



# Jennie Meadows

19821184

MA Photography PT Y1 2019-21

AGM60 Research & Experimentation

Research Dossier

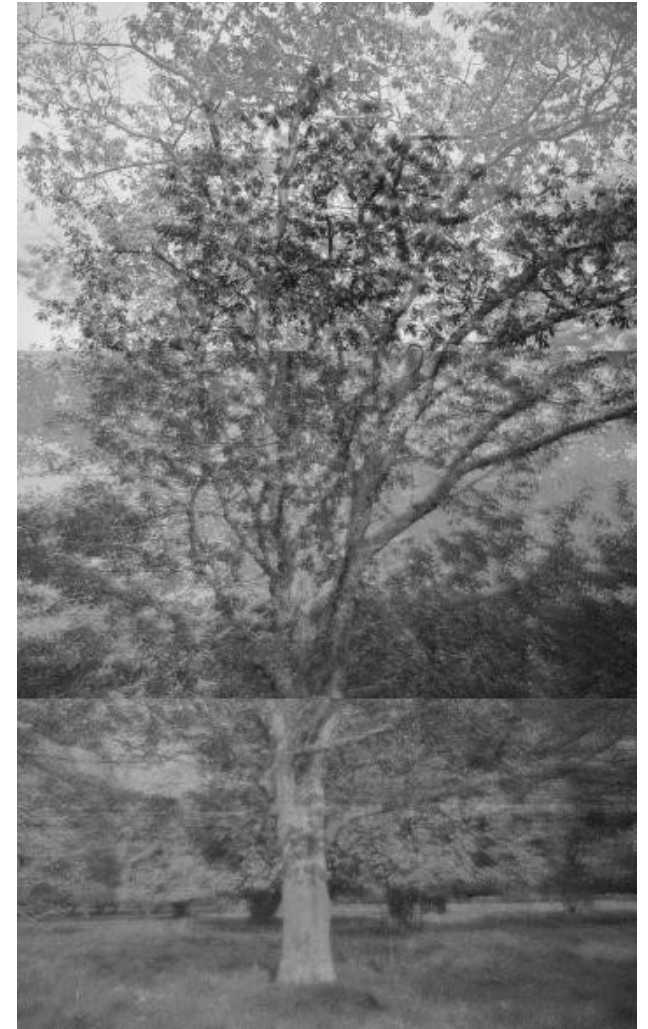
9 June 2020

# Introduction

The following Research Dossier is a reflective and critical evaluation of the process leading to the creation and realisation of my Body of Photographic Work, “Moments of Eternity”.

Included in this Research Dossier will be a set of visual references that demonstrate an appropriate context for this Body of Photographic Work.

Also featured is a critical analysis of a set of historical and theoretical references that support the Body of Photographic Work’s development.



# Starting the Creative Process

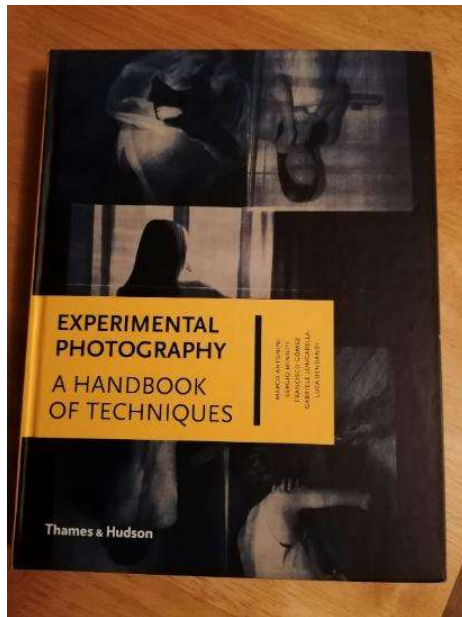


Figure 1: Cover of *Experimental Photography: A Handbook of Techniques* 2018

At the start of this module in February 2020, I did not have any solid concepts. There were two possibilities I was considering at this stage.

The first was a time-lapse piece, inspired by music by the composer Colin Riley. This would involve a combination of my particular time-lapse technique with my multi-exposure portrait technique.

The second was to use analogue and camera-less techniques, making use of the University of Brighton's extensive photographic facilities. With my background and experience purely in digital photography, I was keen at this stage to work with other specialist photographic techniques.

In my eagerness to experiment, I acquired *Experimental Photography*, a book that profiles and gives step-by-step instructions for a number of camera-less techniques, including multiple exposures and photograms. This was influenced by the Black & White and Colour workshops that were part of this module.

# A Happy Accident



*Figure 2: Jennie Meadows, Black & White Darkroom Test Strip, 11 February 2020*

During the Black & White Darkroom workshop, I accidentally created a multiple exposure image while producing a test strip.

I realise now this was the seed that grew into my final Body of Photographic Work.

# Dora Maar, Surrealism & Photomontage



Figure 3: Dora Maar,  
*Les Années Vous Guettent (The Years Lie in Wait For You)*,  
c. 1935

A strong influence on my work for this assignment was Dora Maar (1907-1977). Maar was an accomplished surrealist photographer, artist and intellectual who produced an extensive and prolific volume of work during her lifetime. I was privileged to see Maar's work on 30 January 2020 while at the Tate Modern.

The technique for which Maar is renowned is Photomontage, which she used professionally as a commercial photographer before becoming involved in the surrealist art movement during the 1930s. (Ziebinska-Lewandowska, K. 2019 pp. 99)

The difference with Maar's work compared to other surrealist photomontages of this period is that she did not use photographs taken from illustrated newspapers or magazines. Maar composed her work from elements printed on photographic paper then made a collage before retouching the composition and then reproduced it with a large-format camera. (Ziebinska-Lewandowska, K. 2019 pp. 103).

By merging two images together, the combined connotations of the images are different from those of the individual ones. For example, by overlaying a spider's web over image of the beautiful young woman with smooth skin, the image on the left alludes to the inevitable ageing of the skin and the accompanying lines that will eventually appear on her face.

# Surrealism & My Creative Practice



Figure 4: Jennie Meadows, *Solarised Dragon*, 2015



Figure 5: Jennie Meadows, *The Cave*, 2016

Maar's work led me to exploring surrealism further. I consider this art movement to be one of my influences. My practice to date rarely involved straight, pure or documentary photography. I often combine and manipulate images, specifically digitally, to create 'unreal' images. Looking back at my previous projects, all have involved surrealist elements with titles such as *Dreams/Reality* and *Transformations*.

However, at this stage I realised that I knew little about this particular art movement and its influences. This led me to focus my initial research for this assignment on this subject area.

What I did discover through my research that there is only a small amount of books and articles focusing on surrealism and photography. This is in spite of extensive available research on surrealism in relation to other art forms.

# What is Surrealism?



Figure 6: Dora Maar, *Le Simulateur (The Pretender)*, 1935

The most useful book I was able to source was David Bate's *Photography & Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*.

As Bate explains in the introduction, this book is 'a study of surrealism through the particularity of its uses of photography'. But rather than take the connection between photography and surrealism as self-evident, Bate asks why and how photography was useful to surrealism and what the surrealists did with it.' (Bate, D. 2009 pp. 1)

Bate's book proposes that:

'surrealism was founded in a dual assault, against the military/psychiatric barbarism of the 1914-18 First World War and a rejection of the values of the art and literature tradition to which its members were being recruited.'

(Bate, D. 2009 pp. 7).

Bate also states that:

'It was through those deeply traumatic experiences of that war that disrupted notions of sanity and normality.'

(Bate, D. 2009 pp. 7)

# What is Surrealist Photograph?



Figure 7: Dora Maar, Double Portrait, C. 1936

Bate also dedicates a chapter to answering the question 'What is a surrealist photograph?', in which he dissects the common assumption that a photograph can be defined as such by it having the property of a particular type of image regardless of historical surrealism.

By doing so, Bate proposes that the question being acutally asked should be:

*'when is a photograph surrealist'*

(Bate, D. 2009 pp. 21).

As such, one could conclude that a photograph can have surreal elements, but if it wasn't from the original era, it would have to be considered within its own social-historical context.

It also made me ask:

- Can a contemporary photograph be considered Surreal? Or is it just a facsimile of a bygone era?
- If surrealism is a product of its time, what would a surrealist image be today?

This made me contemplate my own images in relation to this project and the context in which they would be made.

# 100 Years of Surrealism



*Figure 8: Jennie Meadows, British Surrealism  
Installation Shot, 2020*

A further pertinent influence on my project was the British Surrealism exhibition, held at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in March 2020. This major exhibition marked 100 years since the birth of surrealism, championing the British artists that contributed to an iconic movement.

This exhibition gave further insight, especially in how surrealism broke conventions and demolished boundaries at that time.

Although the exhibition was centred on British art, and not photography, it helped my understanding. One element of surrealism highlighted was the use of juxtaposition and coincidence

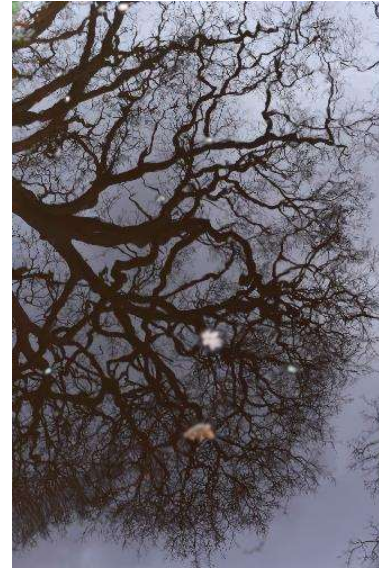
One of the exhibition cards read:

'Like dreams, chance challenges rationality – by using accidents and juxtapositions, the Surrealists bewildered and provoked their audiences. They saw the familiar and new in unexpected ways.'

# Initial Images



*Figure 9: Jennie Meadows, Richmond Park,  
21 February 2020*



*Figure 10: Jennie Meadows, Richmond Park,  
21 February 2020*

In order to begin the practical proceedings, two things were required. First, start taking photos. Second, re-familiarise myself with my DSLR camera. A meandering walk in Richmond Park gave me the opportunity to do both.

# Double Exposure – First Experiments



*Figure 11: Jennie Meadows, Lost Horizon I, 1 March 2020*



*Figure 12: Jennie Meadows, Lost Horizon II, 1 March 2020*

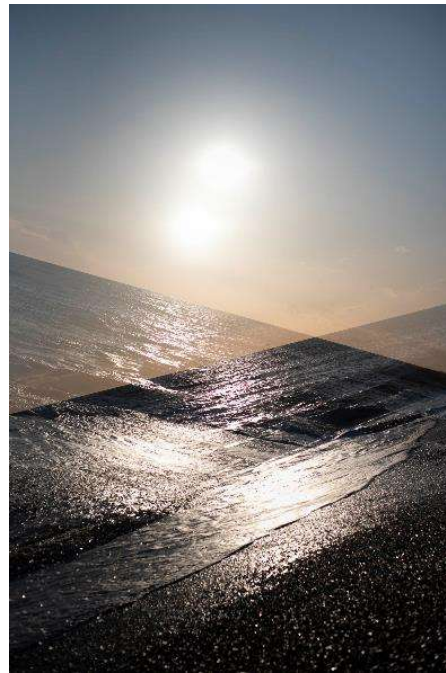
I first started my double exposure experiments on 1 March 2020 using the multiple exposure function on my Nikon D750. I had recently read a feature on the subject, so was keen to experiment.

My previous work using this technique was carried out using Adobe Photoshop, not in-camera.

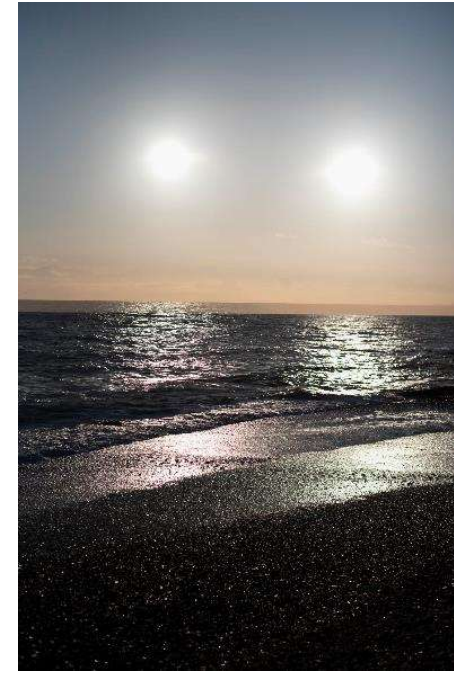
# Double Exposure – First Experiments



*Figure 13: Jennie Meadows, Lost Horizons – Brighton I,  
2 March 2020*



*Figure 14: Jennie Meadows, Lost Horizons – Brighton II,  
2 March 2020*



*Figure 15: Jennie Meadows, Lost Horizons – Brighton III,  
2 March 2020*

I continued experimenting with the double-exposure function the following day.

# Double Exposure – First Experiments



*Figure 16: Jennie Meadows, Lost Horizons - Brighton I, 3 March 2020*



*Figure 17: Jennie Meadows, Lost Horizons - Brighton II, 3 March 2020*

Further double exposure images. Little did I know at the time these would be the last photographs I took of Brighton.

With my future requirement to self-isolate, restrictions on non-essential travel and not being able to stay in any other household apart from my own, my available photographic locations would narrow considerably.

# Double Exposures – 6 March 2020



*Figure 18: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park Double Exposure I,  
6 March 2020*



*Figure 19: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park Double Exposure II,  
6 March 2020*

After the visit to the British Surrealism exhibition at Dulwich Picture Gallery, I was inspired to go to Bushy Park to see what I could find. This location is in walking distance from my home and I photographed it extensively between 2014 and 2017. I wanted to know if I could see the park differently, especially in the light of this project.

One major advantage of using this place as a location is that I know it very well. This includes the environment and different light conditions during the day and night throughout the year.

The recent rain had made a particular area extremely waterlogged. The new 'pond' reflected the afternoon sun beautifully. I took the adjacent double exposures using my DSLR camera, which resulted in dreamy, ethereal and surreal-like images.

# Double Exposures – 20 March 2020



*Figure 20: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park I, 20 March 2020*



*Figure 21: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park II, 20 March 2020*



*Figure 22: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park III, 20 March 2020*

The last trip to the park I made before a period of self-isolation was on 20 March 2020. The images taken on that day included further experiments with in-camera double exposures.

# Double Exposures – 20 March 2020



*Figure 23: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park IV, 20 March 2020*



*Figure 24: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park V, 20 March 2020*



*Figure 25: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park VI, 20 March 2020*

# Impact of COVID-19



Figure 26: HM Government, 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives', 2020

As with surrealism, and other art movements, one cannot ignore the social-historical contexts. These contexts have inevitable direct and indirect influences on cultural production.

When reflecting and evaluating the creative process for this module, it was revealing to observe how the event of COVID-19 affected the proceedings.

By the 16 March 2020, it was clear that changes to everyday life were happening, including the concept of social distancing. My first online tutorial occurred on 17 March 2020 using Skype, after which the project took a new and purposeful direction.

With restrictions in place, I realised I had to work within these limits. The main focus of this project was now to produce a Body of Photographic Work in response to current events.

Themes that came to mind were:

- Isolation
- A different reality
- A surreal situation
- Work within the limitations
- How/why am I responding?

# A Different Direction



*Figure 27: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park I, 5 April 2020*

As of 22 March 2020, the University ceased all activity on campus and teaching would be conducted online. These changes impacted greatly on both my project and life in general.

One aspect that was clear is that I would not be able to use any analogue photography equipment or facilities. However, I did have a full range of digital equipment at home. I have spent the past five years building this up and learning how to use it.

I knew that I could reproduce some aesthetics digitally. These include solarisation, photomontage, multiple exposure and lithographic prints.

The other restriction was location. Having to stay in one place and not able to travel far meant focusing on somewhere/something nearby. The advantage to this was having extra time to develop my ideas.

# Self Isolation: Experimentation & Realisation



*Figure 28: Jennie Meadows, Earth, 26 March 2020*



*Figure 29: Jennie Meadows, Galaxy, 27 March 2020*

Taking the advised action of self-isolation, I stayed at home from 22 March 2020 until 5 April 2020. This period of quarantine made me slow down and gave me space to observe my home environment more closely. During this time, I discovered the Earth and a new galaxy in my garden. The universe is nearer than you can imagine, especially when you have the time to notice it.

# Trees



Figure 30: Jennie Meadows, Bushy Park, 29 April 2020

During my period of self isolation, I was able to contemplate my subject matter further. I had explored other options, but none had inspired further investigation. I then realised that trees would be my subject matter.

Firstly, it would give me the opportunity to combine government's instruction of taking outdoor exercise by myself each day. I could combine my daily walk with photography. I also realised the importance the park played with regard to my mental and physical health. Bushy Park had been my place of refuge several times over the past five years. Not being able to visit the park during my self-isolation felt alien to me. I had begun to rediscover this beautiful and ever-changing location and having that taken away generated a genuine feeling of grief.

Secondly, there was plenty of subjects to photograph. Bushy Park features a variety of trees, including oak, lime and chestnut.

This decision was also inspired by the following:

- The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben
- Among The Trees – Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre
- Into The Woods – Victoria & Albert Museum

# The Hidden Life of Trees

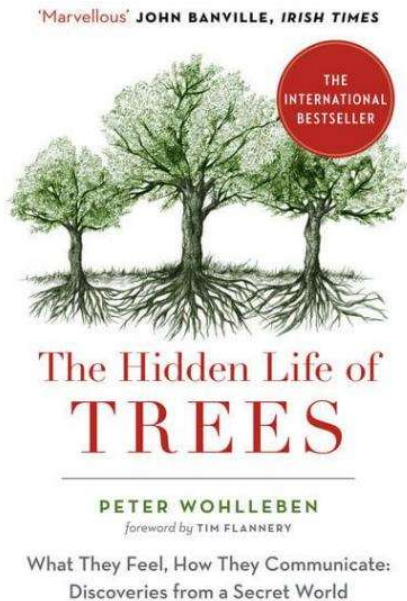


Figure 31: The Hidden Life of Trees Book Cover

In this book, Peter Wohlleben makes the case that the forest is a social network. Wohlleben is a German forester who, after 20 years working with trees, realised that they had their own hierarchies and way of living together. In the introduction, Wohlleben proposes that:

'This book is a lens to help you take a closer look at what you might take for granted. Slow down, breathe deep, and look around. What can you hear? What do you see? How do you feel?'

(Wohlleben, P. 2017 pp. xi)

Wohlleben and other scientists have discovered that trees are social beings, connected by a series of roots. There is no such thing as an 'individual' tree.

This resonated in how though people were having to isolate during the pandemic, everyone is connected and reliant on others in some way. Just like trees.

# Among The Trees – Hayward Gallery



Figure 32: Ugo Rondinone, *Wind Moon*, 2011

Among The Trees was held in the Hayward Gallery at the Southbank Centre in London from 4 March to 17 May 2020. The overarching concept of this exhibition was to explore humanity's relationship with trees and forests. Within the exhibition catalogue, curator Ralph Rugoff outlines the universal importance of trees. This includes aspects such as social, cultural, mythological, historical, religious, iconical, and medical. Rugoff continues to highlight trees' importance in our language, specifically stating how:

'in our everyday phrases we find reflections of our long-standing connection with arboreal life: we speak of having roots, of activities bearing fruit, of branches of government.'

(Rugoff, R. 2012 pp. 10)

Rugoff continues to describe how:

'we also make use of dendritic structures as a model for thought and decision-making, including for artificial intelligence'.

(Rugoff, R. 2020 pp. 10)

This is similar to my concept of the trees shot in sections, not whole, then combined. This then reverses the dendritic model by applying the concept of people appearing on screens separately but together. My images of trees for this project are a metaphorical representation of how we are currently living our lives.

# Into The Woods – Victoria & Albert Museum



*Figure 33: Benjamin Brecknell Turner, Causeway, Head of the Lake – Loseley Park, 1852-4, Calotype – Positive & Negative*

Trees were among the first photographic subjects collected by the V&A as a learning resource for artists and designers. The museum has acquired a number of photographs of trees in various contexts, which were exhibited 18 November 2017 to 22 April 2018.

One of the exhibits on display was the work of Benjamin Brecknell Turner. When the negative and positive versions are shown together, dynamic patterns are revealed. This effect stayed with me and influenced my final body of work in focusing on the details of the trees.

# Grid Experiments



Figure 34: Jennie Meadows, Grid Experiment, 2020

My next stage in the project was to revisit the tree images I had taken. I was intrigued by the possibilities of using a grid form of presentation.

The thinking behind this was showing how the passing of time can last an eternity.

I first tried this format using Adobe Photoshop (Figure 34). It was a useful visual reference.

While thinking about this grid presentation, I realised that I was being strongly influenced by what I was seeing on my TV screen and PC. During this time of lockdown and people working from home, I was being exposed to Zoom chats. This is a way of communicating via the internet where all participants appear in a grid.

Each participant is isolated, but together. They are connected, despite their dis-location.

This is how the trees appear in grid form - the images could be individual ones in separate locations. By presenting them together, it is an allegory of what it can feel like being in isolation and limited to one's surroundings but still able to be part of something much bigger.



Figure 35: Zoom Screen Shot, 2020

# Editing Process



*Figure 36: Jennie Meadows, Moments VIII (Shot 1a Digital Lith Print Effect)  
- Moments of Eternity, 2020*



*Figure 37: Jennie Meadows, Moments VIII (Shot 1b Digital Infra Red Effect) - Moments of Eternity, 2020*

After taking the double exposure shots then choosing the final images, I converted these images using Adobe Photoshop. I had learned two analogue effect techniques during my HNC: Digital Lith Effect and Infra Red Effect. My reasoning in using these were two-fold. First, I knew that just doing a 'straight' Black & White conversion of the merged shots resulted in a 'flat' image. By using the two techniques, it creates a more ethereal and unsettling effect.

Secondly, if I couldn't explore these techniques physically in the darkroom, I could hone this digitally. This would also result in a signature style.

# Combining Process



*Figure 38: Jennie Meadows, Moments VIII (Shot 1ab Combined) - Moments of Eternity, 2020*

The next stage was to combine the Lith Print Effect and Infra Red Effect images in Adobe Photoshop. This was achieved by overlaying the Lith Print image with the Infra Red one at 50% opacity.

This process was applied to all images in the sequence, then the three edited images were combined in a further Adobe Photoshop file to create the final image.

The complete process was applied to all nine final images in my Body of Photographic Work.

# Final Images – Moments of Eternity

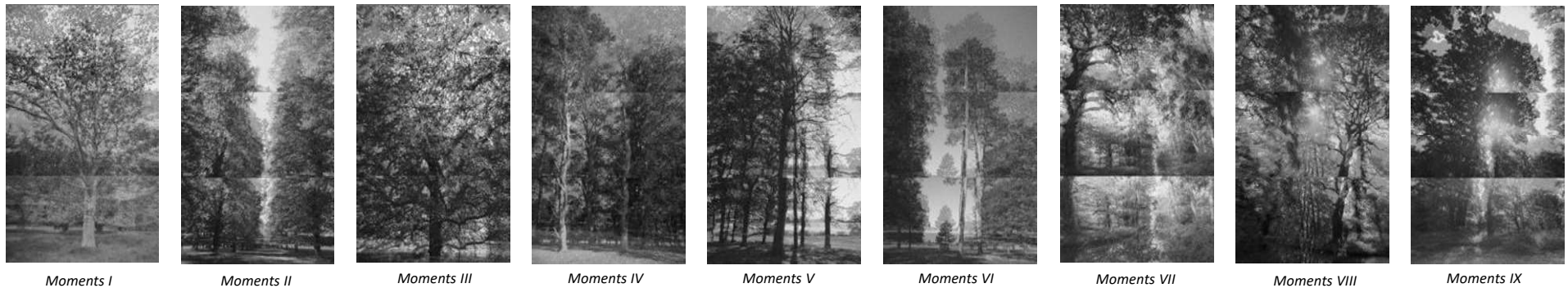


Figure 39: Jennie Meadows, *Moments of Eternity*, 2020

These are the final images that I have chosen for the Body of Photographic Work named *Moments of Eternity*. These were selected from initial shots taken between 29 April and 21 May 2020. With regards to the individual pieces' names, I decided to call each one 'Moments' followed by a Roman number. This would mean being able to identify each one easily, rather than leaving them un-named and having to try to describe each piece from the elements within the image. I chose Roman numerals as, for me, it connotes a 'high-brow' aesthetic. I have always preferred this way of portraying numbers, especially on watch faces.

When looking at these side-by-side and individually, some work better than others. There is a marked difference between Moments I and Moments VIII. Moments VIII is the last set of images I took, each shot intentional rather than left to chance.

# Body of Photographic Work Title



Figure X: Jennie Meadows, *Perfume Bottle*, 2020

While getting ready for the day, on the morning of 29 March 2020, I noticed that my perfume bottle was half empty. After having this thought, I reminded myself not to be negative - it was half full. Then I realised that this positive slant was an essential element of the current situation in which I found myself.

Do I use it or save it? If I used it over the next few weeks, that would mean ordering another for delivery soon. Would this result in someone not getting an essential that they need?

So, should I use it? There was no indication at that time as to when the lockdown would finish, but I would not deny myself a small daily luxury when I still could.

After this particular meditation, I made another observation - the perfume's name. Eternity Moment. This nomenclature was synonymous with being in lockdown. It feels like it will last an eternity, but in truth, it's only a moment. This too shall pass.

These thoughts also lead me to the title of this project - Moments of Eternity. Each image that I will be including in this body of work is a moment and direct result of this unique time we are experiencing and my response to it. For me, this is a very apt name and metanarrative for these images.

# Blog – Jennie Meadows MA Photography



Figure 40: Jennie Meadows MA Photography Blog Screenshot

In order to keep a record of my progress for this assignment and all other aspects of this MA, I have been keeping a blog.

By regularly making posts of the stages of this project, I have found it an extremely useful resource. I have been keeping a blogs for all my photography studies over the past four and a half years, starting with my Level 1 course. I find myself constantly referring to the posts in relation to my current work.

It is not a formal requirement of this module to keep such a record, but the blog has contributed to my critical reflection during the assignment.

<https://jenniemeadowsma.photo.blog/category/agm60-research-experimentation-posts/>

# Gallery Presentation



Figure 41: Moments IV - Moments of Eternity, 2020

In relation to exhibiting the final pieces, I originally planned for each individual section of the total image printed quite large – 24" x 13.5". This would result in a total size of 24" x 40.5". These would be printed on high-gloss paper, sealed with a matte film. This type of finish results in the image being protected and with no reflection from either sunlight or location lighting.

The print is then mounted directly onto 5mm pvc board. This would then be attached to a wood subframe that can be installed with just two screws onto the wall. The result is a sleek wall piece that subtly floats off the wall and is lightweight. This type of printing and mounting would mean an easy installation plus they wouldn't be very heavy to either transport or be delivered directly to an exhibition space.

However, when I looked at my final images, I changed my mind. I realised that they are a 'whisper', not a 'shout'. The details of these images are very delicate and reminiscent of early photographic prints. They draw the viewer in, rather than broadcast their intention. If I was to show the final images in the size at which they have been prepared would be 9" x 15.2". This is a manageable size, both visually and handling.

Other considerations were the price of printing – each panel would cost about £30 plus VAT, so if I was showing all nine final pieces, the total printing costs would be about £1,000. I would also have to consider issues such as storage and transportation. I could have them delivered directly to an exhibition venue, but what would I do with them afterwards?

# Gallery Presentation Cont.



Figure 42: Jennie Meadows, *Max II – Identity Max*, 2019

The other change to my plan would be to have the image printed as stated previously, but as floating mount in a plain box frame. The frame would protect the edges of the pvc board, which can be easily damaged. Something to consider if I was to exhibit these in more than one venue.

I have used this method of printing and framing already as shown in Figure 42. The image featured used the same editing method utilised for the Moments of Eternity images.

Size-wise, this would make each piece 10.5" x 16.2" as this type of frame adds 1.5" to both width and height of each final piece.

Cost-wise, these would be about £35 each, inclusive of VAT. This results in the total of both printing and framing would be in the region of £315 plus delivery.

Expensive, but still considerably affordable than my initial option.

# Conclusion

When exploring and contemplating this assignment, I found it extremely enlightening to reflect on the progression and creative process involved. By basing my experimentation on my research, I have been able to inform my experimentation and taken it further than I initially expected.

At the outset, I wanted to create a body of work using analogue photographic or camera-less methods. Because of the circumstances, I have digitally produced work that takes on the aesthetics of these methods that could not be made this way in the darkroom. I have also explored how trees can be portrayed in a surreal way that doesn't immediately state 'tree'.

I have responded to changing circumstances and limitations in a positive and constructive way. Another outcome is reconnecting with an environment and subject matter that is an integral part of my life.

I am extremely happy with what I have achieved over the past four months and now have a solid base on which I can support further work.



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