

# Notes: Exercise 1-3: What makes a document? Time and context

<https://weareoca.com/photography/what-makes-a-document/>

Key:

[My comments](#)

[Author/person of interest](#)

[Book/artwork etc.](#)

[Of interest](#)

In 2008 Jose Navarro took a picture in Bristol of [Muammar Gaddafi](#)'s hot air balloon, it showed a statesman like photograph of Gaddafi with the outline of Africa behind him, the Libyan flag can also be seen. Navarro had completely forgotten about the image until he came across it while doing a random search through Lightroom. The blog post was written at the point it was clear Gaddafi's rule of Libya was over but before his execution on 20th October 2011. These events led Navarro to look at the image differently - now he saw a document, one, which although he concedes is open to interpretation, he sees as evidence of Gaddafi's pan African ambitions, now dramatically ended:

*"The huge portrait of the ill-fated leader looking up – to God? – or down on you, depending on how you want to see it... the map of Africa...the text above it reading "Africa Union Man"... Within the new context of a post-Gaddafi era the photograph of a simple hot air balloon acquires a new dimension, a different meaning."*

That meaning is context, something Navarro sees as a necessary attribute of documentary photography

A recent review posted by Navarro for [Maria Short](#)'s book ['Context and Narrative'](#) is referenced:

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## Notes on Context and Narrative WeAreOCA blog post:

<https://weareoca.com/photography/context-and-narrative/>

Recommended as a learning resource all OCA students should have on their shelves because of:

**layout and design** - consistent visual style where different design solutions are artfully combined. Demonstrated how to combine images in a visually engaging, reader friendly way.

**Concise** style - an example of how to write analytically.

**Subject matter** - regardless of technology used regards photographs as more than just records or evidence.

^Short comments on the value of photographs as documents regardless of whether they are 'real' or constructed.

^acknowledges current contemporary practice.

^e.g. **Charley Murrell**: **Constructed Childhoods**

[http://charleymurrell.wix.com/charley-murrell-photography#!\\_personal-projects/--constructed-childhoods](http://charleymurrell.wix.com/charley-murrell-photography#!_personal-projects/--constructed-childhoods)

^an original take on the 'real or fake' theme redolent with social commentary, brilliantly conceptualised and executed. Shows Photoshop can be used legitimately in the field of social documentary.

### 'Audience and intention' and 'narrative'

^Short identifies 'gut instinct' as the key skill every photographer needs to develop.

^how to translate ideas into images represents the main hurdle between **intention** and **realisation** of the work as a device of communication.

^recognises photography is a **dialectical process**

^incorporates significant input from the viewer

^is inherently ambiguous

^e.g. **The Bedrooms**: **Emma O'Brien**

<http://eobphoto.wix.com/eob#!projects>

^explores notion of narrative

^emphasises narrative in images does not work like narrative in text

^do not need to be linear or a fixed sequence

^can be multidirectional and embedded in a single image

^e.g. **Devil's Garden**: **Eleanor Kelly**

[http://www.eleanorkelly.eu/gallery\\_338732.html](http://www.eleanorkelly.eu/gallery_338732.html)

^a strong, fluid narrative working in a multitude of directions

Use of **symbols** and **text** in photography

^argues visual metaphors tend to be present in narrative rich portfolios

^how symbols are read depends on the photographer/viewer sociocultural context they belong to

Images featured are by emerging photographers which has the potential to inspire

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Is it really **context** or **time** that makes a document?

^the Gaddafi photograph is not the same in 2011 as it was in 2008 because of the context added by time.

How does a longer length of time affect an image?

- ^example of 70 year old picture of grandfather (Gumer) and a priest
  - ^original reading - snapshot for the family album
  - ^70 years later there is added context
    - ^empty wall in the midday sun acts as a metaphor for sterile post civil war Spain
    - ^2 symbols of power
      - ^clergy
      - ^Army
    - ^what is seen is not content but representation: time has made the photograph a document
    - ^back in the family album the photograph becomes a family photograph again

Is it time or context that makes a document? Is it something else?

Comments:

### 1. RobTM

Any photograph is inherently a document. It can be something else as well but it will always be a document.

The word document is open to interpretation much as any genre in photography.

Taking away subtext (e.g. with Jose's' picture of Gumer, taking away the Spanish civil war) could mean a loss of wider significance, but it remains a family document with demonstrable features (was a military man, knew someone in the clergy, stood in front of a wall on a sunny day.)

Reading of photographs depends on knowledge and perspectives.

- ^even art photography e.g. **Gursky** is a document as well as art. (notions of value and the art market at that particular time for example)

Example of Japanese daguerreotype

- ^was once only a photograph in someone's attic but is now a national treasure
- ^time has influences the importance but it is still a document of someone/something.

### 2. AMANO

Sees representation of officer and the priest as a link to how today resources are still put into war while the morality of the church still dominates.

### 3. Stan Dickinson

Time and context are not mutually exclusive.

Time changes context/different contexts result in different readings.

Our individual readings bring with them the complexities of our experiences, emotions and prejudices.

- ^e.g. **Barthes** photograph of his mother (the winter garden photograph - **Camera Lucida**) had the punctum for him but he know it would not be shared by others.

Although an artist/photographer may hold the secret to an image, once it is out in the world it is no longer theirs.

#### 4. Jose

[In response to Stan]

No matter how hard we try there is no guarantee that what we want to say with our pictures will be heard.

^no control of cultural context and cultural baggage of the viewer.

^our photographs will be ambiguous - **ambiguity characterises postmodernity**

If this is the case we should give up photography

^there must be some universal values we can rely on to effectively communicate through photography?

^do we take photographs with a specific audience in mind - even subconsciously?

#### 5. Stan Dickinson

[in response to Jose]

We make pictures with a purpose

^in the face of uncertainty about how our images will be read we must work even harder on our message.

Agree - we take photographs with an audience in mind.

We will bring our individual values to the work we produce

^we may believe some values should be universal.

^this feels like a giant leap in the modern world however.

#### 6. AMANO

[in response to Stan and Jose]

**Garry Winogrand**: "I photograph to find out what something will look like photographed."

It can be distracting trying to explain/thinking of the audience.

Human motivation is not easy to understand.

#### 7. AMANO

**Photography: a very brief introduction** by **Steve Edwards**

^states the photograph can never be really separated from being both a document and work of art.

^many images however lead to one side or the other.

#### 8. anned

The story supplied is what makes Jose's photograph a document.

^allows us to see a family photo as an aspect of Spanish history.

^without information would be less reliable as a document.

If we look at a photograph as a document do we not need context in order to place it into reality.

^Otherwise we only have assumptions and becomes an image rather than a document.

## 9. AMANO

A photograph needs to show something that once existed to be a document.

## 10. RobTM

Without **provenance** that might state an image is a reliable historical document, it cannot be used for certain purposes.

Despite the fact we only have Jose's' word that the story is true there is authenticity.

**Barthes**: stated the written word was far more expressive than any image.

^a picture can paint 1000 words but they will be different for each viewer.

^it can be vague.

Without context the image is still a document

^specialist information may be needed to read it effectively but that doesn't make it less of a document - you just need the knowledge to be able to read it, does not having this make it any less of a document?

## 11. anned

[in response to RobTM]

To be devils advocate - without the backstory the photograph is merely 2 men stood next to a wall.

^would a footprint be a document?

If intent was to produce an image, rather than a document, how could it be read as such?

Advertisements: as a form of constructed reality and without context of their intent, they could be read as documents of real life - would be misleading.

## 12. Jose

Image gains **authenticity** because of the story.

Reminded by RobTM's comment (10) of a photograph eventually disqualified from 2009 wildlife photographer of the year competition

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8470962.stm>

Interesting aspect of this case is that scandal does not come from digital fakery but a key bit of information that was disclosed and changed the response.

^even though the picture is of a wolf, it is the knowledge it was trained that changes perception - the quality 'wild' disappears.

**13. AMANO**

[in response to Jose]

Agree that the interesting point is that the photograph of the wolf was portrayed as wild when it was actually controlled.

**14. RobTM**

[in response to Jose]

Is it not knowledge that informs the reading of the image? The context changes but not the fact it is a document - a record of a split second at a particular moment and location.

Advertising images are different documents but documents none the less - they record fashion, products etc. of a particular time.

**15. Peter Haveland**

Recommendation - [Stephen Poikoff's Shooting the past](#)  
^for those who like there theory via fiction and drama.  
Episode 1

**16. AMANO**

The photograph is a document yet it becomes documentary when it contains details that point to something more than what is being represented.

At first - saw rulers of society (politicians, priests) with Jose's info saw the human element - figures.

**17. Gareth**

Struck by Peter's earlier post and Jose's comment that returning the photo to the family album it becomes again a photo.

Peter's comment - (quoting Giddens) an individuals biography cannot be wholly fictive. Events that occur in the external world must be sorted into the ongoing story of the 'self.'

Families tell themselves stories and use photo albums to reaffirm them (e.g. Gumer becomes 'good man Gumer')

^family photo albums are documents that support story telling.

^Jose's photo is inevitably a document - shows relationship between church and state in Spain at the time, Gumer's life and position in the family.

**18. Jose**

[in response to Gareth]

Would argue labels/stories change over time, acquire mythical connotations (e.g. family photos passed through the generations.)

^mythical status of grandfathers photo as someone who survived the Spanish civil war in a spectacular way not unlike way oral history transmits knowledge - which changes subtly as it is heard by subsequent generations.

**19. Gareth**

Some photos become documents as soon as they are taken. Example



<http://gawker.com/5836127/stabbing-fleeing-heroism-incompetence-drama-captured-in-one-shot>

Editorial and comments however show how people bring their own meanings.

**20. AMANO**

Amazing photograph!

**21. Tom Smith**

No time for anything with that man's picture on it, cannot believe anyone is praising.

Not sure if referring to writer of article or photographer. AMANO seems to think referring to Gaddafi picture.

**22. AMANO**



[in response to Tom Smith]

Follow link to see picture

**23. Brian**

Photo is an example of images would like to be able to take in the future.

**24. Peter Haveland**

Recommendation to look at chapter by **John Berger**:

Link does not work but indicates article is 'the ambiguity of the photograph' p 87-102

Berger, J. and Mohr, J. (1982). **Another way of telling**. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

**25. anned**

**Berger** articulates that the photographs has been taken out of continuity, and resulting **discontinuity**, produces ambiguity - not obvious to us because the introduction of words produce the effect of certainty. Ambiguity allows us to find meaning in the photograph - facts are not the same as meaning. **Meaning is constructed and dependent on cultural constructions and individual understanding** - ambiguity allows a subjective response and this is what creates meaning.

Agrees, and explanation fits with personal view of looking at photographs, however, where does this lead idea of photo as document? Is ambiguity a good thing? Potentially depends on purpose and context intended to be seen in.

Gareth's example - what conclusions can be drawn without words that go with it?

**26. Folio**

'facts may not be true' is a contradiction - if it is not true it is not a fact. Appearances can be deceptive, but, appearances and facts have different meanings.

Offers dictionary definitions of fact.

Agree - other interpretations of photos are possible.

**27. Anned**

Oversimplified point paraphrasing Berger. Meant facts as meaning the trace of recorded reality, something we knew once existed, but, may not be the whole truth or a misrepresentation.

**28. Peter Haveland**

[replying to Mary/Folio]

Not a small point at all. Post modernism may argue truth and therefore facts do not exist. **Terry Eagleton** (**After Theory**) discusses errors in this



extreme point of view - but - it is the case that facts of the moment become errors of the past. (e.g. Newton, Boyle, Einstein)  
Heisenberg and Schrodinger suggest observations are unreliable.  
Anne's definition of terms and meanings is clear.

**29. Folio**

[replying to Peter Haveland]

Comment was limited to definition of fact.  
If a fact turns out to be untrue then it wasn't a fact, without facts we would still be in the dark ages. There are exceptions but the weight of evidence favours the rational, scientific world view.

**30. CliveW**

[response to Folio]

Last point is a paradigm useful in some contexts and not others.  
Allows us to speculate scientifically but inarticulate when addressing the human condition holistically.

**31. Anned**

[response to Folio]

Only apologising for inadequate English and punctuation rather than agreeing it is a contradiction in terms.

**32. Folio**

[replying to CliveW]

Have to disagree - science is in every aspect of our lives. Chris Jordan's work not always good. Limiting sciences contribution seems an extreme view.

**33. CliveW**

[response to Folio]

The standard model might have aspirations to explain every particle of physical make up but it gives no psychological, spiritual or ethical succour.

**34. Peter Haveland**

Tend to agree with the facts may not be true, but, likely this is nearly always the case. A good scientists refers to theories and not facts.  
Words are as polysemic as images (Barthes) and context alters meaning (post structuralism.)  
Admits to being as pedantic as the next person, but, dogmatism tends to fundamentalism.

### 35. AMANO

Berger chapter is interesting - states, the photograph has the status of fact and yet is not the whole truth and nothing but the truth. There is both a rational and aesthetic way of viewing the world - intellect and intuition are both required.

### 36. John

Gaddafi died 3 years after photo taken and 1 year after post was created. (not true - only 2 months) to some extent forgotten. This does not change personal contextual understanding of the photo. What would comparison between balloon photo and picture of Gaddafi's corpse be? Time can change perspective as well as fact/truth. Gumer picture is that it is a documented fact of the military aligning itself with the church and that the state conspired to govern and control. Connotation is that this is integral to European malaise that has blighted the continent for decades. The picture documents the facts and Jose has provide provenance which allows a mediated response. We do not know the truth behind the meeting and not accepting Jose's view could mean applying our own prejudices. "There are known truths; there are also unknown truths..."

### 37. Jim D N Smith

Exercise

Further questions to add:

Is it the content of the image that makes it a document?

^content is important for information, personal significance, emotional response, cultural significance.

Is it the perspective and interest of the viewer the personal significance?

^Jose's' analysis comes from the position of someone used to professionally analysing photographs/having a cultural knowledge of the Spanish civil war.

^personal significance means some photos will be documents for some people and not for others.

Is it the cultural significance accorder by society at large to the event depicted?

^many events have assumed shared cultural significance, this can help identify them as documentary images.

Is it the way the photo was framed or constructed?

^documentary may be more concerned with capturing than moment than aesthetics (unlike art photography) although some manage both. E.g. Don McCullin.

Is the photograph authentic? Does it matter?

^e.g. Fenton's Valley of the shadow of death - it is certainly real but may not be a direct representation of reality.

^authenticity is ethically important to documentary photographs but open to interpretation rather than a necessary part of the document.

### 38. Curriehannah

## Exercise

Believes photographs become documents over time and needs context before it can be labelled.

Agrees with anned's comment: to produce a document would need to provide more than the image - place, date, text or a series needed to function as something specific in the here and now.

An image is not a document merely by being a photograph e.g. Gumer photo did not become a document until given context by Jose.

A photograph cannot become a document without context.

### **39. Sarah G**

#### Exercise

To be a document, a photo requires another element of seeing or reading in the image. The balloon image throws up more questions than answers due to lack of context.

Subjectivity of the individual leads to individual interpretations, even when context is available. It can change for the individual over time also.

Taking the image out of the family album makes it a document, putting it back reverts it to a family snapshot.

### **40. Asta Tamule**

A document is the fact of something happened. Without context it is not a document. The image of Gumer does not give us facts the story does.

### **41. Pdog19**

#### Exercise

To be a document a photo needs to be of a real event, however, a fictional novel is unquestionably also a document.

With time, a number of elements need to come into place to be a document:

- ^photograph taken in first place

- ^events conspire to enable photo to become a document

- ^photo is found, someone knows story thus creating provenance and a document of interest

- ^'owner' is perceptive enough to understand it is a document

- ^document can find a receptive audience.

  - E.g. **'Bill Wood's business'** (photography book)

    - ^archive of 30 years documenting local residents of Fort Worth, Texas - individually quite ordinary, together provide fascinating insight.

Anne's question of can one photo be a document is valid. Leads to notion that if a photo needs words it isn't good enough.

- ^both images proffered by Jose require words to engage the audience.

^what is difference between photojournalism, reportage, documentary in relation to the question?

Jim -culture means documents of more interest to certain sections of population.

^can extend to age, disability, ethnicity etc.

Any photo is a document

Article on difference between photojournalism and documentary photography by Anton Kratochvil:

<http://niemanreports.org/articles/photojournalism-and-documentary-photography/>

## 42. Nigel Monckton

Exercise

Definition of document from Suzanne Briet in 'What is documentation' (one of founding texts of information science)

<http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/~roday/briet.htm>

^"...any concrete or symbolic indexical sign, preserved or recorded toward the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a physical or intellectual phenomenon."

^on this basis both balloon and image of the balloon are documents, the photo a secondary document.

Shelley in Ozymandias suggests the statue of him was a document but is now a document to human frailty.

Anne implies difficulty with photos is they are incomplete documents

^Berger in 'Another way of telling' argues photos cannot tell the whole story - they quote from appearances. What we gain from them depends on size of quote and context.

^both time and context contribute to the making of a document.

Second picture of Gumer is a short quote without Jose's' story with little evidence of location or period.

## 43. Andreas F

Exercise

Do we need to decide photography into genres?

Every picture is a document, even if just a picture to you or me, can be a document for someone else.

Are the preconditions of time, context and authenticity necessary to define a document?

^e.g. Don McCullin: shell shocked soldier

^not much information provided except what is in the photo - does that make it less of a document?

Authenticity - Walton and Berger say photography just shows things that exists or existed.

American civil war photos still documents although now not ok to manipulate.

Robert Capa: Falling soldier picture - staged or not? Document or not? Not sure...

Are there any photos without ambiguity?

Would the photographer of Gumer's picture have made the same connections that Jose does? E.g. white wall - just a nice background? Problem of cultural differences - e.g. white in the west is purity, symbol of death in Asia.

**44. mattjamesphotos**

Exercise

Context, content, time and audience make a document.  
Not understanding an image does not make it less of a document.  
E.g. selfie of a teenager going out on a Saturday night -  
^a document straight away - little interest to anyone but circle of friends  
^with time becomes more of a document - reminder of how she looked, what she was wearing, stirs memories.  
Time makes a document more valuable, may need more of a narrative however to understand what looking at.  
Any photo is a document - otherwise, why take it? Who is anybody to say a photo is not a document?

**45. Richard Down**

Exercise

Even without context a photo is a document because it has a recorded thing, event or place that exists or has existed.  
The subsequent 6 years following the air balloon picture have enriched the context from an unexpected sight to one whose meaning has been expanded by history.

**46. Peter Haveland**

Working link to chapter referred to earlier: Berger and Mohr's 'Another way of telling':

[http://timothyquigley.net/vcs/berger-appearances\\_illus.pdf](http://timothyquigley.net/vcs/berger-appearances_illus.pdf)

**47. Richard Down**

Thanks!

**48. Jsumb**

**Susie Linfield** - author of **Cruel Radiance** talking about documentary:  
<http://www.vogue.it/en/photography/interviews/2014/06/19/susie-linfield/>

**49. Richard Down**

Thanks!

**50. Kerileeb**

Photo does not need context to be a document, definition is that it records something.

**51. Judy Bach**

A document provides proof of something that happened, does a photo have to be understood to be considered a document?  
Context changes over time - family history becomes like Chinese whispers.

**52. Philoca**

A photograph can contribute to documenting an event but cannot in isolation be considered a document in itself.  
A document should provide an authoritative reference of information. Authority being derived from what is accepted as formal channels and processes for its production e.g. id card.  
The documentary value of a photo can provide what is happening/has happened in a more powerful way than a formal document.  
The analogue origins of photography mean we have come to trust the ability of the camera to record an event and accept this to be true and accurate.  
Sontag (1977: 23) states we never understand anything from a photo, a contentious view which emphasises the need for context to correctly interpret and why.  
Time can allow information to be added in relation to contexts for the image. This can infer greater authority but also a risk that an understanding from different objective sources may not be apparent.

**53. Vesak**

Exercise

All (plain) photos are documents, context defines their importance, a family photo album documents something about the past.  
Time can may a photo a more important document.  
Photos can straddle genres, e.g. Rhein II by Gursky is both an art photo and a documentation of landscape.  
The 'Rashomon effect' is a good analogy as to how different viewers see photos.  
Language is evolving and likewise the word document, it has different meanings in different cultural and time contexts.

**54. Urszula jakubowicz**

Every photo is a document, its importance changes over time.  
All photos are of something/one that existed at some point in time, they document presence.  
Time can enrich the context of a photo but does not define the document e.g. Nicholas Nixon's 'forty portraits in forty years' - 2014 and 1975

pictures are both documents but the 1st photo consists of more documentary value.

[https://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2014/12/05/nicholas-nixon-40-years-of-the-brown-sisters/](https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/12/05/nicholas-nixon-40-years-of-the-brown-sisters/)

**55. Annag1611**

Partly agrees that every photo is a document, but, attracted to Kratochvil and Persson's view that "a galaxy of dissimilarity separates subject from viewer..." galaxy incorporates dimensions of time, space, physical distance which are relevant to viewer interaction - this ignores the emotional connection between viewer and the viewed however.

**56. Gjcimages**

Initially had trouble deciding if photos were documents, struggled to understand some comments.  
It is what is captured and when that makes the difference between an image and a document.

**57. Selinawallace**

Any document is inherently a document, however, contents/meaning of an image are not always easily identifiable.  
Some photos have a duality - can document and also be art.  
If the photographer wishes to pin down meaning they need to use an anchor such as text, however, ambiguity encourages a subjective reading which in turn creates meaning.

**58. Jane**

Every photograph fixes a moment in time (Clarke: 24)  
Every photo is inherently a document or every photograph has the potential to be a document.  
A photo's documentary value may increase over time, a photo can document memories.  
Clarke states a document means evidence - not to be questioned, a faithful account.  
Bill Jay in 'On being a photographer' says the only factually correct aspect of photography is that it shows what something looked like under particular circumstances - but that is not truth.

**59. Ed Lerpiniere**

Exercise

Every photo made and kept is by definition a document and record.  
Example of Vivien Maier - photos 'discovered' 50 years after being taken and although they prove she was a good photographer are more interesting as documents of how things we can no longer see looked.



When do documents stop being contemporary and become historical?  
Historical attachment can make a mundane image become useful/important document.

Photos can also lose significance over time e.g. family portraits of people not known may show family history but their usefulness is questionable.

**60. Sarah D**

All photos are inherently documents but some are more complete than others - they rely on how much information is available and whether extra is available.

**61. Hannahfountainoca**

There is a danger of over interpreting an image - e.g. Gumer picture, there is nothing that suggests the Spanish civil war in the picture.

**62. John Walker**

Disagrees that time makes an image more or less of a document - it retains its original gravity.

The power of an image is dependant on the subject and how empathetic to the message the viewer is.

**63. Rob Townsend**

It is the combination of photograph and words that make a document, in isolation the photograph is incomplete.

**64. Nico Englebrecht**

Everyone who has a camera makes documents of events in the past. Words are increasingly important in the age of social media - e.g. hash tags.

**65. Clive W**

[reply to Nico Englebrecht]

The makers version of reading an image is just one of many and not privileged.

**66. Nico Englebrecht**

[reply to Clive W]

Agree, however the sheer volume of images shared on social media mean our filtering systems can be chipped away by the sheer volume of data.

**67. Sm1ot1c**

Who looks at the umpteen billion images posted daily?

**68. Nico Englebrecht**

[reply to Sm1ot1c]

People are starting to treat images as disposable due to the sheer overload. We now consume many more images than we did in the past, for shorter times - do we form an opinion or swipe past?

**69. Anne Bryson**

A photo will always be a document because it records something that existed at the time it was taken, it also needs to be authentic.

**70. Malc**

The story provided by Jose to accompany his image adds more information, however the photo contained a lot to begin with.

**71. ChrisC**

Even though an image may not change, hindsight can change an images meaning.

**72. Leonie Broekstra**

When is a documentary? Documentary as a mode of reception by Dirk Eitzen

[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/documentary\\_tradition/Eitzen.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/documentary_tradition/Eitzen.pdf)

Article questions what is a documentary and concludes that the question should be when is a documentary.

Documentary photography is essential in informing others about life elsewhere in order to sustain and build empathy and understanding.

**73. Miriam Comber**

A photo is a document in the sense it records something, however, it can be faked, what is recorded is open to interpretation and meaning can be change over time.

A photo is a type of document because it records facts but to be regarded as evidence further endorsements are required.

Despite the potential for ambiguity, photographs are records e.g. Cover of 'The Cruel Radiance' (Linfield, 2010) shows a photo of a girl executed by the Khmer Rouge - we have no other information.

<https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/51aSwpfDZwL.jpg>

Photographs that are not direct records of events can be documents (from BJP Sept 2016 - refugee issue)

e.g. Dario Mitidieri: Empty Chairs (lost family portraits)

<http://www.mitidieri.com/news/Lost-Family-Portraits>

**Patrick Willocq**: Save the Children campaign (**The art of survival**)

<http://patrickwillocq.com/art-survival/art-survival#/0>

What else might be a document? E.g. indigenous Australian art or a memorial quilt?

#### **74. Gerard Hilderly**

Time has an unintentional effect of clouding the context of a photo making it ambiguous.

**Liz Wells** in the foreword of **'The photography reader'** states that everything in the frame of a photograph is significant, especially that which is beyond the photographers control.

The meaning of a photograph can be transformed by changing context - the Gaddafi picture is an example of this.

#### **75. Jan Fairburn**

Exercise

Knowing the full context for a photograph may be necessary to achieve full understanding, but, does not knowing this make it any less of a document?

Any photo is a document - it may (arguably) gain significance and importance over time but that does not make it less historically important.

#### **76. Johnathan Hall**

Exercise

A document is a piece of media from which the viewer can infer an actual event took place, with more context - the more of a document it becomes. Time and context are not mutually exclusive. Over time ambiguity can increase and complications arise due to potential contexts.

Every photo is a document because it is **indexical** to the world around us. Some photos are more of a document than others, could be due to content, how much time has passed, context available.

#### **77. Bryn Davies**

The change in the reading of Gaddafi's balloon leads to consideration of other political documents that have changed in meaning due to time and context:

^e.g. **Alberto Korda**'s iconic image of **Che Guevara**

<http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/photography/images/AlbertoKorda-Guerrillero-Heroico-V1-1960.jpg>

Taken during a memorial service for the Cuban government - Korda could not possibly have anticipated this would become one of the

most iconic images of the 20th C - a symbol for revolution, counter culture, memorabilia and commercial goods.

^ **Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima** by **Jim Rosenthal**

<http://dujye7n3e5wj1.cloudfront.net/photographs/640-tall/time-100-influential-photos-joe-rosenthal-flag-raising-iwo-jima-35.jpg>

An image both celebrated and speculated about whether it was staged or not.

Scientists set about disproving theories by presenting their own. Theories are subject to time and context as well as documents - is there such evidence to prove/disprove authenticity?

## **78. Nathan Adams**

Personal response to Gumer picture is shows peace and conciliation.

Example of recent passing of Fidel Castro used to demonstrate how an images relevance can change over time.

Images of the Titanic were taken to show it's unsinkable magnificence but came to become a record of its astonishing failure.

Pictures of atomic bombs being dropped on Japan had the intention of demonstrating military supremacy but now are a reminder of man's brutal potential.

Images are often recorded without knowing the relevance of the moment - which will perhaps be revealed in the future.

## **79. Veronica M Worrall**

**Barthes** in **Camera Lucida** discusses the linguistic message within photographs as a text. Every photo is a text, a document and has meaning - complex pictures take longer to decipher and may hold deeper messages to an informed viewer which may or may not be originally intended, time can also distort. Barthes states this ageing can also be a punctum.

Although a photo can gain greater significance with background knowledge, it remains as it first was - a document of a moment.

Contemporary photos tend to be more open to interpretation and consequently more ambiguous - ambiguity is the magic of photography and can add depth to its documentary property.

Photographic document can become art but evidence of authenticity is needed to call it a document.

## **80. John Turner**

Context is important but has the ability to mislead as well as inform. E.g. Oli Scarf's image cited earlier - the meaning can be drastically altered by changing the back story.

2008 Taylor Wessing Portrait prize winner - **Lottie Davies'** **Quints**

<https://ae897e68cba0e63e9a9e-1d65bead50177f5d6bfc399936307209.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/quints.jpg>

In authors opinion this is not a portrait as staged using actors and manipulated, yet, Jose Luis Rodriguez's image was not staged and was disqualified from wildlife photographer of the year. We cannot say a documentary photograph is staged or unstaged.

## 81. Dorota Kazmierak

Professor **Tim May** in 'Social research: issues, methods and process' says documents cannot be read in a detached manner. Context is fundamental to understanding the meaning contained within documents.

### Links:

Review of 'Context and Narrative' by Maria Short. (Jose Navarro, WeAreOCA, 20th August 2011)

<https://weareoca.com/photography/context-and-narrative/>

Charley Murrell: Constructed Childhoods

[http://charleymurrell.wix.com/charley-murrell-photography#!\\_personal-projects/--constructed-childhoods](http://charleymurrell.wix.com/charley-murrell-photography#!_personal-projects/--constructed-childhoods)

The Bedrooms: Emma O'Brien

<http://eobphoto.wix.com/eob#!projects>

Devil's Garden: Eleanor Kelly

[http://www.eleanorkelly.eu/gallery\\_338732.htm](http://www.eleanorkelly.eu/gallery_338732.htm)

Wildlife Photographer of the year 2009: disqualified wolf image.

Jumping wolf loses wildlife prize

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8470962.stm>

Nolan, H (2011) Stabbing, fleeing, heroism, incompetence, drama captured in one shot. Gawker

<http://gawker.com/5836127/stabbing-fleeing-heroism-incompetence-drama-captured-in-one-shot>

Article on difference between photojournalism and documentary photography by Anton Kratochvil and Michael Persson:

<http://niemanreports.org/articles/photojournalism-and-documentary-photography/>

Suzanne Briet in 'What is documentation' (one of founding texts of information science) <http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/~roday/briet.htm>

Berger and Mohr's 'Another way of telling': chapter - the ambiguity of the image

[http://timothyquigley.net/vcs/berger-appearances\\_illus.pdf](http://timothyquigley.net/vcs/berger-appearances_illus.pdf)

Susie Linfield - author of Cruel Radiance talking about documentary:

<http://www.vogue.it/en/photography/interviews/2014/06/19/susie-linfield/>

When is a documentary? Documentary as a mode of reception by Dirk Eitzen

[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/documentary\\_tradition/Eitzen.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/documentary_tradition/Eitzen.pdf)