even bigger than Helmut Newton's Sumo book, that are pieces of sculpture. Last year, we put out a book that is a collection of reprinted books by the conceptual artist Mike Mandel, including letters about how the books were made, contact sheets, bubble gum baseball cards...

You can ask if this is even a book, it's made of nine sheets of paper that have been clipped together and wrapped into a tube. This is a magazine bound together with a rubber band which means you can take it apart and use it at your own personal exhibition...

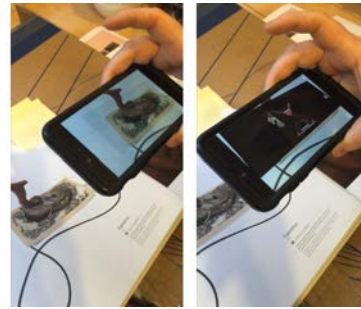
Books themselves are also functioning as exhibitions, this one showing print covers in the frame for instance. Artists have started exploring the materiality of the book form, as the Japanese duo called Nerhol did with a series of portraits carved into a book form and the portraits get a little bit deformed. They also photograph that sculpture object and they have made a book of those prints. They also present their work in this format, which is a limited edition object, part book, part sculpture, part photography.

This is Peter Puklus who showed at Hyères in 2013. I love the idea – if you buy a single book you have some of the images or pieces of images that you can go through, but if you buy multiple copies, you can install a whole book as an exhibition on a wall fitting it together as a puzzle.

In 2011, Daido Moriyama, who loves to give away the process of editing to other people, presented a photo book as performance where you could pick your own favorite 20 pictures and had to think of the interactions of each piece of the image with the other pieces. Daido self-screened the cover and in the end you had a book that was created right there on site.

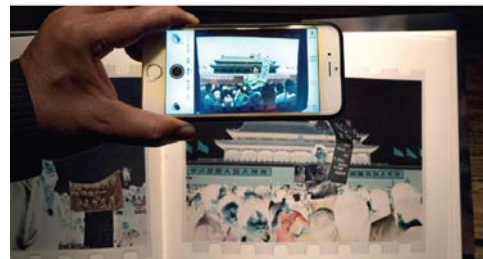


Those activities around the book as a material object, as something you engage with, interact with, are not an “either or” situation with digital forms. There is this hybridity people like Jason Larkin, who is in this year's festival competition, seem to be exploring — that, I think, is very interesting when it offers a whole set of new platforms.



We recently published a book by Richard Misrach for which he collaborated with a Mexican composer, Guillermo Galindo, who makes instruments out of objects he found along the wall between Mexico and the US borders. Richard photographed these objects and the wall, Guillermo created instruments and then played them. With augmented reality, if you download an app, you focus on the image and you trigger the sounds of the instruments or the videos to be played.

Over all these things people are playing with now, I found very exciting this series of photographs from Tian'anmen Square, which is still illegal to distribute from China. They are printed and presented in the universe on the negative. But if you turn on your smartphone on the accessibility mode and you train it on the image, it reverses it and makes it positive so you can really look at the image. It's a way of pretending to fly undercover - the book still can't be sold in China even in the negative - and also to reference technology and the revolution.



All that creativity and experimentation led us to collaborate with the Paris Photo for the Photobook Awards. Artists are encouraged to submit a book that would be exhibited. We do as well a biannual photo book review - it's a news print journal - that talks about all these issues. What we discussed points to the fact that people are really using the book as their own independent art space: As an artist, you can use the book form to do all what you want. Of course, I do books with photographers that are well-established. But what is exciting right now, in a way, is that you don't need Aperture, you can do these things by yourself and there is enough space for us all to coexist at the same time.

Raphaëlle Stopin

Could you please say a word about the project you did with Bruno Ceschel, from Self Publish Be Happy ?

THE PHOTOBOOK REVIEW



It makes sense that people turn to this kind of very self-directed practice to create a space for their work on their own terms. That's exactly what I'm interested in when we think about contemporary artist publishing or self-publishing: the book as a self-run artist's space.

Lesley Martin

Bruno has become his own evangelist for the self-published photo book. He, in a sense, created a library and an online site where he reviews self-published books. So if you do a photo book yourself and you don't have distribution, a publicity team, Bruno would talk about it, show pictures, which could lead the book to be out there and to be sold. We made a book called *Self Publish, Be Happy: A DIY Photobook Manual and Manifesto*, with a sort of collection of his choices, with different categories of self-publishing and a little bit of how to do as well. Of course, everybody asked him why he was working with Aperture, "You are betraying self-publish manifesto!". To a certain point, Aperture can print ten thousand copies of a book and get it at a very low price, whereas Bruno can make very beautiful limited edition books and offer other services.

Clare Strand

Lesley, how do you choose the photographer you publish? What is the process and what is the financial situation to it?

Lesley Martin

We also publish younger artists and first books. There is a lot of pressure for every book that we publish anyway. We don't accept a check written by an artist, we still have to do the fundraising. We might ask an artist to connect us to their collectors. We will apply for grants or ask our own patrons. This means that even for a first artist, that person has to have some audience. There are so many options now, but sometimes a great first book might not be well-served when being published by us because there is a whole campaign to manage. If there is somebody who is on the cusp of just breaking out into a higher level, that's where we can step in and get things done. We also publish more mass market books, for younger audiences for instance, that don't require funding. Our criteria will change according to who we think the audience is, what type of book... But we are always looking for really high quality and that means someone who is pushing the narrative of photography along. We don't want to repeat ourselves, hence we hope to find people who will be contributing to the photographic field to come.

Raphaëlle Stopin

Susan, you may have something to say as you are very much involved in books...

Susan Bright

I published with Aperture. Like Clare was saying, my projects have to be with the right publisher. Sometimes my work will be an exhibition, sometimes a book or a series of talks... I'd like to mention a project that at some point never came about. The idea was for the audience of

an exhibition to actually make the book. I wanted them to come and have online all the photographs that were on the exhibition and commission maybe 20 essays: and have all of them online. And then, out of this, people could make their own books. People I talked to kept telling me it was a bad idea...So Lesley, is there really a way exhibitions could publish books, or something from the exhibitions?

Lesley Martin

You could consider what Daido Moriyama did was exactly that. You have to accept that the book would not be for a broad audience, but it could make a great limited edition maybe. Something that people who were there, at the exhibition, might want to take away. Is that the type of thing you were thinking about?

Susan Bright

Something you could do at home: You read the essays, you select some of them and print it out with the pictures...

Lesley Martin

We are working on this part of digital writing. But I think it would depend on who the right holders are, who is giving the rights to make copies...

I am not sure I have the answer at that.

Susan Bright

It really was a bad idea...

Raphaëlle Stopin

Does anyone have a question in the audience?

From the audience

My experience with the internet as a photographer is a bit scary. I lose pictures, I find my images in all kind of places, print on a wall of a gallery. Everyone can see my photographs on my website. It seems like a dead end. I wonder what is the future of photography?

Clare Strand

It does not bother me if people are sharing my work. Sometimes I even like seeing it popping up here and there. I don't have that preciousness over my imagery. I know some people do, which I can understand. So I'm not scared of the Internet, it widens so much my practice...Also, you could print out of my photograph and put it on your wall and that would be fine, except it's not signed. It would not come with a certificate. Sometimes the certificate is more important than the actual image. That's the way of getting around the problem you were referring to.

From the audience

I took a picture of a 17 years old girl with a saw. One year later, a supermarket chain published it, I knew nothing about it. I am happy to see people using my images on blogs and so on, but there is some serious misuse I hate.

Chantal Webber

Nobody has the right to use your pictures without you giving them permission. Otherwise, and if you have them copyrighted, you can get compensation. Overall, the sharing of images also created many interesting conversations. This said, it is essential to be careful of the imagery you are putting out on the Internet.

Clare Strand

Copyright has always been exploited before the Internet. People always took other people's pictures to use them badly. So copyright issues are not necessarily Internet issues.

Lesley Martin

It is important to say that, with the Internet, there is an increasing criticality around the use of the image and the power of the image. Why are you taking them? What happens with them? Who uses them? We have to think about all this now, because everybody takes images and everybody uses them. If you don't see them as a form of literacy, that is going to change...

Susan Bright

I did a book on self-portrait I really wanted it to be international; I really wanted to know what was going on in Bahrain: I could never have done that without the Internet... It is now absolutely crucial to my practice. There are things you cannot see physically, works we want to curate and that we can only see online. It really became the biggest tool to our practice.

Clare Strand

Nowadays, the gallery is a particular space for a particular type of works. I can look at two dimensional work on the screen and get a good idea, but I can't fully appreciate the more experiential three dimensional things. When I go to a gallery, I am after an experience now.

Chris Littlewood

An unprecedented number of pictures is being taken daily, no doubt. But I am with Clare on the evolution of the gallery: Artists can behave in a way of taking the role of curator, creating this practices which involves studio construction with appropriation of images coming from the Internet mixed with other materials, it is interesting, it is dynamic, it pushes things forward. As far as the gallery experience goes, the more of that, the better really.

Susan Bright

If I curate an exhibition on self-portraiture, I'd know that people are very literate now, much more so than before the idea of the selfie appeared. They know how to look at self-portraits, but they also make them and understand their bodies better. So I have to raise my game as a curator! And I have to think about space in a different way and about experience in a different way. That's really exciting for me and for photographers as well to respond to that. I don't think there is any fear. The world is changing fast and we have to keep up with it to stay relevant. And that's always exciting.

Chris Littlewood

I always get a little concern with curation of works whose material is pulled from the Internet. We need to calm down and think about what will happen overtime to these timeless projects which are coming out of this.

Raphaëlle Stopin

Thank you everyone.