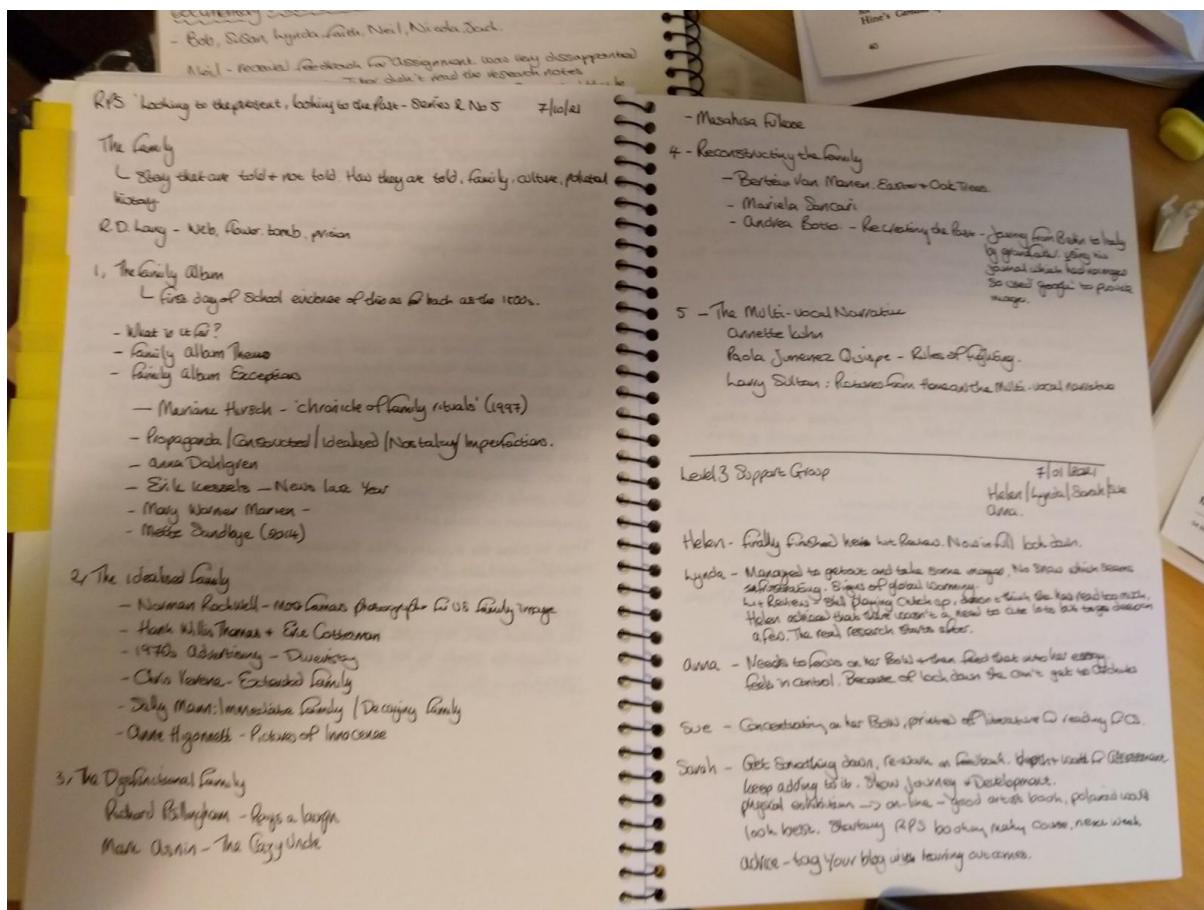


## -----RPS Lecture 5 Series 2: Family



# Looking to the present, looking to the past

## Series 2 – lecture 5 Family

with Colin Pantall

# RPS Lecture 5: The Family



R.D. Laing

'The family may be imagined as a web, a flower, a tomb, a prison, a castle.' (Laing, 1971)

↳

Laing, R.D. (1971) *The Politics of the Family and Other Essays* London: Routledge

1. The Family Album
2. The Idealised Family
3. The Dysfunctional Family
4. Reconstructing the Family
5. The multi-vocal narrative

# 1. The Family Album

- What is it for?
- Family Album Themes
- Family Album Exceptions



## What is the family album for?

Marianne Hirsch describes the family album as a 'chronicle of family rituals,' (Hirsch, 1997).

The purpose of the family album is 'integrally tied to the ideology of the modern family.'

Hirsch, M. (1997) *Family Frames* photography narrative and postmemory. United States of America: Harvard University Press.

# The Family Album

Propaganda

Constructed Image

Idealised Image

Nostalgia

Believability?

Imperfections?

Anna Dahlgren says that albums 'portray [only] a fraction of the lives people [lead] and relatively little of common life ... they represent almost exclusively birthdays, parties, travels and holidays and seldom everyday rituals and habits.' (Miller and Wilkie, 2013)

Is this so?

Carson, J., Miller, R. and Wilkie, T. (2013). The photograph and the album. 1st ed. Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc.





Leerbüchel 1932



# Family Album Themes: Erik Kessels

"For instance, people make mostly on average 7 or 8 albums during their lifetime. The first is always when a couple meet each other, they're in love and they go on holiday etc."

Noting how analogue family photography was a largely engendered pursuit, he adds: "It was mostly men taking pictures of their partners. It was them who had the machine around their neck. For instance, in [the album labeled "Helene"], the man is taking close ups of her excessively. Even his girlfriend's name is written in large lettering. You can tell he considers her an adorable, desired object."

1. Couple meet
2. Couple get married
3. The first-born child (or dogs if no children)
4. More children/holidays/important occasions

? The couple are alone again

The couple are together, alone again because the kids have gone to university or left home. However, you can observe that the woman usually appears smaller in the frame, either because the man loses interest, she doesn't want to be photographed or due to the fact that he's more interested in the surrounding landscape.'





## Is this the case

‘The content of family photographs was dominated by celebratory occasions, such as weddings, birthdays, and vacations.

Few families resolutely set out to record the look of everyday life, such as messy kitchens and unmade beds. Fewer still made visual records of emotionally trying times, or used the camera for psychological self-study or therapy.’

Mary Warner Marien (2002), *A Cultural History of Photography*

## However

‘Family photo albums are about social and emotional communication, they can be interpreted as ways of understanding and coming to terms with life, and at the same time they document more sociological aspects of daily lives, that we do not have access to from other historical sources.’

Mette Sandbye (2014) *Looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how*, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*

‘The family photo album is a globally circulating form that not only takes locally specific forms but also “produces localities” that creates and negotiate individual stories.’

Mette Sandbye (2014) *Looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how*, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*

'What can the images in the albums tell us about their owners, taken as either individuals or as belonging to a local culture? How have the albums been used? What have they meant to their owners?

Family photo albums must be approached not as static entities but as social and dynamic objects that perform cultural work.'

Mette Sandbye (2014) Looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*

## 2. The Idealised Family

- In advertising
- Norman Rockwell
- Diversifying (kind of) the advertising family
- The Extended Family
- The Decaying Family





*"We've made travel by air a family affair"*

**Ever since TWA started its Family Budget Plan,** parents have had cause to cheer. For now they can take the whole family along—without doing the splits . . . simply by traveling on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday day within the United States. As head of the family, Dad pays full fare. Mother and the children under 22 go for only half fare each . . . there's no charge for an infant under two.

Five-mile-a-minute TWA Skyminers give family

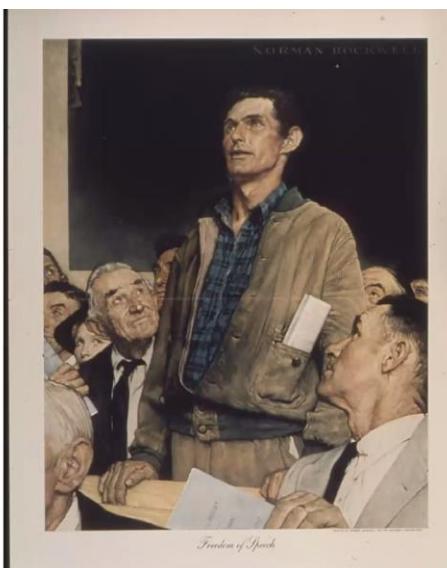
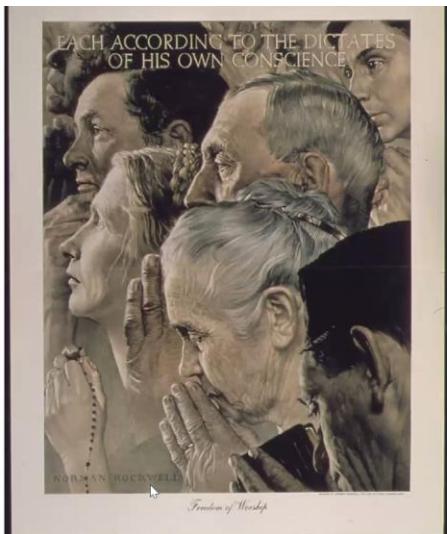
travel plans a lift other ways, too. Far-off places are now really quite near. The flight is a delight, the service is superb, the meals are deliciously free. Best of all . . . and oh, how Mother loves this . . . you're there long before the kids start to fuss or fidget.

Where in the world do you want to go? Whether it's in the U.S. or overseas, take the family the comfortable, low-cost TWA way. For help in planning your trip, see your travel agent or call TWA.

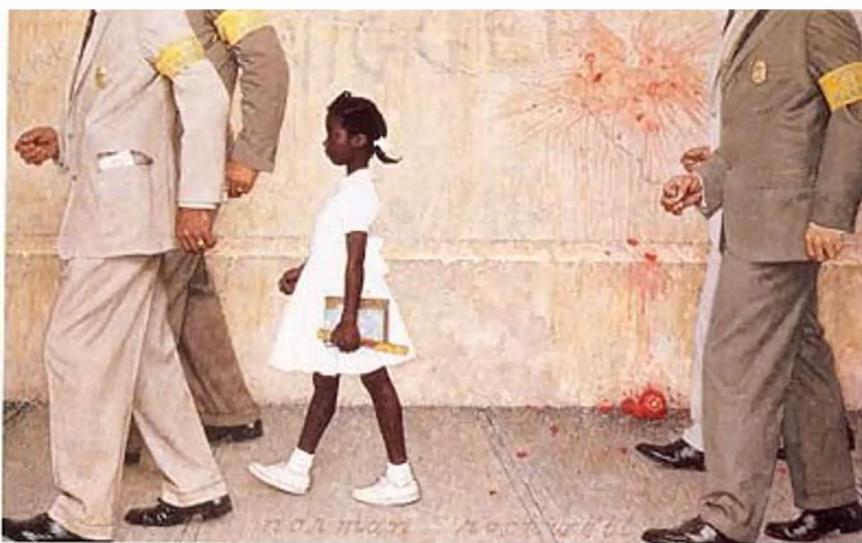


## Norman Rockwell



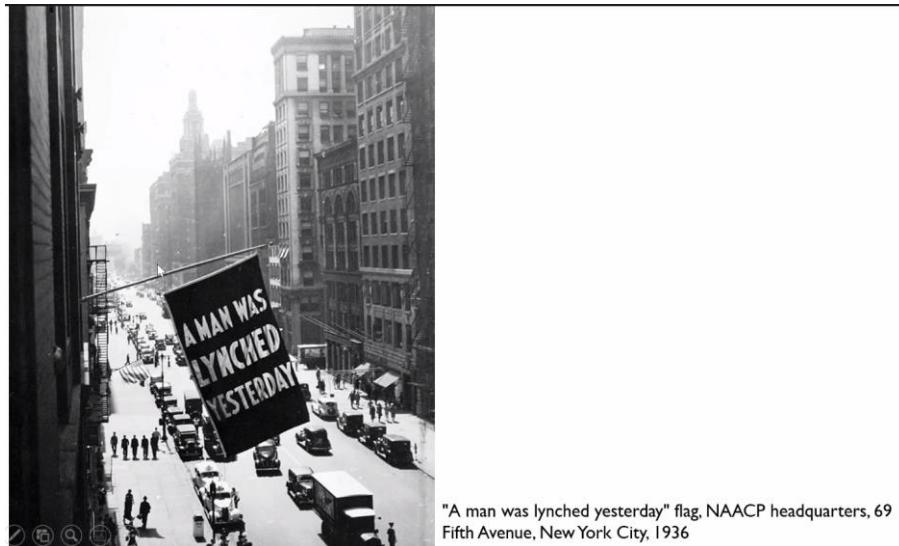


## The problem we all live with



# For Freedoms: October 2020

(founded by Hank Willis Thomas and Eric Gottesman)

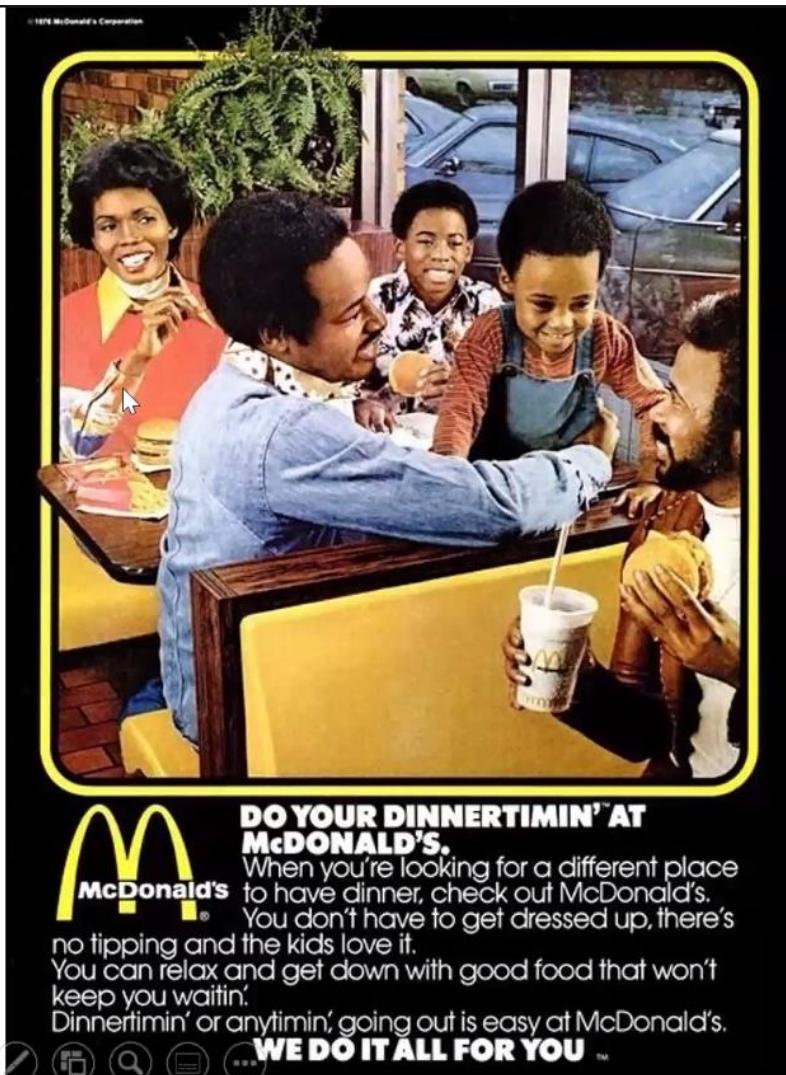


Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, 2016



'In the 1970s, something special began happening in American advertising. At the tail end of the civil-rights movement, the industry began to move away from its decades-long habit of portraying African Americans almost exclusively in positions of servitude or inferiority, as props in ads aimed at white audiences. By the 1970s, companies such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola began increasing the racial diversity depicted in their campaigns.'

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/06/casual-racism-and-greater-diversity-in-70s-advertising/394958/>



© 1978 McDonald's Corporation

**DO YOUR DINNERTIMIN' AT  
McDONALD'S.**

When you're looking for a different place to have dinner, check out McDonald's.

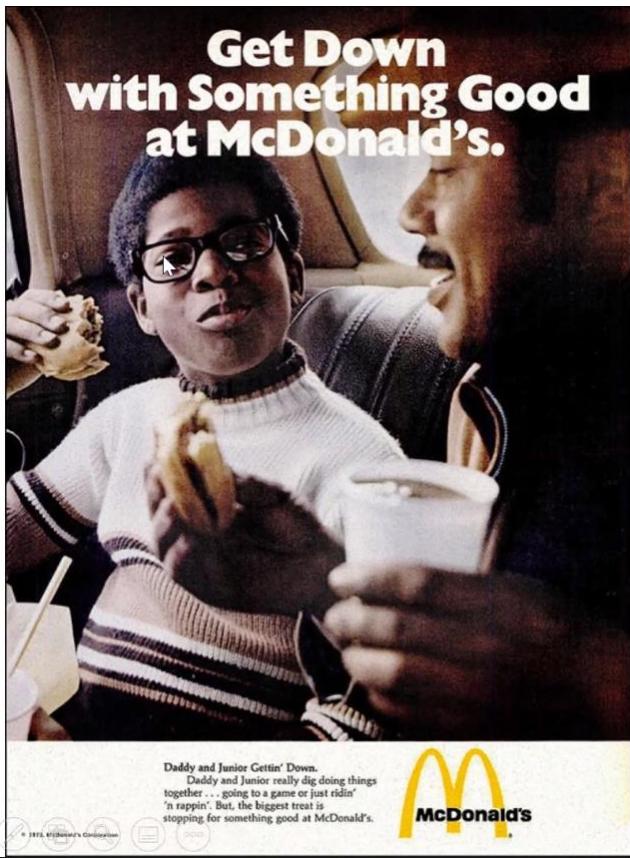
You don't have to get dressed up, there's no tipping and the kids love it.

You can relax and get down with good food that won't keep you waitin'.

Dinnertimin' or anytimin', going out is easy at McDonald's.

**WE DO IT ALL FOR YOU™**

McDonald's



<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/06/advertising-race-1970s-stereotypes-offensive/395624/>



## Chris Verene: The Extended Family

Uses Captions

It's Verene's voice

Commentary on Rural America

Commentary on Working Class America

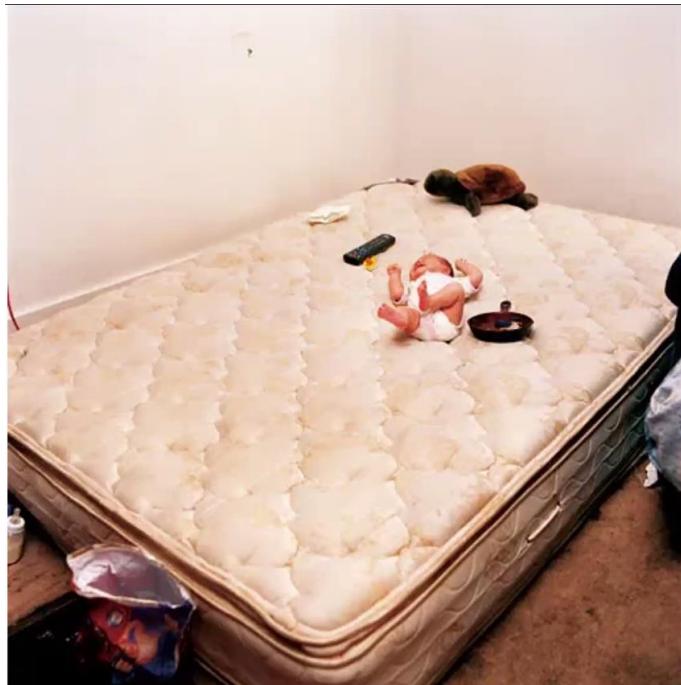
Focus on the Domestic

<http://www.foto8.com/live/chris-verene-the-family/#.UnDk9PlhhWY>

THE SAME DAY THEY SIGNED THE DIVORCE PAPERS



A TORNADO HIT THE HOUSE.



NICO AND HIS STEP-COUSINS ON THE INTERNET.



TRAVIS'S NEIGHBORS



MY COUSIN'S HUSBAND'S BROTHER'S COUSIN'S COUSINS.

## Sally Mann: Immediate Family

David Levi-Strauss

'They show what some would argue should not be shown; the psychosocial complexity of family relations, the terrors and erotics of childhood, and the beauty and violence (and elight and joy) that lie just below the surface of domestic life.'



Mann, S. 1989. *The New Mothers*. In: Mann, S. 1992. *Immediate Family*. New York. Aperture.

## Anne Higonnet: Pictures of Innocence

'These Knowing Children have bodies and passions of their own. They are also often aware of adult bodies and passions, whether as mimics or only witnesses' (Higonnet, 1998 p.207)

From Pictures of Innocence where Higonnet talks about the Romantic Child, the Innocent Child, the Knowing Child in art-historical and political terms



Mann, S. 1988. *The Alligator's Approach*. In: Mann, S. 1992. *Immediate Family*. Aperture: New York.

## Sally Mann: The Decaying Family

- References Historical Processes
- Organic nature of life is mirrored in photographs
- Theme of Decay and connection with land/nature

‘When she photographs hers and her children’s faces up close, tightly cropped, pressed against the Collodion wet-plate, the surface of the large faces become ‘not so much the outward expressions of individuals as human landscapes in which skin carries the weight of its own decay’.

Mann, Sally, John B. Ravenal, David Levi Strauss & Anne Wilkes Tucker (2010) *The Spirit and the Flesh* New York & Richmond: Aperture & Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



“There is nothing whimsical about digital. No ‘gifts’ occur. It’s too predictable.”





### 3. The Dysfunctional Family

- Richard Billingham
- Marc Asnin
- Masahisa Fukase

#### Richard Billingham: The Dysfunctional Family

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



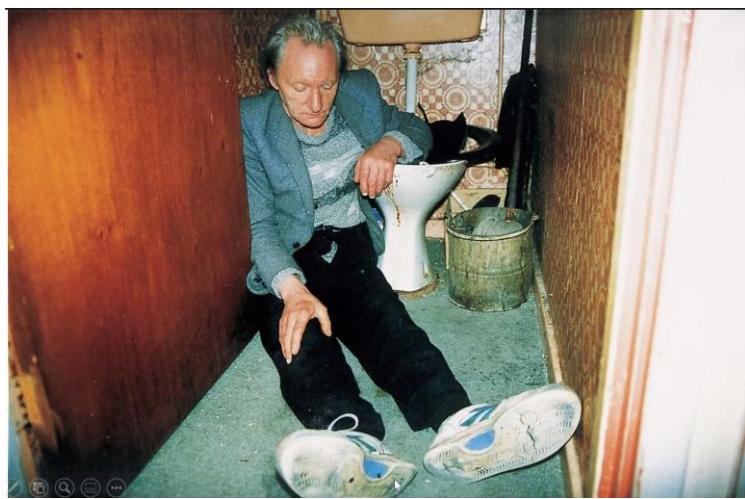
'Not only is the situation unseemly and somewhat repulsive, as the mother hardly conforms to the pattern according to which she has been arranged' (Orskou, 2003)

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



Hatherley wrote in response to Orskou, ...‘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



# Frances Hatherley on Billingham

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

This thesis reclaims and refigures negative stereotypical images of working-class femininity, proposing an “Anti-Pygmalion” aesthetics (referencing Shaw’s Pygmalion) in which pressure to conform to bourgeois notions of respectability is refused in favour of holding onto aspects of working-class female identity which have been treated as faulty and shameful



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

[Jo Spence : From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy | Photographs from the Hyman Collection - Arnolfini](#)

## Mark Asnin: The Crazy Uncle

Long Term Project

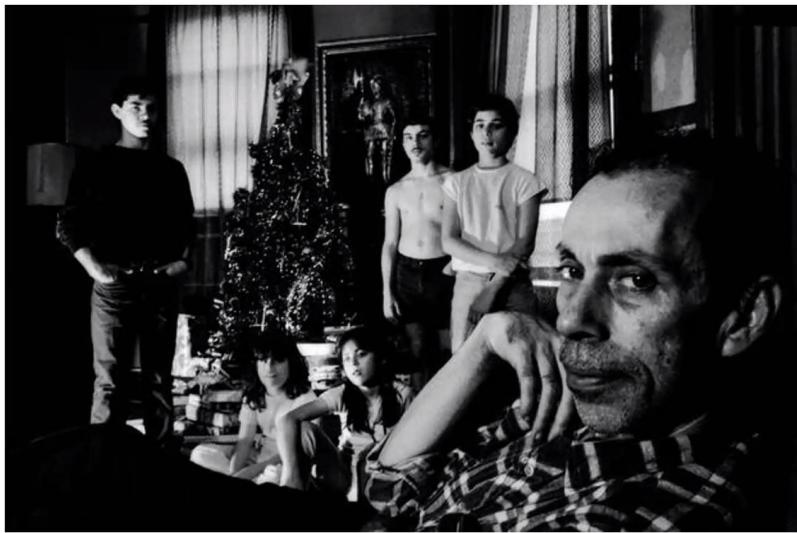
Tragedy

Mental Illness

Traditional Documentary

Brings in Cultural and Historical Elements

<http://blog.photoeye.com/2012/12/book-reviews-uncle-charlie.html>



'Uncle Charlie was my favorite uncle. He's my godfather. My grandfather was a grade-A hood, hustling, pimping women, abusive. My mother got out, but Uncle Charlie never did. My mother made sure I had an education. I went to art school. In 1981, I started realizing that my uncle was an interesting person to take pictures of, and it became my family album.'



'Charlie is fifty-one years old now and his life is a mess. He blames his kids, he blames his ex-wife, he blames my mother? He thinks he is the ultimate victim. I know enough about his life to know how he got there, but emotionally I can't cut him any slack. I know it's because he had an abusive childhood, but that doesn't give you the right to fuck up your kids. Still, you know, I feel for him. He'll always be my Uncle Charlie.'



'And how does Uncle Charlie feel about it all, now the book has been published? "When I gave him a copy he said, 'It's everything you said it would be'. But my uncle thought that his notoriety, him being published, would change his life. That someone would buy him a house. That didn't happen. He has talked about how I'd benefited from his misery – I won the Life magazine award, I was on the Today show – and it has definitely been a theme of contention that I got more than he did."



'Henschke has said he'll meet Asnin "in hell"... Is he really that angry about his portrayal? "On any given day he could have a different feeling towards me. The underlying thing though, I think, is that for 30 years he was interested because he shared those stories and, for whatever reason, it just happened to be that I was the guy he shared that with.'

Asnin, M. (2012) *Uncle Charlie* Rome: Contrasto Books

### Family: Masahisa Fukase



'In the ten or so years of our marriage, he has only seen me through the lens of a camera, never without. And in fact what he saw through the lens was not me, but nothing other than himself.'





'My entire family, whose image I see inverted in the frosted glass, will die one day. This camera, which reflects and freezes their images, is actually a device for archiving death.'

Fukase, M. (2019) *Family* London: Mack Books  
<https://phmuseum.com/news/performance-portraits-revealing-the-death-of-a-family>

## 4, Reconstructing the Family

- Bertien Van Manen
- Mariela Sancari
- Andrea Botto

Bertien van Manen: Easter and Oak Trees



A requiem for her deceased husband  
A homage to the family album  
Blown up from contact prints







Van Manen, B. (2012) Easter and Oak Trees London: Mack Books

## Mariela Sancari – Moises

### S E B U S C A N

**HOMBRES ENTRE 68 y 72 años**  
de edad y con ojos claros, parecidos  
al señor de la foto,  
para formar parte  
de un proyecto  
fotográfico.

Interesados  
comunicarse al  
**15 36097839**

o presentarse en la PLAZA COLOMBIA (Suárez y Brandsen  
/BARRACAS) de lunes a viernes entre 11 y 14:00 horas.





◀ ▶ 🔍

↓





[photobook Moises - YouTube](#)

## Andrea Botto – recreating the past



[https://www.andreabotto.it/en/19-06\\_26-08-1945/](https://www.andreabotto.it/en/19-06_26-08-1945/)

# 19-06\_26-08-1945

This book was created in memory of the return journey from the nazi prisoner-of-war camps, made by my grandfather, from June 19th to the August 26th, 1945.

The images were collected on the internet in July/August 2010, by typing the names of the cities along the journey and the year, for ex. "Hannover 1945", saving the title of the original files, listed at the end of the book.



## Annette Kuhn

### The child I never was

'Photographs are evidence, after all. Not that they are to be taken at face value, necessarily, nor that they mirror the real, nor even that a photograph offers any self-evident relationship between itself and what it shows.' (Kuhn, 145)

If, as this suggests, a photograph can be the site of conflicting memories, whose memory is to prevail in the family archive?

## Paola Jimenez Quispe – Rules for Fighting

One day I googled my dad's name and found an article where I found his photograph. He was covered in blood in the seat of his car. I recognized his shirt. "Rules for fighting" is a project about my father's murder in 1998.

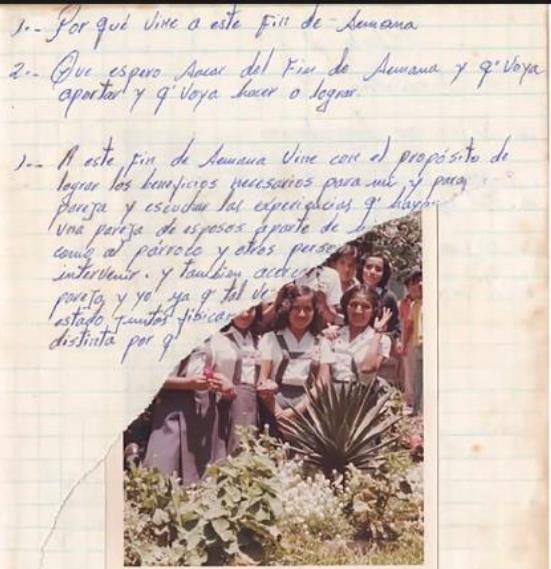
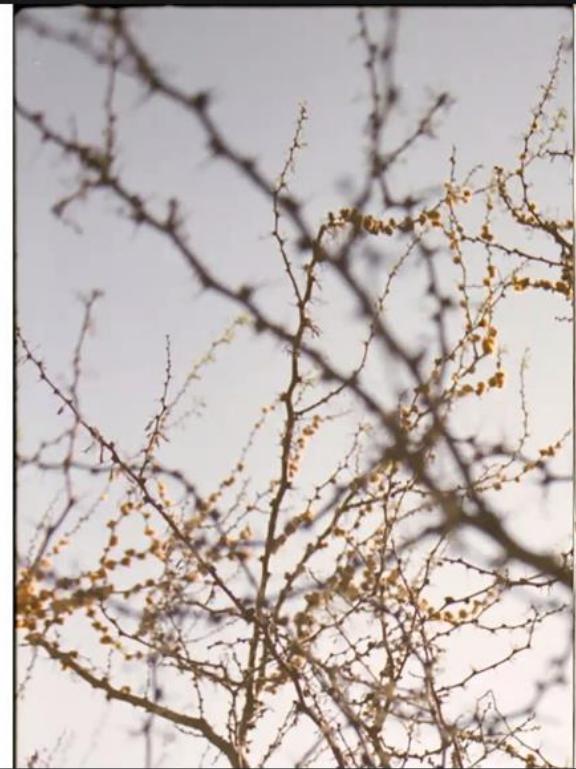
<https://birdinflight.com/special/bif-prize-20-shortlist/bird-in-flight-prize-20-finalist-rules-for-fighting.html>



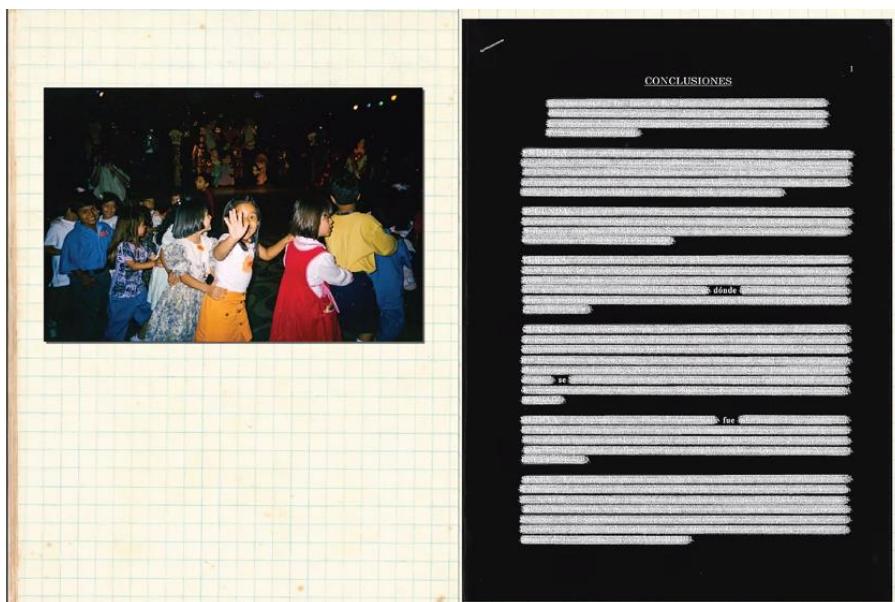
<p>1 debo pensar en que en momento hay algo que solo correcto en mi</p> <p>debo pensar en el amor no a odio</p> <p>pero no desde el momento en que me lastimo</p>  	<p>1. A postura en la Comunicación</p> <p>Reglas de Peleas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Pelean pero sean justos</li><li>2. Mantenganse en el Lema</li><li>3. No ensayen a terceras personas</li><li>4. No dejen caer al pasado</li><li>5. No se insulten. No usen palabras fuertes ni se apodere la desdicha de los demás</li><li>6. Limpie las peleas</li><li>7. Mantengan el buen humor</li><li>8. Cofazos de las manos</li></ul>
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• This is my father and mother at the ages they got married. Next is a page of my father's notebook. He writes "Rules for fighting", from which I took the project name. The rules are:

- 1. Fight but be fair
- 2. Stay on topic
- 3. Do not include third parties
- 4. Don't take things out of the past
- 5. Do not insult each other, do not use hurtful words, or take advantage of the weakness of the other
- 6. Finish the fights
- 7. Keep a good mood
- 8. Hold hands.



'My father and mother wrote in a notebook before getting married. They wrote about love, relationships, parenting, etc. I use these notebooks as a canvas, and I include writings from both of them, and the object itself as I found it. This is my mother in her teens. She met my father when she was 14, and him 17. This is a page of my mother's notebook, and some plants. She loves plants.





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### Larry Sultan: Pictures from Home and the multi-vocal narrative

'Photography is there to construct the idea of us as a great family and we go on vacations and take these pictures and then we look at them later and we say, 'Isn't this a great family?'

So photography is instrumental in creating family not only as a memento, a souvenir, but also a kind of mythology.'

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/photography/genius/gallery/sultan.shtml>



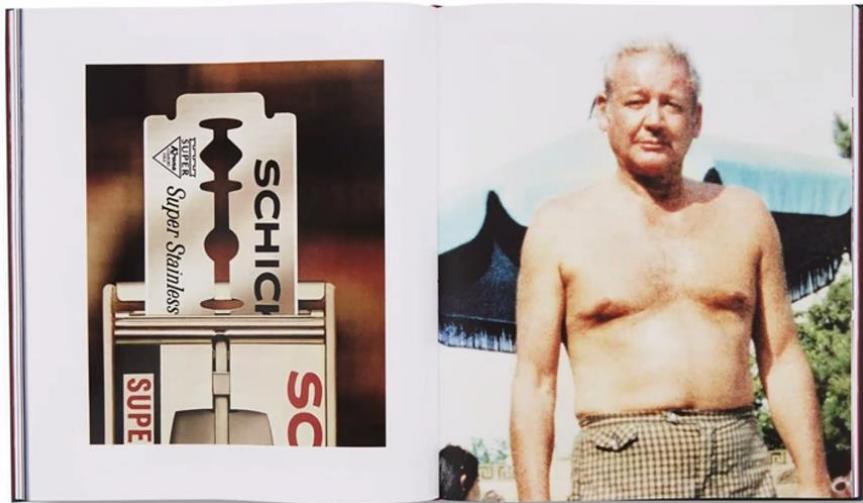


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- Larry Sultan's Voice
- Father's Voice
- Mother's Voice
- Corporate pictures
- Home movie stills
- Larry Sultan's large format pictures
- Family History
- Social History (the move west)
- Corporate History

'By taking stills, I've transformed the movies themselves. If it was just the movies, their general effect would be that kind of edited, distilled recreation of cultural history. By isolating stills, I can make my own incision. The off-moments, that look of worry on someone's face, in the middle of all this...'

<http://larrysultan.com/gallery/home-movie-stills/#>



""In fact you went even further you said, 'That's not me sitting on the bed that's you sitting on the bed. That's a self portrait'. And I thought that was right. And you said this too, you said 'Any time you show that picture you tell people that that's not me sitting on the bed looking all dressed up and nowhere to go, depressed. That's you sitting on the bed and I am happy to help you with the project but let's get things straight here!'"'

Sultan, L. (2017) *Pictures from Home* London: Mack Books



## Irvin Sultan

""I'd get set, I'd get comfortable and he says to me 'Don't smile', which would absolutely irritate me because when he says 'Don't smile' in my own mind I have no idea what he is projecting. What is he trying to tell me to do?" "I remember that picture so distinctly sitting on the bed, shirt and tie dressed up and I looked like a full on lost soul and I look at the picture and I say "That's not me!"

- "All I know is that you have some stake in making us look older and more despairing than we really feel. I really don't know what you are trying to get at."

# Debsuddho Bannerjee – Swati and Gayatri



