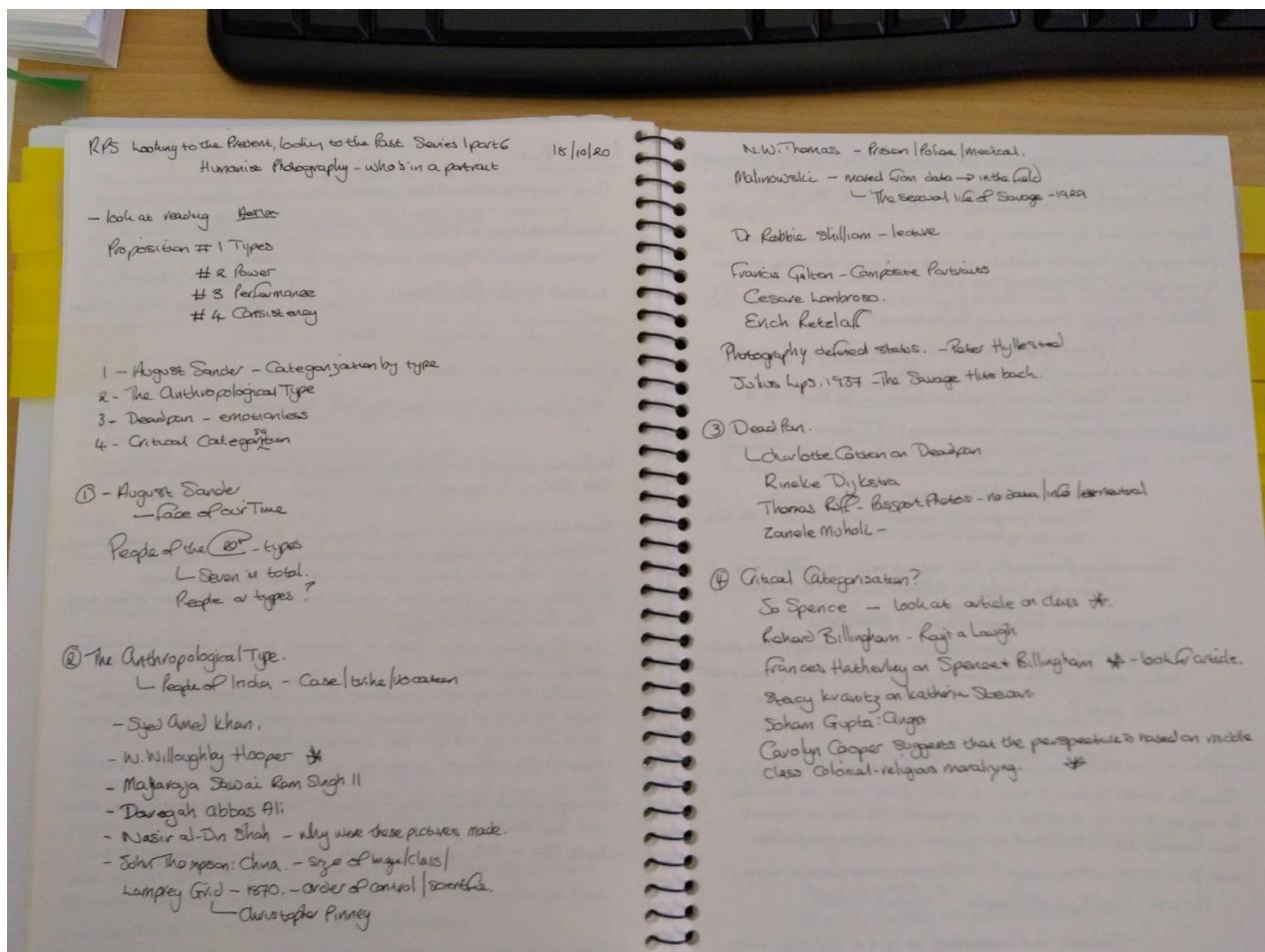


## RPS Lecture 6



# Looking to the present, looking to the past

## Series 1 – lecture 6: Humanist Photography – who's in a portrait

with Colin Pantall

Starting at 1800

# Lecture 6: August Sander, Classification, Consistency, and Respectability



## Proposition #1: Types

Wolfgang Brückle: 'It is by associating individual with types that meaning is produced in Sander's photographs, or more precisely, that the possible meaning of a photograph is linked to received ideas and beliefs, and that these are confirmed or tested.'

<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/face-off-in-weimar-culture-the-physiognomic-paradigm-competing-portrait-anthologies-and-august-sanders-face-of-our-time>

## Proposition #2: Power

Allan Sekula: 'In other words, a covert Hobbesian logic links the terrain of the "National Gallery" with that of the "Police Act."'



## Proposition #3: Performance

John Mortimer: "I always think we underestimate the amount of acting that goes on in what is known as 'real' life... with all this acting about in the world why should not the sitter perform as usual for the benefit of the [camera] lens?"



## Proposition #4: Consistency (we'll come to this at the end)

Aldous Huxley: "Consistency is contrary to nature, contrary to life. The only completely consistent people are dead."

<https://talking-pictures.net.au/2020/10/10/the-mirror-of-three-kingdoms/>

1. August Sander – categorization by type
2. The Anthropological Type
3. Deadpan — the emotionless type
4. Critical Categorisation?

## 1. August Sander – categorization

- Face of our Time was published in 1929
- The Images are fabulous
- They are divided into types
- This connects to terrible elements of photographic history and German history
- The Nazis destroyed many of his plates
- Sander's son died in a Nazi prison

### August Sander's Faces of Our Time



Categorised people into groups  
Photographed systematically  
Included background detail  
Strong farming/rural connection

Photographed from 1910 – 1950s  
Shot in large format  
Son died in concentration camp  
Persecuted by Nazis



What's in an image?

How do you talk about this, write about this?





## People of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century - Types

- 'The Farmer'
- 'The Skilled Tradesman',
- 'The Woman',
- 'Classes and Professions',
- 'The Artists',
- 'The City' and
- 'The Last People'

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/august-sander-5319/lists/five-things-know-august-sander#:~:text=The%20project%20adapted%20and%20evolved,The%20portrait%20is%20your%20mirror.>

- “The individual does not make the history of his time, but he both impresses himself on it and expresses its meaning,” he said in a 1931 radio broadcast. “It is possible to record the historical physiognomic image of a whole generation and—with enough knowledge of physiognomy—to make that image speak in photographs.”



[moma.org/magazine/articles/184](http://moma.org/magazine/articles/184)



<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/august-sander-5319>



Inventor and Dadaist [Raoul Hausmann]  
1929



Victim of Persecution, 1938



Circus Workers, 1926

The review '...noted that Sander did not photograph people but types. In other words, he photographed people as they are defined by their rank, profession, place of residence, class and caste, to an extent that superseded any differentiation between the individual and the group.'

<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/face-off-in-weimar-culture-the-physiognomic-paradigm-competing-portrait-anthologies-and-august-sanders-face-of-our-time>

# The Last People



Blind children (Blindenkinder)



31:35 / 1:56:43



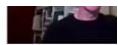
## 2. The Anthropological Type

- People of India
- The Photographer Princes
- Malinowski
- Eugenics
- It's not all bad

### 2. People of India and the anthropological turn



Looking to the present, Looking to the past - series 1, no. 6

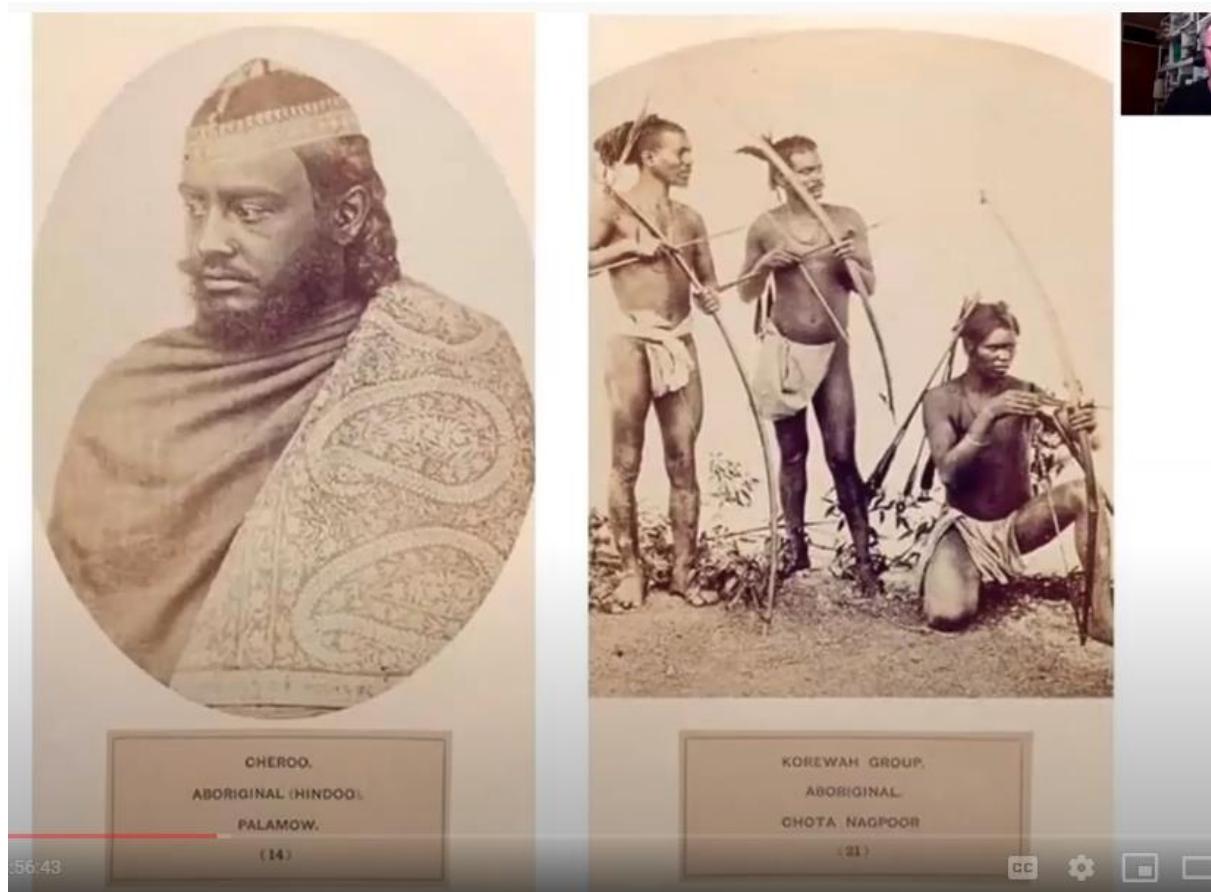


# The People of India

'The People of India is an extraordinary document, which was published in eight volumes between 1868 and 1875, under the editorship of Dr John Forbes Watson and John William Kaye. Its 480 plates, depicting the various castes and tribes of India, have ensured its place among the most important 19th century attempts to harness photography to an ethnographic project.'

## The Photobook History (Volume I)





## Syed Amed Khan, 1888?

'In the India office is a book in which all the races of India are depicted both in picture and in letterpress, giving the manners and customs of each race. Their photographs show that the pictures of the different manners and customs were takend on the spot, tand the sight of them shows how savage they are – the equal of animals. The young Englishman... What can they think, after pursuing this book?'

# W. Willoughby Hooper

- Told people to be photographed
- Sent them away
- Didn't give them anything



## The Madras Famine by W. Willoughby Hooper

‘People who still delude themselves with the idea that the famine, if it has any existence at all, has been greatly exaggerated, could see [the photos], and they would lay aside that notion for good ... Their knowledge will enable them to testify that these photographs are not representations of exceptional cases of suffering, but are typical of the actual conditions of immense numbers of people in the Madras Presidency.’

# Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II



<https://caravanmagazine.in/vintage/nobles-at-court>

40/55 / 1:56:42

# Darogah Abbas Ali







# Nasir al-Din Shah





عجمان



There are political machinations; there are private loves and personal grudges; there are sex strikes; there are boycotts; there are multiple stories sunk into the eyes of these women who stare back at us from the page.'



## Why were these pictures made

- a) to further subjugate the women by having them eternally within his photographic gaze
- b) as proof of his virility (especially as there were gaps between children)
- c) To give the women a visual voice
- d) As entertainment
- e) All of the above

See Photography and the Album

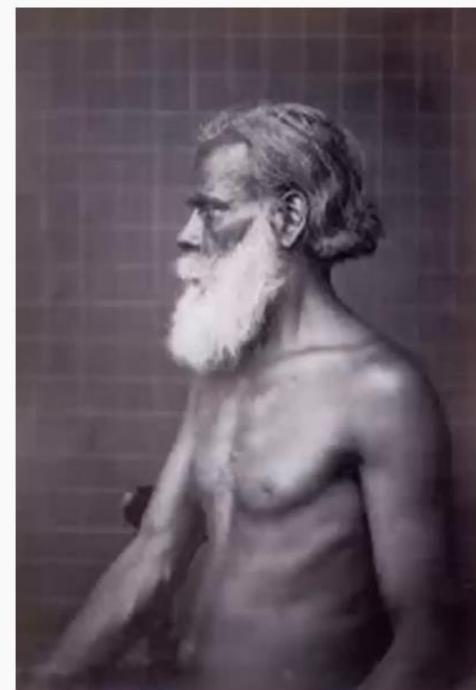


From Zanjir, by Amak Mahmoodian

## John Thompson: Illustrations of China and Its People



[https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/john\\_thomson\\_china\\_01/ct\\_essay04.html](https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/john_thomson_china_01/ct_essay04.html)



## The Lamprey Grid

Man photographed against a Lamprey Grid, 1870

Lamprey proposed that anthropologists photograph their subjects against a background grid of 2-inch squares formed by hanging silk thread on a large wooden frame... to surmount difficulties in the 'questions of comparison' that anthropologists had to confront.

'By means of such photographs the anatomical structure of a good academy figure or model of six feet can be compared with a Malay of four feet eight in height.'

Christopher Pinney: Photography and Anthropology (p.29)  
(the man photographed is in London)

# N.W. Thomas



A man in Iyede, Delta State, Nigeria, 1909

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2019/nov/19/the-anthropologists-africa-in-pictures-faces-voices>



A boy in Ewu, Delta State, Nigeria, 1909

# Malinowski



## Malinowski – the academic view



Malinowski broke with convention by abandoning the positivist pretence of aloof scientific objectivity by inserting a witnessing self into his narrative.

The ethnographer's main task is to observe and describe customs in their everyday social contexts and to elicit people's explanations for their own behaviour.

<https://publicdomainreview.org/essay/writing-his-life-through-the-other-the-anthropology-of-malinowski>

# The Sexual Life of Savages (1929)



Bamasia deli Dabugera; bayobobu,  
I sleep together Dabugera; I embrace,  
bavakayla bavayauli. Tannu dubilbilada,  
I hug all length, I rub noses. We suck lower lips ours,  
pela bPaluyvalayda; mayela tanumu;  
because we feel excited; tongue his we suck;  
tagadi kabulala; tagadi kala gabula; tagadi  
we bite nos his; we bite his chin; we bite  
kimwala; takabi posigala,  
jaw (cheek) his; we take hold (caress) armpit his,  
viviyala. Bilirola minona: "O didakozu,  
groin his. She says this woman: "O it itches,  
lubaygn, sonela; kcorikikila  
lover mine, very much indeed; rub and push  
tewayla, bilukewali  
again, it feels pleasant towogu—  
body mine—

340

## THE ACT OF SEX

kwopinaviyaka, nnakwana bipipi  
do it vigorously, quick (so that) it squirts  
momona:— kwalintumtu tuwyla bilukewali  
sexual fluid:— tread again it feels pleasant  
towogu."  
body mine."

Malinowski with natives on the Trobriand Islands, ca. 1918

## Malinowski: A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term (1967)



It would become the most infamous, most nakedly honest document in the annals of social anthropology. With its moral struggles, its Dostoevskian moods, its Conradian allusions, its Freudian subtext of mother-love and frustrated sexual desire, its misanthropic and racist outbursts, the Diary abundantly revealed some unpleasant aspects of Malinowski's character.

[https://monoskop.org/images/f/ff/Malinowski\\_Bronislaw\\_A\\_Diary\\_in\\_the\\_Strict\\_Sense\\_of\\_the\\_Term\\_2nd\\_ed\\_1989.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/f/ff/Malinowski_Bronislaw_A_Diary_in_the_Strict_Sense_of_the_Term_2nd_ed_1989.pdf)

# Dr Robbie Shilam - The British Academy and the British Empire: Blackness as a problem at home and abroad'

Aesthetic Incompetence: The other is too ugly (see also Ugly laws)

Cognitive Incompetence: (See Agazziz, Galton) The other is stupid

Cultural Incompetence: The other cannot function in society

Psychological Incompetence: The other has the wrong psychology (Seligman believed the black subconscious was too close to the conscious)

Urban Incompetence: Post-war UK race relations. The other cannot function in an urban setting.

Political Incompetence: The other cannot function properly politically (they will vote for the wrong party)

Educational Incompetence: The other does not function properly in the educational setting

<https://criticalraceculture.com/inaugural-lecture/>

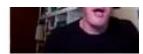
## Francis Galton – Composite Portraits



# EUGENICS

"IS THE STUDY OF THE AGENCIES UNDER SOCIAL CONTROL, THAT IMPROVE OR IMPAIR THE RACIAL QUALITIES OF FUTURE GENERATIONS EITHER PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY."

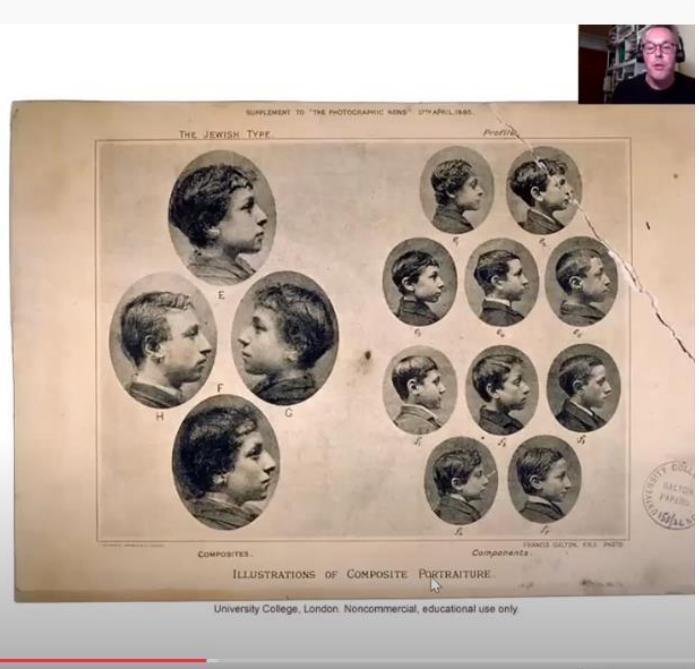
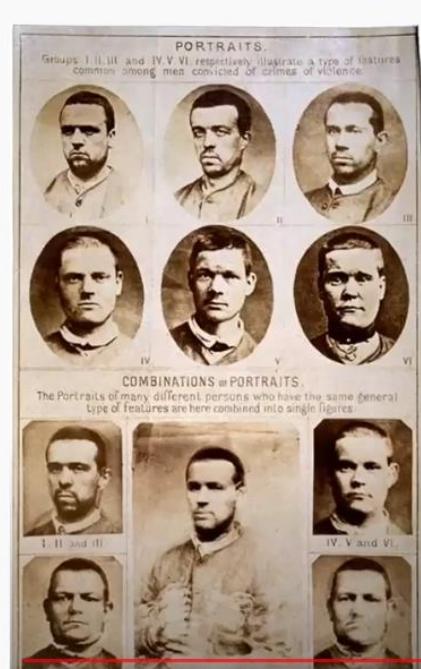
SIR FRANCIS GALTON.



## Eugenics

The best form of civilization in respect to the improvement of the race... where the weak could find a welcome and a refuge in celibate monasteries or sisterhoods, and lastly, where the better sort of emigrants and refugees from other lands were invited and welcomed, and their descendants naturalized.

Galton, F. (1869). *Hereditary Genius*. London: Macmillan.



# Cesare Lombroso



Examples of physiognomy of criminals illustrated from *L'uomo Delinquente* (Criminal Man), 1876, by Cesare Lombroso.

So-called “ugly laws” were mostly municipal statutes in the United States that outlawed the appearance in public of people who were, in the words of one of these laws, “diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object” (Chicago City Code 1881)

[https://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree/54d39e27f8a0ea4706000009#:~:text=So%2Dcalled%20%E2%80%9Cugly%20laws%E2%80%9D,\(Chicago%20City%20Code%201881\).](https://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree/54d39e27f8a0ea4706000009#:~:text=So%2Dcalled%20%E2%80%9Cugly%20laws%E2%80%9D,(Chicago%20City%20Code%201881).)

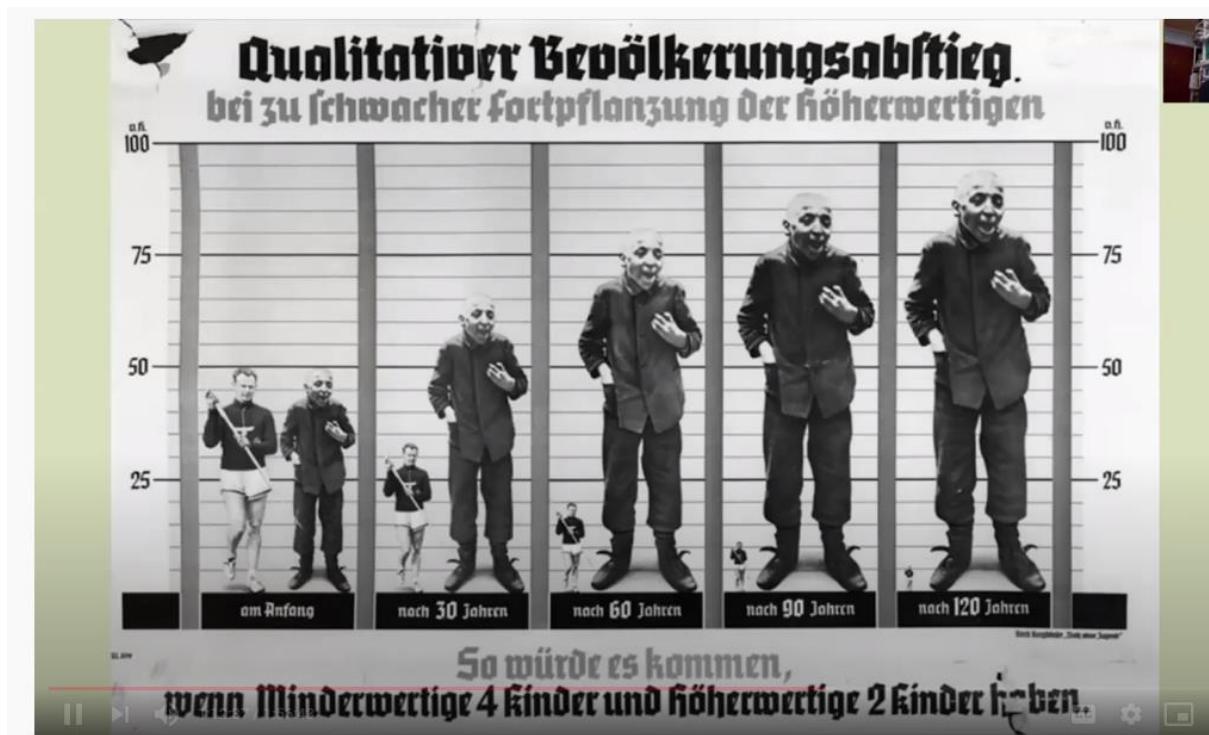


## Erich Retzlaff -Die von der Scholle (Those who till the soil) and Menschen am Werk





Where are the links? Are they visual? Are they organisational? Are they political?





## Paul Close - Snakebox Odyssey.

- Simple backdrop
- Used text
- Used maps
- Gave subjects their own voice
- Non-exotic
- Published on Picasa

<https://picasaweb.google.com/PSClose/TheSnakeboxOdyssey#slideshow/5349074424206867250>



Bangourou Djilleli  
N° 21.67.201  
E. 2011.05.14

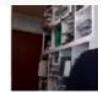
Rain



Assane Diakhaté  
N° 19.24.554  
E. 2011.05.09

Some new clothes





## Photography defined status

Peter Hyllested – Emily and William Williams, c.1910

## Julius Lips, 1937 - The Savage Hits Back



His seminal work created a new perspective. In *The Savage Hits Back*, he inverted the 'colonial gaze' by examining visual expressions of the colonial encounter in 'non-European' art by presenting a worldwide kaleidoscopic view of Indigenous depictions of Europeans

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.77152/page/n19/mode/2up>

[http://www.thirdtext.org/domains/thirdtext.com/local/media/images/medium/The\\_Savage\\_Hits\\_Back\\_I.pdf](http://www.thirdtext.org/domains/thirdtext.com/local/media/images/medium/The_Savage_Hits_Back_I.pdf)

### 3. Deadpan

Deadpan – absence of expression

Rineke Dijkstra – awkwardness of expression

Thomas Ruff – removal of emotion

Zanele Muholi – subliminal expression

The Straight Up – Deadpan for style

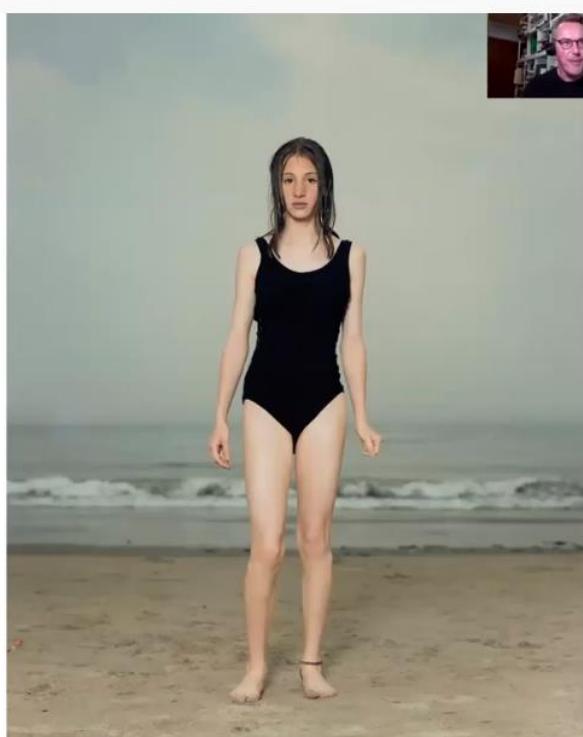
### Charlotte Cotton on Deadpan

The emphasis, then, is on photography as a way of seeing beyond the limitations of individual perspective, a way of mapping the extent of the forces, invisible from a single human standpoint, that govern the man-made and natural world. Deadpan photography may be highly specific in its description of its subjects, but its seeming neutrality and totality of vision is of epic proportions.

# Rineke Dijkstra



Dijkstra, R. 1992. *Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA. June 24, 1992*. In: Ehlers, C. 2003. *Beach Portraits*. La Salle Bank: Chicago.



## Thomas Ruff – Passport Photos



I wanted to do a kind of official portrait of my generation. I wanted the photographs to look like those in passports, but without any other information, such as the subject's address, religion, profession, or prior convictions. I didn't want the police/viewer to get any information about us.

(Ruff in Gil Blank, 'Interview: Thomas Ruff', *Influence*, no.2, 2004, p.51, <http://www.gilblank.com/images/pdfs/blankruffintvw.pdf>, accessed 5 May 2015.)

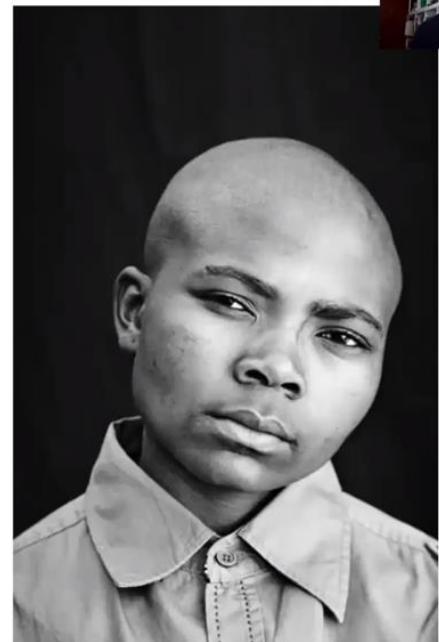


## Zanele Muholi



- *Faces* express the person, and *Phases* signify the transition from one stage of sexuality or gender expression and experience to another.

<http://www.stevenson.info/artists/muholi.html>



# Erving Goffman: Presentation of the Self

The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life

Published in 1959

Face to face interactions are a theatrical performance

We perform differently for different groups – friends, lover, family

So we live life on a 'stage'

And we have parts we play and costumes we wear that correspond to those stages.

Life is formulaic in other words

## 4. Critical Categorisation?

Jo Spence

Richard Billingham

Stacey Kranitz

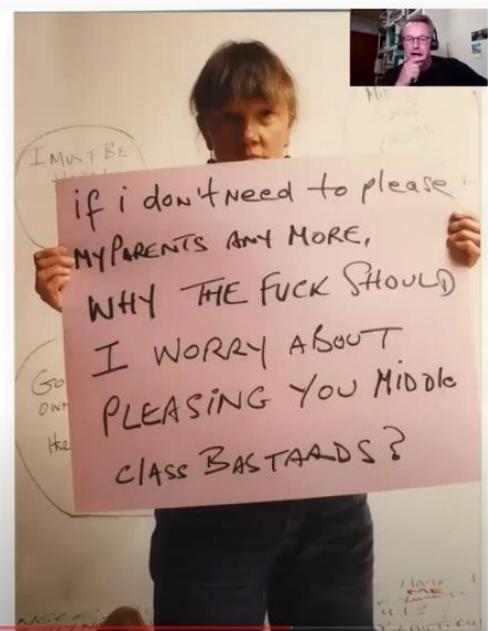
Soham Gupta

# Jo Spence



“Spence sought, in photographing women at work, to render visible what has previously been unacknowledged, unappreciated”, thereby (quoting Spence) “validating women’s experience and demonstrating their unrecognised contribution to the economy.”

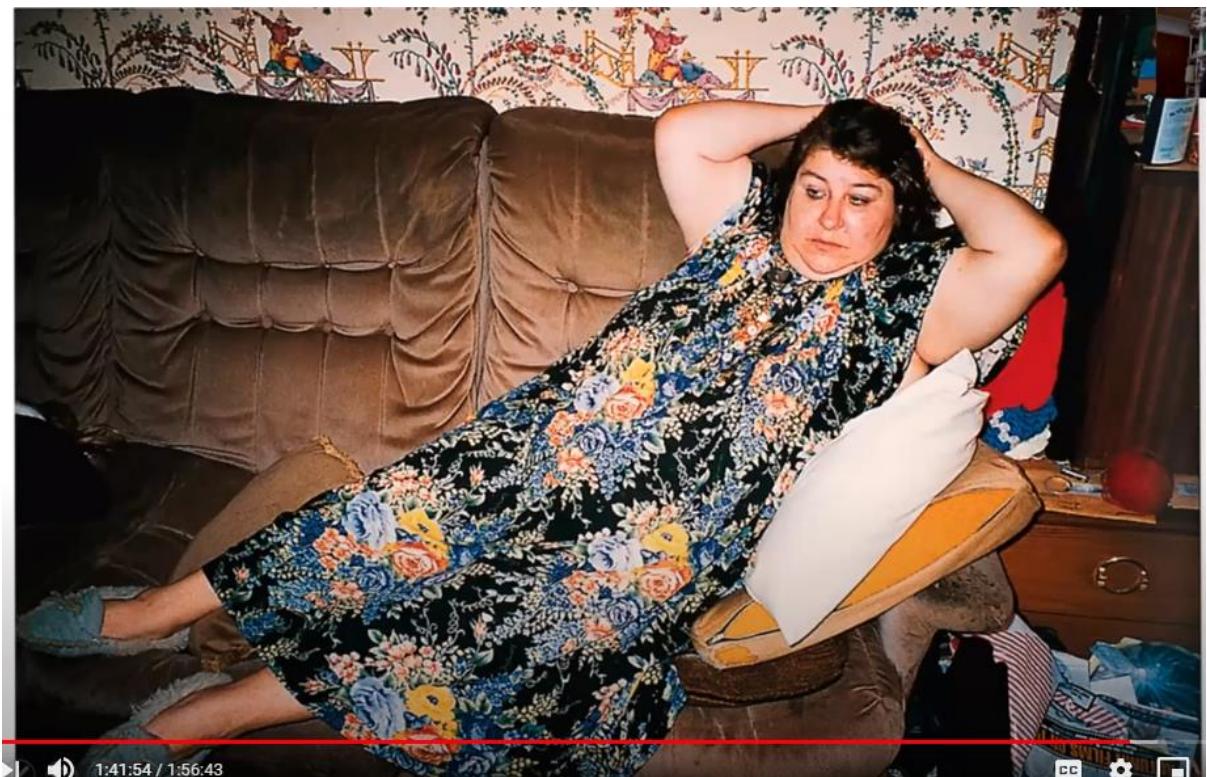
<https://parsejournal.com/article/the-labour-of-class-discourse-jo-spence-and-the-unmentionableness-of-class/>



# Richard Billingham – Ray's a Laugh

- Accidental Project
- Research for Art
- Driven by strong emotions towards father
- Hit the Art Market
- Not able to Replicate





1:41:54 / 1:56:43

CC

'Not only is the situation unseemly and somewhat repulsive, as the mother hardly conforms to the pattern according to which she has been arranged' (Orskou, 2003)'

Hatherley wrote in response to this, ...'it is an image of love for his mother - Orskou finds it repulsive because it does not conform to her notion of correct feminine motherhood' (Hatherley, 2018, p.365).

Hatherley, F. (2018) A working-class Anti-Pygmalion aesthetics of the female grotesque in the photographs of Richard Billingham. European Journal of Women's Studies. Volume 25 (Issue 3), pp. 355 – 370

Orskou, G (2003) Home Sweet Home. Arhus: Aarhus Kunstmuseum

## Frances Hatherley on Spence and Billingham



Sublime dissension: A working-class Anti-Pygmalion aesthetics of the female grotesque

This thesis' reclamation of negative stereotypical images of working-class femininity, described as grotesque, ugly and shameful, hinges on an argument that aesthetic as well as gender categories are classed constructs.

- Available at <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/23204/>

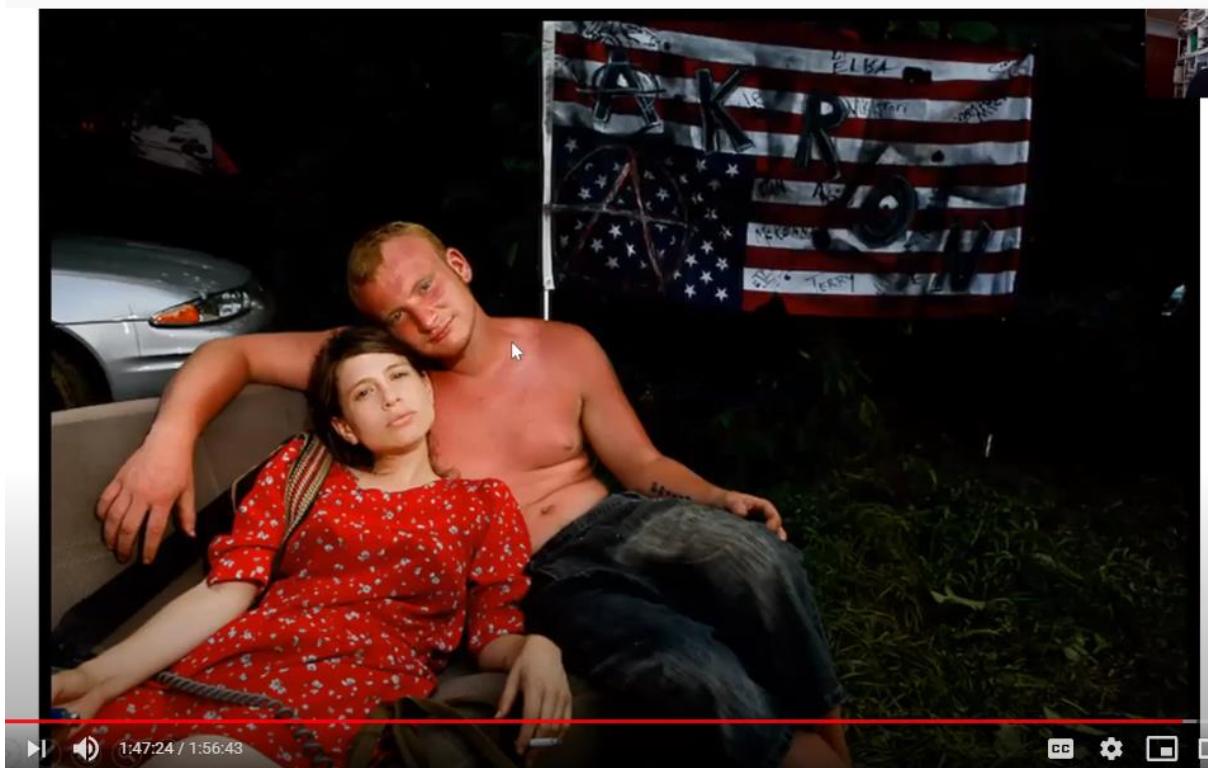


## Stacy Kranitz on Katherine Stewart

Kranitz references Katherine Stewart as an influence on her work (which is also part of an MFA she is studying for). Stewart believes that over-intellectualising things gets in the way of understanding the incoherent and inexplicable elements in a society. "I see myself, like Stewart, making work that I hope destabilizes the very claim of knowing the meaning of things at all because culture isn't something that can be gotten right," says Kranitz

BJP, 2014

<http://colinpantall.blogspot.com/2014/01/best-interview-of-2013-stacy-kranitz.html>



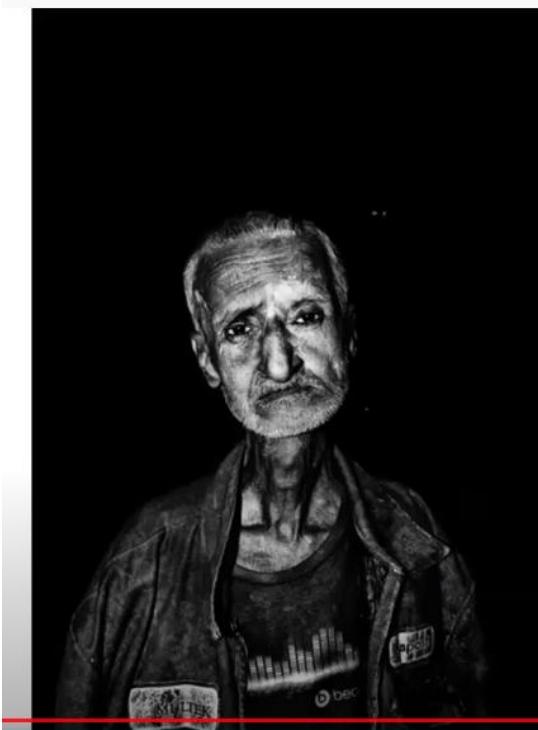


## Kranitz on Michael Taussig

Another influence apparent in Kranitz's approach is Michael Taussig, an anthropologist who said that western anthropologists shouldn't examine other cultures but should examine and critique their own defective culture by going to the fringes of that culture, to the places where the joins show, something Kranitz is doing by joining the Skatopian community.



## Soham Gupta: Angst



## A final question

How can you unpack criticism of photographic criticism?

Is much of photographic criticism based on misogynistic ideas of respectability and conformity in looking suitably middle-class (and Carolyn Cooper suggests this is a colonial perspective based on middle-class colonial-religious moralizing)?

How do you unpack – voyeurism, moralising, misogyny, conformity, surveillance, control, eugenics, racism etc etc