THE ETHICS OF THE PICTURE DESK

AN INVESTIGATION

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THE NEWSPAPER AS PRODUCT

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The images we receive from the press appear to have authority.We are being told something by someone who is in a position to tell us.

We consume by reading the text and 'reading' the image.We do not look away as we might whilst viewing Cinema or Television images.The newspaper has been bought and it is our duty to consume the content.The photographs placed in paper appear via a system of editorial control as established and directed as is the text.In this case I wish to examine the question of editorial responsibility and 'taste' with reference to images of the human body in the reportage of human disasters.

The images we see passed two editorial stages,the first being the will of the photographer assigned to the event;the second the decision of the Picture Editor on the staff of the newspaper.

There is a common fallacy that the press photographer will photograph anything;this view is reinforced when Television news shows a prominent person making a statement with a cluster of camera crews and photographers.In fact the single photographer has to constantly analyse a situation and to frame a section of the event in order to create an image that will convey information.

Photographers have described the mental process of observing a situation and the taking of photographs.There is never reference to the technical operation.Cameras and lenses are tools to be operated.The particular 'creative' operation often depends on a particular lens and its use,that in turn is often dictated by the physical situation.

What is of deeper concern is the moral act committed whilst taking a photograph.

To a photographer of experience,there is little formulation before the event.When the 'pre- image'(1) is seen s/he awaits the best moment to release the shutter.The timing of the release is the moral commitment

What proves this as a moral act is the possibility that the photographer would NOT take a picture of a circumstance that would offend the potential reader of the Newspaper.The situation for the photographer is more urgent than that of a reporter.There are modes of style which can imply destruction or death,but the physical presence of the camera allow no screens of respectability.

The only screen is the consciousness of the photographer acting in the accelerated heat of the moment.

The second screening or editorial process is under less harrowing circumstances,but has a higher level of responsibility.The picture desk receives an average of 250 pictures of a given event.There are two main sources of images,a highly ordered'Wire'service (REUTERS,AP,Etc) and the product of the newspapers staff photographers.

As there are technical limitations of space,little of the material can be used,and a few pictures must 'explain' the situation.
One picture will be selected to 'lead' the story,the rest to fill in detail,often competing for space with factual illustrations.
The Picture Editor needs an image that can offer graphic information and,less importantly,an aesthetic comparable with the photographic 'style' of the Newspaper.Here there is further control and decision. The desk has to run a particular picture which will show a potentially horrific situation,will inform the reader,but will not pass an innate barrier of emotional taste.In order to understand the various influences and emotions which define the decisions,I have interviewed the Picture Editors of the GUARDIAN and the INDEPENDENT.(2)
To get a more general insight,I have discussed the morality of photography with Hurst P.Rinehart and Paul Trevor.(3) The photographer John Voos at the INDEPENDENT has explained the method of working as a press photographer.(4)
The question of taste and what is acceptable for inclusion in a newspaper is not subject to inflexible rules,but is often a case of the personal decision of one journalist.The style of a newspaper develops and changes over a period of time; what might appear reasonable now would seem offensive to the previous generation.
Modern Journalism has become more violent as the events of the world become more violent.We are not offered discreet images,we are injected into the presence of death and destruction.There is an argument that events have to be shown so that the public may be aware of a situation in order to press for change,but this is often an excuse for glorification of horror.In terms of attention,images are not only stronger than words,but can but can be 'read' faster:the eye so fixed will instil desire for the copy to be consumed.
In this investigation I intend to screen the emotion of both the photographer and of the journalists who translate the raw images to the page.
Producers and custodians of the image have a certain responsibility toward those who receive them,the image and the word are a reflection of the conduct of society,and here I propose to observe that process.

A Newspaper,though transitory,is a product.It is the surface representation of a complex system of networks which supply the operation with factual content,reported analysis and personal commentary.This is put together with paid advertising material.The Newspaper is a stable product,homogenising reported input into a formulaic style of graphic presentation with 'news' and 'comment'apparently neatly separated

The Newspaper can be expected;it is reassuring.It is bought regularly by the satisfied reader who recognises a consistency of editorial style, political placement and intellectual standing.The reader requires to be informed and requires the paper to present an amusing or authoritative standing. The paper would be chosen for the political leaning or by it's perceived level of 'independence' from overt political tendencies.A reader might wish to be identified with established authority or a more liberal commentary.A Newspaper which has internal problems or change in corporate control might increase its incline toward a particular political direction.The newspaper is a particular edifice,rarely changing it's political position.As 'news' is gathered,so it is tempered by the 'tone'of the publication.It is possible to see traces of political direction by standard references to particular groups or organisations.The simple connotation of'Terrorist'or'Freedom fighter'for example neatly provides a classification.The newspaper consistently sees itself as a moral arbiter,dictating a position to the readers often in a paternal,if not patronizing,tone.There are three decending levels of comment:the'Leader',which is unsigned,the column by a signed journalist,and the less affected news report by a particular journalist for the newspaper,often a correspondent with a geographical or subject specialization.

Reports of a lesser nature are usually Wire Service material; news does not just decend upon the newspaper.A service team exists to manage input from foreign correspondents and to re direct resources to new areas of interest.

A sequence of events might be as follows.At a given event,the first reports are often given by the national news service (Wire Service).This depends on the State;the 'Service'can often suppress the news,ignore it or water down the content.This technological censorship now has a declining effect:the news and pictures from Tianamen Square were FAXed from private telephone lines.A news desk has several options;there might be a local correspondent or at least an individual or official who could be persuaded to give an aural account.This would be the first line for Radio reportage and provide the news desk with a situation to write up as a first report.A national writer or 'stringer'(known freelance) would appear followed by a photographer and additional news team,followed by TV crews.

The newspaper picture desk would now have early visual reports.The first might be from national TV (subject to the above control) this would be photographed off screen from satellite transmission.Next would come FAX transmissions from photographers sent out either at negative stage transmitted via special transmission equipment,or as prints.Further material would come by special courier.By this time a sophisticated system of communication would have been established.One would assume that still video and portable satellite will further add to this sophistication.

It could be assumed from the above that the picture desk is obsessed with speed and prepared to print the first image it receives.This is not entirely the case.A story 'breaking' would obviously need images to establish the tone of the report,but the strength of the photojournalist is to work round the event and provide a bank of images to make the coverage more personal.It is not enough to send a photographer just to record material purely for instant news value,any news event will need more extended coverage to provide images for a continuing assessment of the situation.

It is at this stage that the newspaper has to assert the moral tone at least in the selection of images.It is not my intention to compare the so called 'Quality' papers with the 'Tabloid' press- rather to investigate the current graphic morality of the A B media scale papers.I say morality because images are as much content as words in our diet of consumption.

Certain images are not expected;some are.Certain images will offend because we do not expect to see certain realities in print before us.We expect to see a formal representation of national figures,a sentimental portrayal of victims of circumstance,(I think known of as'Courage of...'in this trade) and a graphic but not crude presentation of national disasters.

We do not expect certain images of death.These might be observed by the members of the press but we do not want to see them at the breakfast table.We expect the editorial group to arrange matters,to process the images,and give us our daily read.

1:2

NEWS VALUES
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We expect news; we are conditioned to receive news at specific times and in a specific form.Unconsciously we assume that the news as given to us is a direct account and is unbiased.After the consumption of written or broadcast news a muted sense of disbelief might evolve.One's mind turns to what the item might have been,what has been processed,left out, 'turned' to provide a political slant.There are codes and references,ways of address,implied assumptions of guilt or innocence.

Value must be placed on news in order to conform to the patterns of presentation. Demands of space or time give the news it's value.Media presentation of news is a rigid structure.Systems exist to gather and contain repeated events.A value system operates in rigid form allocating pages and sections.Thus,pages have 'Home News','Foreign News'etc.,neatly organising our sense of priority.These pages can expand or contract to fit the degree of information.Matters editorial, artistic, or financial are fixed in form and merely rotate content to fit editorial planning.The front page can exist as a menu in quiet times,or as a blank canvas in times of disaster.

News value can be seen to increase in scale when there is an element of breakdown introduced to the quotidian flow of life. Threat to our stable way of life is the most emotionally upsetting condition but,paradoxically,we must consume the bad tidings as soon as possible.We must be told,we must be shown the film and later the pictures on the printed page.In detail. The more tragic the tale the more space must be found.The front page becomes less the menu,more the poster.Inside,we are told, there will be more.Indeed there is.The Home pages now assume the catalogue of despair.The paradox of consumption now becomes the paradox of supply.

Ingeniously, the former pages,neatly filled with 'soft' reports,now show the different views,the closeup and the wideangle.Humour and anecdote vanish,hard presentation becomes the norm.To be specific,one could say that the amount of death or injury becomes the scale of reporting.Or the immediacy of the event.'Home' tragedy becomes more newsworthy than'Away'. Foreigners are distanced,possibly less human.As the distance increases,so does the distancing of emotion.And,to bring the degree of attention full circle,the size of the report.So,as the event recedes in time the value decreases.Reintroduction of interest in the form of an inquiry or legal forms of redress in the courts of law produces a reintroduction of images.These are now less specific,more of an anecdotal,symbolic form.They are triggers to the past images which remain in our collective memory.The Home pages revert to style,a landscape,Nuns playing Snooker perhaps.The space is elastic,One waits for the next time.

2:1

THE TASK OF THE PICTURE EDITOR

Page 8

There are six main sources of images feeding to the Picture Desk.Historically,the main source was,and is,the 'Wire Service'a name derived from telephonic,now electronic transmission of images via land and satellite lines direct to the Picture Desk.This service is contractual,the Newspaper having a continuous feed of current news images selected by a separate company, REUTERS, ASSOCIATED PRESS,and PRESS ASSOCIATION.Photographic prints and electronic images shown on a video screen comprise the bulk of raw material.With current news events,the paper will have i'ts own staff photographers and hopeful freelances contributing material.This input could be said to be 'directed'as the Picture Editor controls his own staff and will be able to give them themes or areas to work on.The freelances might have their own style or, by means of location,have a head start in time and be able to submit material as the story 'breaks'.

In the case of the wire picture,the common content is that of information,the 'WHO/WHAT/WHERE' style of approach.This is to be expected,as speed precludes style,whereas the committed staff member will often be hired for his or her 'style' This,with the word 'creatively be difficult to analyse.The style of a particular picture is influenced by the intelligent use of lens and the placing of the viewpoint together with skilful arrangement of content,often with elements of content juxtaposed for humour or visual attraction.

The Picture Editor has to sort through a vast input to select material for both news and editorial content. Invariably,overseas events will be covered by wire and it is necessary to have the best cover appropriate to the weight of the story.These pictures will be 'Documentary' in the true sense of the word,a visual presentation of an event, rather than an illustration tempered by interpretation.

The pictorial input by the staff photographers and some freelances will differ in that they will have a personal way of producing photographs.Photographers often have their own approach to their subject,their own sense of proportion and taste.These are emotional contributions,and the Picture Editor will use these as a guide to choosing who will photograph what.

Although a photographer might be considered 'hard' or 'soft',all are trained by experience to capture the event. But some might be considered to have a particular area in which they excel.Thus a Sports photographer might devise a particular angle of view with remote equipment to produce an unusual picture.

Editorial decision is not just the quality of the particular picture.The overall visual design of the paper is the responsibility of a Design Director or Editor who will need to work with the Picture Editor to agree on visual balance.

In order to understand this process of what picture might achieve publication,I interviewed the Picture Editor of the Guardian,Eamon McCabe,previously a noted sports photographer with the Observer.I was particularly concerned with the events at the Heysl Stadium tragedy. There was a situation where fans were pressed to a wall which was in danger of collapse.

He described to me the particular emotions.He was there as a sports photographer for the Observer and,as he pointed out, these photographers are more tuned to catch a fraction of movement than others.He described his feelings as automatic.

"The adrenalin pumps and you chase"The pictures were taken without any prior decision making;it was important to expose the film and to record the event.He wanted to make"A fair representation of what happened" I put it to him that there were other pictures taken later which showed the bodies of the supporters,and if he were to choose between them which would he print as Picture Editor.He pointed out that his photograph showed the event but contained elements of hope;the others showed no respect for the dead.I asked him if there was a particular code or outline of practise in relation to the selection of photographs.He repeatedly said that the decision was a 'gut' reaction that he or his colleagues would take.If there was a serious conflict or indecision he would refer to the Editor.

However 'Automatic' his feelings were,he recalled that later,when viewing footage of the Hillsborough tragedy, He mentally returned to the scene and felt a severe reaction.

I have found that the question of 'Taste' a difficult matter to resolve in this respect,especially as the press has a duty to report the news,and a particular newspaper has it's own character as viewed by the public.It would seem that the individual journalists have their own idea of their own newspaper and a form of self control inspired by that idea. A particular newspaper forges its own character by the ideals and campaigns it follows and the political bias of its writers.The public will choose from the available views and tone and vote with their purchase of the paper.

In contrast to the GUARDIAN,the INDEPENDENT has a professed harder line in the use of pictures.I interviewed Chris McKane,the Picture Editor,with respect to his attitude toward photography and to the use of photographs in his paper.He has a particular regard to his photographers,requiring them to be intelligent,well read and aware of their subject.

> "I am entirely happy to defer to the photographers to edit their own material,it's up to them to produce two or three prints that they are proudest to see in the paper and it is my job to get them in"

The INDEPENDENT has a certain reputation for the quality of its photography.At the launch of the paper pictures were given a high priority in terms of space allowed,and there was a distinct pictorial elegance in the style of the pictures.

> "We took in four or five photographers who had for many years been feeling thwarted in the display of their pictures,and they were given free reign...the combination of that and the space available in the paper,better reproduction,better newsprint,is not a combination that had arisen before"

I tried again to elicit policy about the inclusion of pictures which might cause offence,referring to the tragedy of Hillsborough stadium and to the Clapham train crash.

> "I was the picture editor on that Sunday and obviously an awful lot of material had arrived by then and I discussed with the Editor broadly what type of picture we would use and we both decided that we would not use pictures of people who were clearly dead"

There were complaints to the Press Council about the coverage of the disaster:

> "The press Council found that close-up pictures of people who were dead or dying might be objectionable"

We discussed the matter of house policy toward acceptable pictures and the operations of the individual photographer:

> "You can't have a house policy laid down because the photographer always has the choice wether he is going to take the picture at all-so he is in the editing role"

Earlier I had been shown a picture that might have been the first Marathon fatality;he compared this to pictures from further afield:

> "..It depends where the corpse is.If we are going to be really cynical about this,bodies of Afghan terrorists in Kabul..I know that I don't apply the same judgements to those pictures as to the Marathon one..if that man had been dead...people that die in far away places...one has fewer qualms about"

It was clear at this stage of the conversation that McKane had complete faith in his photographers,but before further eulogies there were a few comments on the procedure of news photography.

A key,though possibly obscure,question remained on my question sheet:I have always asked photographers if they would NOT take a photograph at a given scene; the question would induce a short moment of thought,a possible moment of salvation,but rarely would they admit to a downing of tools.McCabe said that he had not taken a picture,but after added that the Germans and Italians behind him had done so; McKane had shown me a copy of STERN Magazine with all the pictures he had not used.

> "I don't think that in that case(5) it was Eamon's business to decide what he was not going to photograph on grounds of personal taste; to that extent a photographer is an operative of the camera...I think David Ashdown should have got closer at Hillsborough...I think it is only the best photographers that know what they are photographing ...most of them would just bang on"

It would seem at the INDEPENDENT that although news urgency is as acute as other media,the editorial approach is that the photographer is considered to be truly a reporter with a camera and is expected to research and investigate his story.

> "The paradox of the freedom that we give to our photographers to operate puts an enormous amount of responsibility on them...some other papers would say send all your stuff back and we would decide here;our way is to give him the opportunity to think about what he has done, why he has done it,and why it should be published.And then he will be involved in the final decision...I put intelligence,awareness of news and the fact that we are looking for thoughtful photographers.I will trust their judgement in the situation and the sort of picture they are going to take"

To balance the management view,I briefly spoke to John Voos,one of the photographers mentioned in the interview.I asked him about the editorial freedom and its effect on his work.

> "In effect they have cut the leash:you go out and it's on your back and you have total freedom,but you have more responsibility -and so therefore it is an individual thing, it is your interpretation and when it is more individual you have the tendency to argue harder when you come back"

I asked him about his emotions whilst shooting and what he might or might not photograph:

> "You would take pictures that were unacceptable...you have in mind the pictures you can't get-you take a photograph that would suggest the death toll without showing so much detail that it would put people off their cornflakes...in that process you would get things that were unacceptable.In hard news photography you are going for what it is all about;and when you get it you can't use it because it upsets people-there is a dilemma there-what if that person died and the husband picked up the INDEPENDENT the next day?"

The circumstance of taking a photograph,the instant realization that one will take the moment and freeze it for use later,needs to be defined.I have outlined the area of institutional motivation, but here I wish to try to examine the personal motivation behind the urge to record.It might be useful to compare the photographer with the footsoldier.In terms of mental and physical equipment,there is a parallel.The term 'Location' in film parlance refers to anywhere outside the studio,ie.the technical mothership of production.The term 'Field' is used to denote the sphere of war.A photographer on location is therefore fully prepared for 'Action',ready to 'Shoot' film.As is the soldier ready to shoot in his particular way,in his particular field.It is tempting to take the analogy further:does the soldier go on Safari to eliminate'Gooks',or is he a legitimate fighting unit ? And with what respect does the photographer approach the subject.To a photographer indulging in reportage the field is clear.Anything can be seen,anything can be used for the camera.Indeed the photographer's indulgence,unconscious or not,is that to photograph is to make real,and that which is not photographed has no value.

Susan Sontag(1978) reminds us in 'On Photography'that in Jean Luc Godard's'Les Cabiniers' the two scrofulous peasants return not with loot or gold,but with Postcards."Godard's gag vividly parodies the equivocal magic of the photographic image. Photographs are perhaps the most mysterious of all the objects that make up,and thicken,the environment we recognise as modern.Photographs really are experience captured,and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood."(6)

Photography during war has long been an attraction to photo-journalists,as the Cabiniers return with the Postcards,so do the photographers with the latest batch of war reportage.There is a curious emotion when confronted with these images-a war has been fought away from us;here is the proof-not statistical 'proof',but the image of the dead enemy.We faintly distrust film,knowing that it can be arranged and contrived,but a 'real' photograph is a confirmation of conflict.

In order to expand on the personality of photographers,I interviewed two contrasting photographers.Paul Trevor is a photographer/writer whose work encompasses social documentary reportage(EXIT Group)(7) and and books concerned with the use of the image.His most recent work is CONSTANT EXPOSURE.(8)
Hurst Palfey Reinehart is an American photographer who served in the Vietnam war.His experience amongst photographers and troops is used to examine the work of Don McCullin,(9) and in some way to understand the motivation of photographers in the theatre of war.
Reinehart was conscripted into the US Army and trained as a medical assistant.Posted to Vietnam,he describes the atmosphere:

> "Let me put it this way,the difference between civilian life in America and being in the Army,is like difference between living now and two centuries ago and then living in the Army and being in Vietnam is like living two centuries ago and being on the planet Mars.And the difference in being in Nam and being on the front line is like being sane on a different planet and being insane. Actually living in a nightmare"

I asked him to recall his service time and if he had encountered any war photographers.He described the reaction of the men:

> "The attitude of the guys in my Regiment,which was basically a front line Regiment,they were out there fighting for their lives everyday-the guys that were the meat and potatoes of our Regiment-if they saw Tim Page come along they thought oh no,I wish he wasn't here, because they knew if he was here,that it was going to be the roughest fighting of the scene,because he of course was looking to be in that kind of area.He and the late Sean Flinn would get stoned and ride into a free fight zone on a Honda just to get pictures-they were crazy."

Reinehart purchased some cameras in the PX and proceeded to record both civilian and army experiences.He would carry cameras on duty with his medical kit:

> "I remember a Sergeant one time-they were bringing wounded men off a 'chopper and the Sergeant said to me'Get the hell outa here Reinehart you goddam idiot..you don't take pictures of this kinda thing'...inside of myself I felt that this kind of thing should have pictures taken of it... people should somewhere know what is going on in the world and photography above all reveals a lot of truth in what's going on."

At this point I felt that we should discuss certain pictures from the book "Hearts of Darkness" by Don McCullin.

The photograph,on page 28,is described:Vietnamese civilian injured by American hand grenades,Hue,1968.His reaction:

> "There is the man sitting there,hunkering down with a child between his legs about four.And the child's eyes are bright and clear,and the man is looking into space with what appears to be blood all over them;his hands over her dress.They actually look incredibly undisturbed don't they...and that's disturbing.The photograph is incredibly artistically composed-it's a certain kind of passivity that comes from people heavily shocked,stunned."

My questions became more complex,confused,as we both struggled to articulate.Should these pictures be taken?

> "...should people take photographs in this situation? the answer is yes.Should they be published,the answer is yes...the pages of newspapers should be covered with them...so people know that human beings every day every second of their lives are going through this and there should not be too much commentary on this except on,what can we do to stop this thing going on-it should be on the front page of the New York Times along with the politicians,the warmongers who allow it to happen."

We discussed the treatment of the war dead,if there was respect in disposal:

> "I saw them take Vietnamese bodies and pile them up and burn them like cordwood"

I turned to other pictures and we came to picture 45 and 46 ; 45 a headless corpse and 46 a close up of a head distorted by decomposition.What goes through the mind in that occasion:

> "I would say that he (McCullin) is a very brave and strong man in order to do it-he didn't take that picture with carelessness,it caused him a lot of pain to take that picture,this child(in fact a NVA soldier)half of his body burnt away...if you want to get fussy there is a certain spiritual beauty in that photograph,it indicates that the photographer was sensitive to the horror and trauma of these people..what right do I have of taking pictures of these people unless I make sure that other people see it with the hope of stopping this kind of thing"

At the conclusion of the interview I felt that we had covered enough ground: I knew that to remind someone of a war is to disturb memories and that these particular memories had caused harm to my host.

With respect to Paul Trevor,I intended to interview a photographer who did not work within the Press situation in order to have an informed view,but one that was within the world of Publishing and independent work.We discussed various images and their effect on Society.

As a concerned photographer who publishes his own work-at a loss-I asked him about the dignity of the subject.A particular project(10) had taken him to many neglected areas and had involved him photographing people who were almost derelict:

> "I showed you a slide earlier of this character who was a cripple an alcoholic,a wreck,a human wreck:and in the circumstances-a project about inner city crisis- it seemed to fit perfectly well but there were considerations;the man has relatives,if the man is so out of it that he would never know the photograph has been used,certainly his relatives might easily have been upset,distressed-so you have to consider other people as well,not just the person photographed.Ultimately the picture deprived him of his rights to dignity"

Trevor has a great distrust of the media;he considers the image is lost when taken from the photographer/author.As with most reportage photographers he will be open to any opportunity:

> "My working rule is that I will photograph anything and everything as long as the taking of photographs does not put anyones life in jeopardy and it is only later that I have the opportunity to decide wether it should be published or not so the actual decision to release a picture into the outside world is made under entirely different circumstances.I have a tremendous distrust of just about anybody and everybody when it comes to handling my work"

He feels newspapers distort reality;that they process and omit; and they are not to be trusted.That they have little moral respect and are to be avoided in terms of factual truth.

> "If the truth could be gleaned by looking at newspapers then we are living in a very strange world-there is no doubt about that;newspapers are reflecting somebody's truth,but it is certainly not my truth or the truth of the way most people live their everyday life.but it is certainly the way truth is reflected and to me a grotesque travesty of truth"

On the Qualities power and situation:

> "They have pretensions.They give a more considered and a more articulate spiel on events but if you look at them you get an ideological perspective.In a way that is quite interesting;what newspapers really give you is who has the power to define reality"

He feels that British society is visually weak;that we are literate and that this precludes proper attention to photographs and the visual arts.He sees everyday images as banal and society as uncomprehending:

> "We are very literary-and we are very literal in our image making as well;the authority of picture editors is weak.In Britain it is a word based culture:the word is paramount"

He combines feeling with an acerbic humour:I felt I had to test his moral deliberation:

> "I can categorically say that if a certain political party wanted to use an image and I was not sympathetic to that group,no amount of money would allow me to give them that picture"

R.C.:"Unless the no amount of money became quite attractive?"

P.T.:"And then I would regard it as stealing from them and find it totally acceptable."

It is very expensive to remain on the outskirts of visual production,and it is with some strength that Trevor remains independent of the picture desk and of the newspaper's ideology. His work remains in the book and in the gallery and exists in a curious negative anger.He recalls an Exhibition:

> "I remember reading a review in the Sunday Press on Joseph Koudelka...an exhibition that was stunning, monumental,breathtaking-he summed it up in about two sentences...it was just gibberish-he was totally unqualified to deal with this kind of work and he was the visual critic...a complete nincompoop to review it and that for me summed up the minor tragedy that goes for the Visual Arts in Britain"

It would be wrong to think that independent freelance photographers have the only hold on the moral aesthetic,but there is a need for small voices to be heard if we need to educate this minor tragedy.

SELF CENSORSHIP AND CONTROL

The photographer has a duty to himself and to the person seeing his work.As the method of transmission is complex,the various pressures and constraints should be noted.Work,for a photographer,is either a contractual operation or a personal desire to confront issues and produce work that will explain feeling and promote change.In both cases the personal and private emotions will effect the way in which work is undertaken.If the work is of a contractual nature,the photographer has to take on the ideological constraints of the employer.This might or might not be apparent at the outset,as the final use of the work is not determined by the photographer.If,for example, we take the documentary photographic essay,some idea of the subject might be in the form of a news item which should be investigated,or a more researched situation which needs specific illustration.In both cases the photographer has an obligation to understand a circumstance and interpret a situation.

The background feelings of a particular journal are usually self evident.A responsible Editor will outline the circumstances of the proposed confrontation of the photographer with his or her subject, and give guidelines as to possible problems.The photographer will have to prepare operational minutiae of detail and prepare mentally for the change in cultural circumstances.Unintelligent planning or disregard for new cultural situations do not provide an easy environment for fruitful work.

In the case of work of a more personal nature,the idealism and motivation rest with the personal conscience of the individual photographer.The object of the work should be thought out,and the addressee considered.Self control and rational presentation is more effective when the subject is analysed and planned.

Photography is obsessional,and the operators are in turn obsessed.We are given obscure statements to digest:
"I photograph to find out what something will look like photographed" (Winogrand)"Photography is a tool for dealing with things everybody knows about but isn't attending to.My photographs are intended to represent something you don't see" (Gowin) "The camera is a fluid way of encountering that other reality" (Uelsmann)(10)

What reality,indeed.Photography has been described as not an art,more than a craft,something nearer to chess or music; something that is to do with both the spirit and the tangible; No wonder the Critics are confused.

There is a central paradox in the news photograph.The image is a temporal arrest of the subject.It records,faithfully,the moment of time,the dispersion of objects,the age and expressions of the subjects.Thus frozen,the image is reproduced.Wether of important news or of passing report,the time is fixed.Within twenty four hours this fixture is used up;the use and the importance so energetically created is over and the material is filed,possibly forgotten.It now assumes the historical fact: at that time and at that place such existed and that this is proof.Time passes and time has been replaced.

Past is now a reality that has been lost,but we can keep the image for as long as we like.

In his 'Reflections on Photography'(11) Roland Barthes sees this moment of time to be a powerful emotional event.He considers the picture:the sense of reality,the information,the 'air' emanating from the composition,and the historical importance.This is the nature of STUDIUM,the'average effect',a geography of visual importance,a reference that can be arranged and given notation.What gives the photograph a unique importance is the ability to strike out at the viewer to affect the psyche.

"This second element which will disturb the STUDIUM I shall therefore call the PUNCTUM; for PUNCTUM is also:sting, speck, cut, little hole--and also a cast of the dice.A Photographs's PUNCTUM is that accident which pricks me(but also bruises me,is poignant to me)."

He later refers to the PUNCTUM in terms of time past:

"I now know that there exists another PUNCTUM (another 'stigmatum') than the'detail.' This new PUMCTUM.which is no longer of form but intensity,is Time,the lacerating emphasis of the noeme(that has been),its pure representation."

This analysis brings to a point the reaction to a picture. However transitory our reactions to a picture it will affect us. The eye will observe arrangements of content and interpretations of event.Thus fused is the photograph,the distillation,behind the print as it were, in the eye of the Operator,the person whose own,personal vision and emotional concerns has decided that the moment should be recorded.The photograph is at the same time a window and a barrier.

A window in the Modernist sense;to imply the gifted attitude and presence of the photographer who is imbued with the ability to transform the moment of reality into print and a barrier in the sense that we 'receive' the finished work with no instruction or information.We might know of a place or time; possibly we recognise the person,but there is a need for our interpretation,the more of a historical difference in time the less we are able to merge with the picture.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the newspaper is a tangible product expressing the views,opinions and concerns of its member journalists,together with what is seen to be news appropriate to the interests of the class which includes those journalists.

We are conditioned to receive a regular supply of information and in a format and style which is acceptable to our personal aesthetic.Despite small variations the Broadsheet Qualities exhibit similar design and layout.

The use of Photography is dependant on the perceived value or scale of the news and the pagination of the paper.The size of a picture will depend on the drama content of the news or the aesthetic use it will bring to a feature article.

In selecting the images for a particular story the Picture Editor has to select pictures that will inform the text and will impart as much information or graphic impact as can be had.The photograph is a balance to a story and can express the essence with far more speed than the written word.Indeed the graphic portrayal of an event might be our only remembrance of that event.The power of the image then gives the setting for the required information,with the eye held and the image fixed.

In this examination I have tried to understand the various emotions and concerns which orbit the editorial desk and the selection of the image.I have found that few fixed rules apply and the allocation of images is subject to severe stresses of time and space.

The photographer/journalist has to select and control his vision in order to satisfy the style of the newspaper but also to convey as much information as possible.

With regard to the presentation of a disaster,there is too much concern with graphic portrayal of death.There is a professed desire to explain but this masks a morbid desire to titillate and shock.

We have seen that the image has power and that it fixes time more readily than memory.That power is to be used with care.

NOTES

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1. I would designate 'pre image' as the moment where the photographer has framed the picture and has finally decided to release the shutter.

2. Taped interviews with Author: McCabe 3/1/90
McKane 23/4/90.

3 As above:Reinhart 18/4/90;Trevor17/4/90

4 As above:Voos 23/4/90.

5 Heysl: see McCabe page 9

6 Sontag;see Bibliography.

7 EXIT Group;see TREVOR :Bibliography

8 Trevor;see as above

9 McCullin;see Bibliography

10 As quoted in Sontag.

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2 Philip Jones Griffiths Vietnam Inc. (Collier Books New York 1971)

3 Donald McCullin The Destruction Business (Open gate Books/Macmillian 1971 London)

4 Don(ald) McCullin Hearts of Darkness (Secker&Warburg 1980 london)

5 Susan Sontag On Photography (Allen Lane London 1978)

6 Paul Trevor [EXIT] Survival Programmes (Open University Press 1982)

7 Paul Trevor Constant Exposure (Proper Pictures 1987) [ISBN 1870481003]