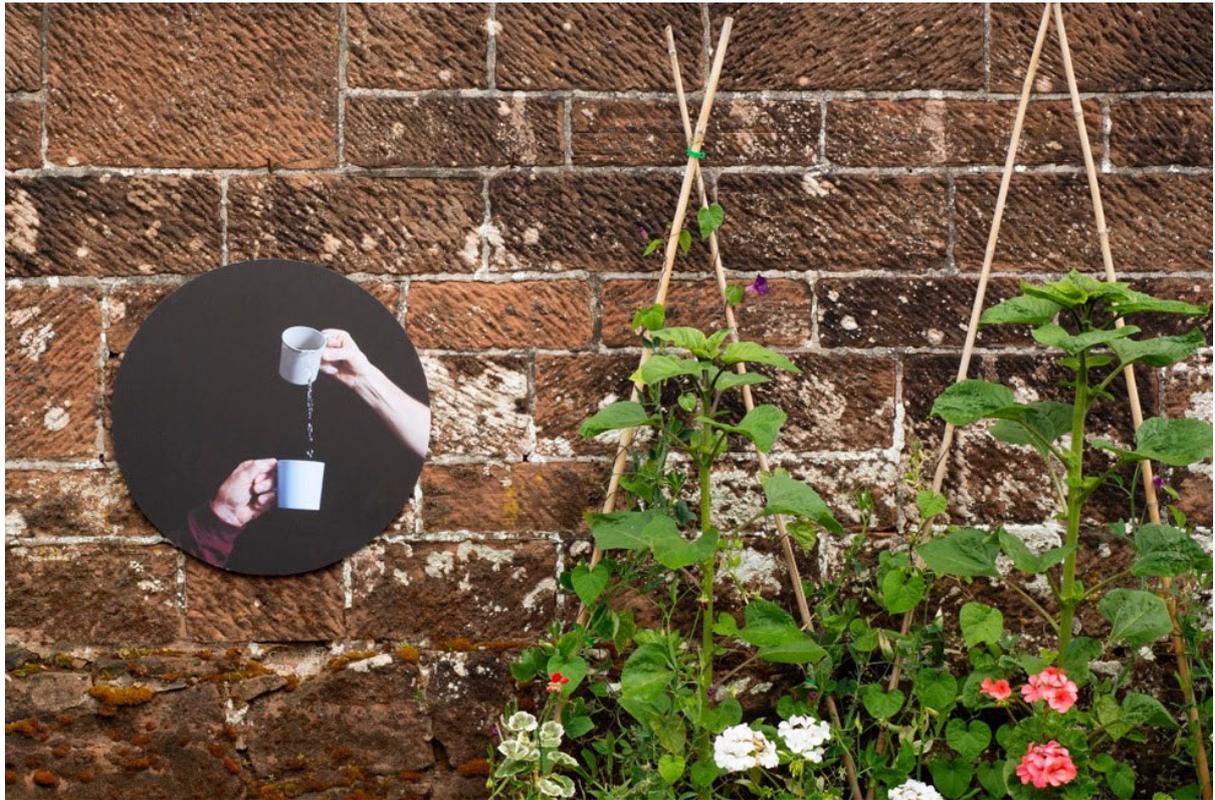# Imagining a Polyvocal Prison Image Archive

Dialogical photography and the aesthetics of ethics in spaces of incarceration

Alice Myers - PhD Thesis

Glasgow School of Art – School of Fine Art

July 2024

Cup of Tea 4 You + Me *by AK, BMB, JP, NC, SW, YB and Alice Myers*
Installation View, HMP Dumfries gardens

Student Declaration

I, **Alice Myers** declare that the enclosed submission for the degree of **PhD by Practice** and consisting of a **written thesis and portfolio** meets the regulations stated in the Research Degrees Guidance for the mode of submission selected and approved by the Research Degrees Committee.

I declare this submission is (please check appropriate box):

☒ is my own work, and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

☐ is work done in collaboration with _____ The parameters of the collaboration have been ascertained within the submission and the extent of my own work has been clearly marked. It has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Signed,

Date   22/07/24

Supervisor Support:

Signed,

Dr Gina Wall   Date   23/07/24

Abstract

Working creatively and collaboratively with photography in a prison is ethically fraught, due to the historical symbiosis of prisons and photography, and the stark inequity between incarcerated and non-incarcerated people. This practice-based research project explores methods for turning towards and articulating these challenges asking: **What new ways of working with photography emerge from the collaborative creation of a photographic archive with imprisoned people?** And, drawing on artist Walead Beshty (2015): **How does the social and ethical context in which collaborative photography takes place become visible?** I take Ariella Azoulay's work (2019) on the interactions surrounding the photographic moment, and Tina Campt's approach of 'listening to images' (2017) as starting points for addressing these questions.

During a year-long series of workshops with imprisoned people at HMP Dumfries in Southwest Scotland, we collected, generated, curated, and discussed images reflecting aspects of the prison that co-creators felt should be remembered. We developed a dialogical, para-archival approach (Slager, 2015) that presents aesthetic logic as an alternative to the illogicality of the prison. Installing and documenting artwork in the prison was key, bringing creative practice into conversation with institutional space. The outcome is a layered, polyvocal record of a place. It is also a collaborative meditation on what it is to record, to document, to create and co-create, and what it means to do so whilst imprisoned. The nuances of the collaboration are captured through an ethical framework, through my reflection on roles and collaborative modes (facilitated by audio recordings of workshops) and through the artwork itself. Each of these elements was the subject of detailed discussion with co-creators and their contributions crucially informed my understanding of the research project.

The impact of the prison environment on the collaborative process and the images we produced was all-pervasive, but the project opened an *interstice*, a small space

for creativity and collaboration. Crucially however, the value of projects like this is in both making space for and visualising something that imprisoned people are *already* experts in, that is the daily practices of creativity, hope and aesthetics that are essential for survival in prison (Fleetwood, 2020, Kelly, 2022). This research project makes an original argument for the potential value of collaborations between incarcerated and non-incarcerated artists, which is in making space for the *practice of the interstice*.

Turning towards ethical challenges can lead to new understandings of photography and power in the prison. The significance of this work is in interrogating methods for placing ethical complexity at the centre of a collaborative art project, and articulating the nuances of the process. This should be of interest to those pursuing collaborative research in the arts and social sciences, and more specifically to artists working with participatory photography.

Presentation of Submission

This submission consists of a written thesis, a portfolio of images and a project publication.

Where I refer to the portfolio in the text, I cite the page number. For example: (Portfolio, p.12). The ring-bound format of the portfolio is loosely inspired by that of a calendar, as some co-creators mentioned having several on their cell walls (Portfolio, p.16).

The publication is one culmination of the project and can be found in the back of my portfolio (in the digital version it is submitted as a separate file). This booklet will be given to co-creators and shared publicly in exhibitions (see project timeline in Appendix 6). Copies will also be given to the HMP Dumfries Library, Dumfries and Galloway Image Archives and the Dumfries Museum.

Words in the text that are included in the Glossary are in **_bold italic_** the first time they appear.

A project timeline can be found in Appendix 6.

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Glossary of Terms

Aesthetic　　　This is a contested term often associated with 'rules' relating to beauty. In this sense aesthetics can be seen as part of an Enlightenment era value system that excludes all except free, white men (Fleetwood, 2020, p.25). In fact, in Nicholas Mirzoeff's description of 'Visuality', to 'aestheticize' means to normalise classification and separation (2011, p.476). One approach to this contested history has been to re-define the term. Several writers (Eagleton, 1990; Rancière, 2009a; Beshty, 2015; Kelly, 2022) return to the Greek aisthēsis, but each has a slightly different interpretation. My preferred definition comes from Claire Bishop, drawing on Jacques Rancière: 'an autonomous regime of experience that is not reducible to logic, reason or morality' (Bishop, 2012, p.12). This emphasises the aesthetic value of complexity and contradiction. For Rancière (2009a) this aesthetic space also holds the potential for equality and therefore **_politics._**

Aesthetic Logic　　　Although I am using a definition of Aesthetics as 'not reducible to logic' (Bishop, 2012, p.12), aesthetic practice may have a logic of its own. This is a form of reasoning based on contingency and poetic resonance. We made use of Aesthetic Logic in opposition to the _illogicality_ of the prison, rather than using the hierarchical logic more usually associated with archives.

Agency　　　Imprisoned people's agency is extremely limited, to the point that the use of the term in this context might be considered misleading. This research project aims to highlight some of the constraints placed on imprisoned people's agency, while

creating small spaces for very limited choice in a context where this is heavily restricted.

Assemblage	I use this term to refer to the process and results of bringing together multiple images and objects. Assemblage can be understood as a philosophical orientation, drawing on diverse thinkers including Giles Deleuze and Bruno Latour, that emphasises the agency of non-human elements when acting together (Bennett, 2010). In this sense the prison itself could be viewed as an assemblage(Deleuze, 1994). I am using the word in the narrower art-historical sense, where it refers to the practice of bringing (found) objects together to form artworks. I enjoy the material and social connotations of this gathering. I also use the terms 'collage' and 'installation', in relation to this activity, where collage is more two-dimensional, and installation is more site-specific.
Co-creator	I initially thought of the people I worked with at HMP Dumfries as 'participants'. However, as the collaboration developed it felt more accurate to describe them as co-creators. I have chosen to use this term throughout (except where referring to other projects) to underscore their creative role in the overall direction of the artwork. This is slightly confusing as I am also a co-creator, but I hope this is a productive confusion. The people I worked with approved my using this term to refer to them.
Collaboration/ Collaborative	There are many possible definitions of this word. Recent work by Daniel Palmer (2017) and Ariella Azoulay et. al. (2023) positions photography as inherently collaborative. This recognises the contributions of others besides the photographer to the meaning of the photograph. However,

when used in this sense it does not suggest that those collaborating necessarily have shared aims. Certain practices deliberately invite collaboration, honouring everyone's knowledge and creating something that surprises everyone involved. It is in this sense that I use the term, while acknowledging its wider implications. I also use ***Dialogical*** to emphasise this conversational approach to collaboration (see below).

Counter-archive Frequently used term that covers a wide range of practices that interrogate or propose alternative archives. I first encountered it in Brenda Caro Cocotle's writing (2021) on the project *Archivo Muerto* by Andrés Orjuela. I mostly use the similar term ***Para-archive*** (see below).

Counter-visuality Strategy proposed by Mirzoeff in opposition to ***Visuality***. Involves countering the normalisation of visuality through drawing attention to its 'unreality' while suggesting alternatives (Mirzoeff, 2011, p.485).

Cyanotype Sometimes called a 'blueprint'. This is a print produced using a chemical compound that turns blue through exposure to UV light. This usually involves contact printing, where a negative or object is placed directly on the sensitised paper.

Dialogical This is a term increasingly used in recent writing on photography (Andrew, 2014; Fairey and Orton, 2019). I use it to emphasise a conversational approach to collaboration. Steve Edwards also uses 'Dialogical' to refer to photography where other 'voices' contribute to the meaning of the photograph, besides that of the photographer (1990). These 'voices' could include the facial expression of the sitter but

also details such as the clothes they are wearing. This is not to be confused with 'Dialogical Aesthetics', a term coined by Grant Kester to describe art that overlaps with other 'cultural forms' such as activism or planning, whilst 'The subject positions, author and recipient of authored material, for example, and modes of agency, fluctuate through the course of a given project' (Kester & Krenn, 2013). My work does question subject positions but does not overlap directly with other 'cultural forms' in the way described by Kester.

Engaged Pedagogy

Associated with bell hooks (1994). Teaching that welcomes everyone's **lived experience**, including that of the teacher, situating learning in the embodied experience of being in the world.

Equality/Equity

I use the term 'equity' throughout the text, except when quoting others, in acknowledgement of the fact that 'if people are situated differently when receiving the same resource, equal input will only reinforce existing inequalities' (Race Matters Institute, 2023).

Ethics

Many writers differentiate between the ethical and the political, at the expense of the ethical. Rancière's 'Ethical Regime' relates to being together in a place, but this implies both difference in status and exclusion from that place, divisions which remain fixed. He contrasts this with 'the political' and 'the aesthetic', which contain the potential of equity though a questioning of social hierarchies (2009a). For Bishop, building on Rancière, ethics implies 'consensus', at the expense of systemic change. Azoulay employs a similar critique of Sontag's 'ethics of seeing' (1979, p.1), which Azouly associates with empathy and compassion, in

contrast with the 'civil duty towards the photographed persons' (2008, p.130).

The ethical framework of this research project is founded in an assumption of equity within a situation of stark power imbalances. If, for both Rancière and Azoulay, the ***political*** concerns claims to equality, why use the term ethics? Ethics is a useful 'methodology' for addressing highly situation-specific ***social dynamics*** and how they impact and are impacted by an artwork (Beshty, 2015). Ethics entails a recognition of connection and disconnection (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, 2005) that I argue is essential for equity, but which is also useful for moving beyond the consensus/dissensus binaries that characterise much writing on participatory art. This is also a useful term due to its relationship to ***Procedural Ethics***, which are important in this research project.

Fabulation   Imaginative invention with an emphasis on the fantastic. Used more often in literary criticism to refer to certain forms of magical realism. Recent work by Black science fiction writers such as Octavia Butler has championed the radical, reality producing potential of fabulation.

Gatekeeper   The organisation or individuals between the researcher and the ***participants***. In this case the gatekeepers are Scottish Prison Service staff and Fife College staff.

The Hall/Halls   Area of the prison that contains cells and often some common space.

Indexicality	The quality of 'trace' in a photograph whereby it may be described as 'literally an emanation of the referent', like a footprint (Barthes, 2000, p.81). Palmer (2017) argues that indexicality contributed to the photograph's use as evidence, and therefore its role in 'criminal justice', but for Tagg (1988), the photograph's evidentiary status arises purely from the systems that use it, not from anything intrinsic to the medium.
Interstice	A very small space between things. Nicolas Bourriaud describes art as a 'Social Interstice', building on Marx's use of the word to describe 'trading communities that elude the capitalist economic context' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.16) However Marx seems to discuss these only as primitive, pre-capitalist practices (1861/1973, p.152) More relevant is Marcuse's characterisation of the interstice as a space for 'heretical methods' within the dominant system: 'it is necessary to feel out every possibility of a crack in the enormously concentrated power structure of existing society' (1970, p.74).
Listed areas	Some parts of the HMP Dumfries buildings are 'listed' or 'scheduled'. Scheduling is managed by Historic Environment Scotland with the aim of preserving buildings of ''special' architectural or historic interest' (What is Listing? n.d.).
Lived experience	Knowledge and understanding resulting from first-hand life experience.
'Mainstream Prisoner'	The term used by the Scottish Prison Service for the prison population who are not on 'protection'. Sometimes referred to at HMP Dumfries as 'Short term prisoners' or 'STPs'. See *'Protection Prisoner'*.

Materiality   The material qualities of a photograph, such as the paper it is printed on, printing method and marks of wear and tear.

Para-archive   I've chosen to use Henk Slager's term 'para-archive' (2015), rather than ***counter-archive*** (see above) because he emphasises the personal aspect of collecting, whilst still interrogating archival structures. Slager also uses the prefix 'para' to indicate a process that goes on *alongside* other forms of archiving (individual and institutional) that take place in our culture.

Participant   Imprisoned people who took part are described as ***co-creators****,* not participants. I do still use the term for people who take part in other projects, including my previous work. In Lacy's formulation, many different people could be considered as participants, and the roles they take up may be fluid depending on the activity they engage in (1995, p.178). Here I use the term in a narrower sense, to refer to people directly involved in making artwork, who are not the instigators of a project. See also ***Co-creator***.

Participatory   Many different terms have been offered for practices that prioritise the relational. These include Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' (2002), Grant Kestor's 'littoral art' (1999) and Tom Finkelpearl's 'socially cooperative art' (2013). Two terms often used in relation to photography are 'Socially Engaged' and 'Participatory'. Both are complex, as any art could be argued to be 'socially engaged', and 'participation' has many meanings in other areas such as museum education, planning and research. Kester writes 'The word *participatory* has scare quotes around it for many artists today for good

reason.' (G. Kester & Krenn, 2013, emphasis in original).
Both terms cover a very wide spectrum of approaches to
working with people. **Collaborative** is not much better as in
some definitions all photography is collaborative (see above).
I have chosen to use all three terms, as they are all
commonly applied to contemporary photographic practice
that deliberately invites collaboration and troubles traditional
notions of authorship. I also use the term **Dialogical**, which
resonates more closely with my approach but is less
commonly used.

Performative/   Dorothea von Hantelmann (2014) draws on Judith Butler's
Performativity   work on gender performativity (1988) to explore the reality-
                           producing dimension of an artwork. From this perspective our
                           actions construct the reality we live in.

Politics/political   For Rancière, politics only occurs when equality is claimed
                           (more specifically, when a certain group claims a right to be
                           seen and heard) and the contingency of the 'status-quo' is
                           revealed (Davis, 2010, p.79). The rest of what we might think
                           of as politics he names 'the police'. Azoulay employs a
                           broader definition of the political, as 'but a space of human
                           relations exposed to each other in public' (Azoulay, 2010,
                           p.251), but her characterisation of the photograph as a
                           'political space' also entails claims of equity between subject,
                           photographer and viewer. For both the assumption is that
                           these claims to equality lead to wider systemic change, but
                           this is not their main focus, nor is it mine in this thesis.

Polyvocal   I use this word interchangeably with 'multi-voiced' to indicate
                           the inclusion of multiple perspectives, although the volume
                           and importance conferred on different voices may vary.

Prisoner	I mostly use the terms 'people in prison' or 'incarcerated people', in an attempt to counter de-humanising assumptions that may be associated with the words 'prisoner' or 'offender'. However, some ***co-creators*** preferred the term 'prisoner' as more straightforward.
Procedural Ethics	Used by Guillemin & Gillam (2004) to differentiate institutional ethics forms and requirements from what they term 'ethics in practice': the on-the-ground evolution of ethical situations, often on a micro-scale.
'Protection Prisoner'/ 'Protected Prisoner'	The term used by the Scottish Prison Service for imprisoned people who have been separated from the 'mainstream' prison population. This is often due to the nature of their offence but can also be due to a range of other factors (Cornish, 2022). Another term often used at HMP Dumfries was 'Long Term Prisoner' or LTP.
Property Store	Room where people in prison store property that they are not permitted to keep in their cells, for the duration of their sentence.
Social Dynamics/ Social Field	These admittedly broad terms include power dynamics at a societal level *and* the ways they are reflected on a smaller scale within a group or project. This encompasses socially given roles that are often assumed to be fixed.
Socially Engaged	See ***Participatory.***
Standpoint Epistemology	Feminist approach to epistemology arguing that 'knowledge claims are always socially situated' and that acknowledging

this results in 'stronger standards for objectivity' (Harding, 1992, p.50-54). Advocates for turning towards underrepresented groups when generating research questions, as they hold knowledge and perspectives not available to dominant groups.

Remand Prisoner   A person who is kept in custody while awaiting trial or sentence.

Visuality   This word is used in multiple ways but most relevant here is Mirzoeff's definition: 'Classifying, separating, and aestheticizing together form…a complex of visuality' (Mirzoeff, 2011, p.476). Complexes of Visuality support the use of force by the dominant power, in such a way as to make it seem natural. Mirzoeff identifies three main 'complexes', starting with early slave plantations, through Imperial domination, to counter-insurgency today. Fleetwood (2020) adapts this term to explore 'Carceral Visuality' specifically.

1 Introduction

Figure 1: 'Maxwelltown from prison tower' (n.d.) Source: Dumfries & Galloway Image Archives

1.1   Seeing Prisons

In 2019 I was searching the Dumfries & Galloway Image Archives for photographs to use in workshops with imprisoned people at HMP Dumfries. I realised there were only two that involved the prison itself, both taken from the tower, looking out into the landscape (Figure 1 & Figure 2). The stone crenelations are just visible in the bottom corner of one image. I later realised that these photographs were taken around the time the prison was built (you can see the courthouse under construction, which dates it), probably because the tower provided a high vantage point. It struck me as odd that a prison that had been embedded in a small town since 1883, incarcerating and employing hundreds of people, could be so invisible in the town's account of itself. Prisons and imprisoned people are often invisible in this way, positioned as though peripheral to society, even though they are central to the way that society operates.

Figure 2: 'View from prison' (n.d.) Source: Dumfries & Galloway Image Archives

My initial thoughts on invisibility were not quite accurate. I later found a series of images of HMP Dumfries - taken in the 1990s by architectural historians - in the Historic Environment Scotland Archives. Several Scottish prisons have been photographed in this way. There are many early police images of arrested people who otherwise would have remained un-photographed. They became visible at the moment of arrest. In her ground-breaking book on prison art Nicole Fleetwood writes, 'Carceral **visuality** makes incarcerated people both invisible and hypervisible' (Fleetwood, 2020, p.15). Prisons and imprisoned people are often present in contemporary visual culture, through fictional film and TV, documentaries, and news reports. Angela Y. Davis argues that in fact '[t]he prison is one of the most important features of our image environment' (2003, p.18) arguing that this is both product and cause of the ideological function of prisons, as 'an abstract site into which undesirables are deposited, relieving us of the responsibility of thinking about the real issues' (2003, p.16). Because the idea of being in prison is so horrifying, society turns to more spectacular or dramatic representations to underline how totally separate from daily life these places are. For Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Visuality' - which originated in the slave plantations and persists in prisons today - first separates, then classifies and finally normalises those classifications. **Aesthetics**, for Mirzoeff, are part of this normalisation (2011).

The problem then, is not that there are no images of prisons and imprisoned people, but that there are too many images that entrench a certain way of seeing prisons (Armstrong, 2017) Many of these emphasise 'spectacle' (Carney, 2010); distancing, fictionalising, sometimes demonising, placing the prison as an unexamined fact in the imagination. Very few images address the prison as a real place, a place nearby, inhabited and maintained by human beings, part of the everyday fabric of our lives. Armstrong describes this as 'an alternative understanding of prison as a relational object', something that acts 'among people (2017, p.240) A place that is maintained by people can also be changed by people. What might be needed then, is what the images from the prison tower provide: a view from the prison, from the perspective of those imprisoned, not only looking out into the landscape but looking at the prison itself.

One reason for the lack of this kind of imagery is the historical symbiosis of prisons, photography and archives, where power is maintained through control over who or what is seen and who does the seeing (Tagg, 1988; Fleetwood, 2020). As Mirzoeff writes, 'the right to look is strongly interfaced with the right to be seen' (2011, p.484). This practice-based research project proposes specific, **dialogical** approaches to working with photography which respond to this context. Ethical complexity is foregrounded as central to the creative process. I ask how **social dynamics** might become visible and how an artwork might shape the **social field**. In *Listening to Images*, Tina Campt writes that 'photography and the portrait are neither wholly liberatory vehicles of **agency**, transcendence or **performativity**, nor unilateral instruments of objectification and abjection. *They are always already both at once*' (2017, p.59, my emphasis). I take this as the foundation of my approach to collaborative photography. By using technologies that are themselves implicated in systems of control I hope to arrive at new understandings of prisons and the society that sustains them.

The research project unfolded over a year of workshops with imprisoned people at HMP Dumfries, beginning with the question of what a collaborative prison image archive might look like. Using images of the prison from the Historic Environment Scotland Archives as starting points, **co-creators** listed the things they felt were missing. What could or should be remembered about this place? We then used a range of photographic techniques to visualise answers to this question, installing artworks within the prison environment and documenting the results. The outcome is a layered, **polyvocal** record of a place. It is also a collaborative meditation on what it is to record, to document, to create and co-create, and what it means to do so whilst imprisoned.

Focusing on archives brings with it, among other things, the question of preservation for the future, of deciding what is and is not important enough to be remembered. The prison estate in Scotland is changing. Cornton Vale closed in 2023 to be replaced by a newly built women's prison. Barlinnie, the most well-known Scottish

prison is slated to be replaced by HMP Glasgow in 2027. This will leave HMP Dumfries and HMP Perth as the only two Victorian prisons still operating in Scotland. These changes are taking place in the context of severe overcrowding and staff shortages, according to a recent report (Public Audit Committee, 2024). Amidst these pressures, it matters how and from whose perspective prisons are represented. Nuanced, collaborative artworks can trouble the simplistic narratives that stigmatise imprisoned people and position prisons on the margins of society. They can also make space to imagine what else might be possible (A. Davis, 2003).

1.2 Previous Practice

This research project evolved from my interest in the interactions and negotiations surrounding the photographic moment. These interactions sit within wider systems of power, in which the camera can play a role. Underlying this interest are ongoing questions around what role art should or could play in fraught *political* situations.

I first engaged directly with these issues while volunteering with the charity No More Deaths on the US/Mexico border in 2010. I became conscious of the many ways photography is used to oppress or expose in this context. The stories I heard from volunteers about photographers' behaviour made me embarrassed to be holding a camera - but I also learned how photography can open a space for exchange and creativity as I worked with people to represent them in ways they felt comfortable with, through portraits and handwritten notes. This led me to pursue a project in Calais, visiting periodically over two years. There I began to experiment with sharing authorship, and with recording conversations around the images and my role.

Figure 3: From the series, 'Nothing is Impossible Under the Sun' (Myers 2014-19)

When working with underrepresented people, there is always a risk that power dynamics may be re-enforced rather than challenged. In Calais I therefore aimed to make ethical tensions a visible part of the work, as in Figure 3. When I took this photograph, I had been in Calais for some time, making portraits of people (not for public display) and giving them prints. With some people a **collaboration** emerged where they suggested ideas about how they wanted to be photographed, especially ways to hide their identity. In this case Adel, a man I had photographed several times, suggested using the basketball and was holding it up for the photograph when another man threw himself into the frame, sleeping bag over his head and phone pressed to the sleeping bag. This man is not only hiding his identity from the camera. He is *performing* the fact that he must hide his identity and challenges my photographer's gaze as well as the gaze of a potential viewer. He is expressing himself with humour and creativity. The resulting tensions keep me returning to this image.

Shared authorship in this project was in the form of contributions from others: personal photographs, drawings, writing, collaborative portraits. I still held authorship over the project. Many questions emerged that I am still working with today. Why was I seeking to share authorship but still retaining overall control? Was there any way to place people in the frame without exploiting them? Could some of the unresolvable ethical tensions in the project be made visible in ways that would draw attention to wider power dynamics? How did I justify making art in situations where urgent action is required? This last question intensified for me as the situation in Calais deteriorated further, with hostility towards migrants increasing.

Although I shared the work with contributors both during the process and once the project was published, I regret that I never exhibited in Calais. I did consider it, but it was logistically challenging and at that stage I had not fully realised the power of showing artwork in the place where it was made. The result was that I found exhibitions unsatisfying, so far removed from the spirit of the making.

The questions raised in Calais persisted throughout the next five years, during which I lead a range of *participatory* photography projects. Again, I felt a keen sense of the potential and challenges of working in this way. The organisations I was working with often imposed structures (timelines, conceptual frameworks) which obstructed the participatory potential of the work.

In response to the limitations of working with commissioning organisations I began to co-ordinate my own, more open-ended projects. One, at Abbeyhill Primary School in Edinburgh involved children making collages of photographs we had taken in the playground. I then made collages from their offcuts. The result was a series of postcards featuring *participants*' work, hidden around the school for the children to find (Figure 4). Showing the work in context was satisfying as it held different significance for people familiar with the community. The presentation continued the spirit in which the work was made. The multi-layered approach to authorship resulted in imagery evoking the creative ways children use space and objects during play.

Rather than working towards predetermined outcomes, the participants took the process in directions I was not expecting.
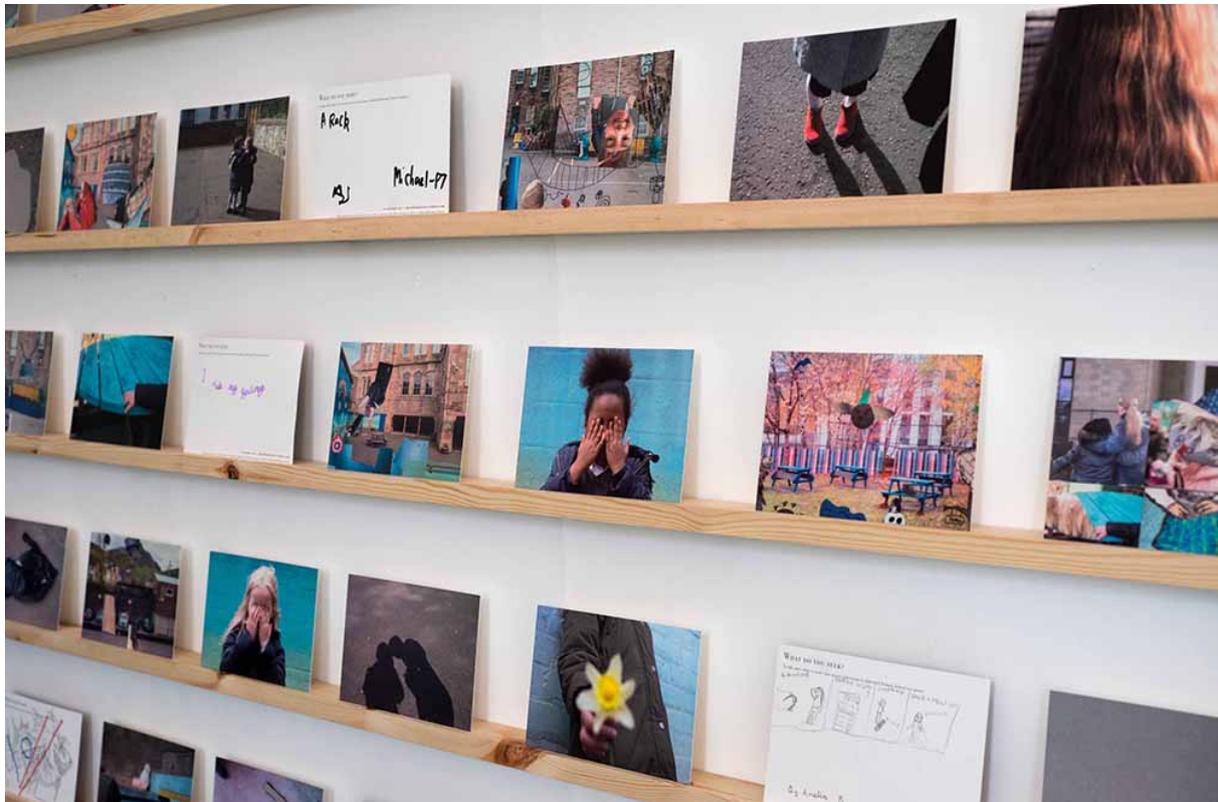
Figure 4: 'Loose Parts' Installation View, Abbeyhill Primary School, Edinburgh (Myers 2019)

My interest in the intersections of photography and power led me to prisons. Like refugee camps, prisons are positioned as peripheral to society whilst being central to its operation. To find out what might be appropriate in this context, I worked as a photography tutor at HMP Low Moss for five months in 2018. The responses from the imprisoned people I worked with were generous, creative and surprising. I became more aware of the camera's role in the prison system and the ethical complexity of working across such a stark power differential.

At Low Moss I had observed people's enthusiastic responses to any new imagery, but especially local archive images. I thought this might be because they could use their knowledge of the area or history, and because it gave them a sense of connection to place. I devised a project for HMP Dumfries (*Commonplace*, 2019) which involved bringing images from the local archive for participants to discuss,

reframe and reconfigure into new artworks. We also used a makeshift studio to photograph participants in ways that expressed their individuality while preserving anonymity. The outcome was a publication that could be pulled apart and shown on the wall as an exhibition (Figure 5 & Figure 6). This was approved by and given to all participants. The work existed in the same form both inside and outside the prison. Participants could choose to put the pages on their wall, and the artwork was exhibited at The Stove, a gallery and cafe in Dumfries.

Figure 5: 'Commonplace' publication, Alice Myers & HMP Dumfries Prisoners (2019)

Figure 6: 'Commonplace' Installation view, The Stove, Dumfries (Myers 2019)

Commonplace involved participants in generating new artwork, but it was a short-term project and they did not have much input into shaping the project direction or editing and curating decisions. It was whilst researching *Commonplace* that I came across the photographs from the prison tower and began thinking about archives more deeply, leading to the development of this research project.

1.3 The Setting: HMP Dumfries

My PhD proposal to the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) in 2022 requested permission to work across three prisons. Due to Covid restrictions, SPS granted me access to one: HMP Dumfries. Dumfries is a small town astride a tidal river in Southwest Scotland. The prison was built in 1883, in the fields of Maxwelltown, across the river from Dumfries and originally in another county (in 1929 it became part of Dumfries). Buildings replaced the fields, including cottages and villas, a primary school and the Queen of the South football pitch. 'Jessiefield' is a local name for the prison derived from the name of the field it was built on. It was designed by military engineer Thomas Bernard Collinson, who returned from a career of surveying in the colonies

to build HMPs Dumfries and Barlinnie. The original building is Category B **listed** and looks like a red sandstone castle, with an imposing gateway complete with towers sporting 'arrow slit' windows and crenelations. Behind this, around a central tower, is a huddle of single-storey, newer buildings. Through a small door in a high wall are the unexpectedly open-feeling prison gardens and football pitch, some of which has been given over to solar panels.

HMP Dumfries originally housed convicted tailors from across the country. They made uniforms for the prison service. It was later a borstal, then a Young Offenders Institution. It now holds up to 60 'short-term **prisoners**' (often referred to as '**mainstream**'), up to 135 'offence related **protection prisoners**' (often referred to as 'protected' or 'vulnerable'), as well as prisoners on **remand** (Scottish Prison Service, no date).

'Protected prisoners' are people who have been separated from the 'mainstream' prison population for their own protection. The reasons why someone might be offered or request this categorisation are complicated and individual, but they often relate to the crime for which they have been convicted, previous employment as a police/prison officer, gender expression or other factors that might make bullying more likely, such as building up debts in prison (Cornish, 2022). 'Protected prisoners' are even more stigmatised than the 'mainstream', both within and outside the prison (Ievins, 2023). Some co-creators in this research project were 'protected' and their awareness of this additional stigma sits in the background and surfaces occasionally in their responses, especially in relation to sharing artwork publicly.

I worked with all three categories of prisoner at HMP Dumfries. I chose not to find out what people's convictions were, and I did not discuss this topic with co-creators. It is the convention in social science not to disclose people's convictions as this might re-stigmatise them (Ievins, 2023), preventing them from being seen as whole human beings. There is also, as Fleetwood writes, a risk that naming convictions and 'the proposition of degrees of innocence' unquestioningly adopts the logic of the carceral state (Fleetwood, 2020, p.xxiii). There are ethical reasons to discourage the sharing

of personal information in a group setting if it is not necessary or may be distressing for participants (see Chapter 3). Although Ievins (2023) argues that a person's conviction might sometimes be of relevance to a research project, the focus here was imprisoned people's responses to the prison itself, so it was not necessary to discuss their lives prior to imprisonment.

1.4 Research Questions & Thesis Outline

The practice trajectory and cultural context I have outlined led me to ask: **What new ways of working with photography emerge from the collaborative creation of a photographic archive with imprisoned people?** As photography, archives and prisons evolved together (see Chapter 2), a specific approach to photography is required in this context. What might that approach be?

Throughout my practice, and particularly my work in prisons, I am aware of the privilege I hold. As a white, middle-class woman, I have never had to deal with race or class-based discrimination from the police or the justice system. As neither I nor my family members have ever been incarcerated, I do not have *lived experience* of the setting in which I am working. This carries the advantage that I can interact with the prison system free of the trauma that others might have to deal with. However, my background will restrict my knowledge and understanding of the situation. This I attempt to address by opening to the knowledge of others.

As working in a prison presents an *ethical* labyrinth, the most generative approach might be to place ethical tensions at the centre of the creative process, allowing them to become visible in the artwork. I therefore draw on Walead Beshty's suggestion that we consider not just how artwork impacts the social field but also how the social might become visible in the artwork (2015) and Claire Bishop's insistence on the *aesthetic* significance of complexity (2012), asking:

How does the social and ethical context in which collaborative photography takes place become visible? And what is the aesthetic potential of this visibility?

My final question looks at what might be learned about photography and its relationship to power and prisons by turning towards ethical issues, and choosing to use technologies (archives, cameras) that are embedded in the prison system:

What new understandings of photography, power and prisons grow out of this process?

This introduction has mapped the origin of my research questions in the development of my photographic practice and the broader question of how prisons and imprisoned people are visualised in our society. I have also set the scene for the research with a description of HMP Dumfries. In the following chapter, I will chart the wider context in which this study takes place, including the interrelation of photographic archives and power, and a variety of creative responses to that symbiosis, including recent participatory photography projects in prisons (**Chapter 2**). As the ethical issues that arise when working in a prison are central to this research project, I position my Ethics chapter early in the thesis (**Chapter 3**), developing a framework that forms the basis of my approach to my methodology and fieldwork. In **Chapter 4** I lay out my Methodology, which is practice-based and builds on strategies used by *socially engaged* photographers, as well as my own previous work. I describe my iterative project structure, workshop content and approach to documentation and analysis. **Chapter 5** charts how the research project unfolded over the course of the fieldwork. As the project was designed to respond to participants, much significant evolution is described. In **Chapter 6** I reflect on the implications of the fieldwork. I discuss the impact of the prison environment on collaborative dynamics, before unpacking the roles and the collaborative modes that unfolded. I then consider three key moments when the work was shared with an audience, reflecting on how the social field shaped and was shaped by the work. **Chapter 7** closes the thesis with my contributions and conclusions.

This research project mostly focussed on images, but the thesis contains many conversational metaphors. There is dialogical photography, polyvocality, polyphony, 'listening to images' (Campt, 2017) and the artist as listener. This is an approach to photography that extends beyond visual semiotics to include 'an expanded and embodied set of practices involving making photographs, talking about photographs, looking at photographs and listening to their silences' (Fairey and Orton, 2019). What is the potential of this expanded approach within the context of the prison? To begin to answer this question it is necessary to start with the co-evolution of photography and incarceration.

2 Literature and Contextual Review

Figure 7: 'Dumfries Burgh Police Criminal Album and Records' (1858-1920). Courtesy Dumfries and Galloway Libraries (Myers 2022)

2.1 Introduction: The Mug Shot

The mug shot plays a key role at the intersection of photography, archives and state power. It has supported the operations of police and prisons since the late nineteenth century (Sontag, 1979, p.3), and it is often the only way that imprisoned people become publicly visible. In *The Disciplinary Frame* (2009) John Tagg discusses Inspector Byrne's 'Rogues Galleries', which placed photographs of criminals on public view. Tagg describes Byrne's use of force to hold an arrestee in place for the camera as emblematic of the violence of fixing meaning through photography. Shawn Michelle Smith (Smith, 2018), suggests that none of the occupants of the 'Rogues Galleries' were black because the public did not need to be taught to see black bodies as criminal. These displays taught the public a certain understanding of criminality.

Steve Edwards presents a different perspective from Tagg, noting many accounts of the arrested person's docility in front of the camera (1990). Stillness was especially necessary in the 19th Century due to slow photographic chemicals. Whether compliant or struggling, Edwards draws our attention beyond the act of violence to the photographed person: their choice, even under duress, to respond to the situation within the limited means available to them. This did not always involve a physical struggle. A powerful example is the photograph of the suffragette Evelyn Manesta, closing her eyes while being restrained for a prison photograph (Figure 8). Yet more subtly, Tina Campt suggests we attend to micro-frequencies in 'compulsory photographs' that allow us to detect resistance in the photographed person. For Campt, stillness can sometimes be understood as 'stasis', a tensing of the muscles that signifies refusal (2017, p.51). If, as Campt argues, even a mug shot, that symbol of control, does not achieve total domination, what potential for simultaneous 'self-fashioning' (2017, p.59) and objectification resides in other photographic practices?

Figure 8: 'Evelyn Manesta photographed outside Holloway Prison circa 1914'. Source: Wikimedia Commons 2024

In this chapter I chart the symbiosis of photography, archives, and prisons, presenting different models of the power dynamics surrounding the photographic exchange. I then outline attempts to engage directly with these power dynamics both through participatory photography and through projects that engage with existing archives or create new ones. I conclude with recent uses of participation, photography, and archives in direct relation to incarceration, as the immediate context for my research.

2.2 Photography, Archives and the Prison
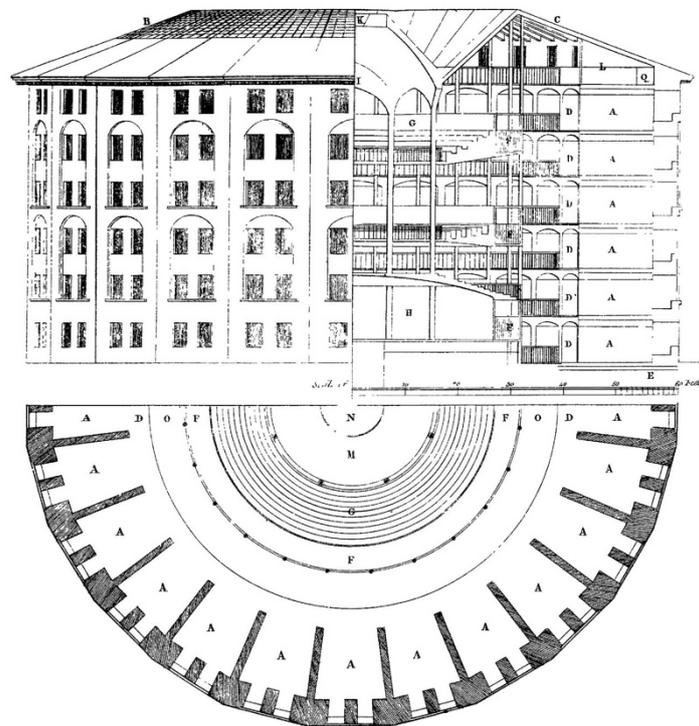
Figure 9: 'Plan of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon', drawn by Willey Reveley, from 'The works of Jeremy Bentham' vol. IV, 172-3 (1791) Source: Wikipedia 2022.

There are multiple models of the co-evolution of photography, archives and prisons, each employing a different technology as their central metaphor. Most build on Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1991/1975), which places the dynamics of seeing, being seen, and controlling who or what is seen at the centre of modern disciplinary power. He charts a shift from the spectacle of punishment of the body in the Middle Ages, to a system of discipline permeating every aspect of modern life. The central metaphor is Jeremy Bentham's panopticon (Bentham & Bowring, 1843): a design for an ideal prison, where cleanliness and virtue are promoted by placing imprisoned people in individual cells, laid out in a circle around a central observation tower (Figure 9). Backlit by windows, the prisoners are constantly visible to the observer, who remains invisible to them: '[the prisoner] is seen but does not see; he is the object of information, never the subject of communication' (Foucault, 1991/1975, p. 200). This was a 'diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form' (Foucault, 1991, p. 202). This mechanism was simultaneously developed

through other disciplinary institutions such as schools, workhouses, factories and hospitals. Mirzoeff widens the scope to include early slave plantations, describing 'Visuality' as a system of 'classifying, separating and aestheticizing', used to make force seem 'self-evident' (Mirzoeff, 2011, p.476). 'Visuality' not only re-enforces power but also naturalises it. This perspective situates the history of prisons and photography in a wider colonial context. The fact that HMP Dumfries was built by a colonial surveyor (see Chapter 1.3) underscores this link.

For Foucault, the panopticon should be seen in the context of wider technologies of description and documentation, with a particular focus on control of the body. This idea was a catalyst for Tagg's *The Burden of Representation*, which develops the 'unobtrusive cells of the photographic frame' (Tagg, 1988, p. 80) as a metaphor for power logically evolving from that of the panopticon. Tagg argues that the meaning of photography was shaped by the social and institutional structures that made use of it in the nineteenth century, especially the police and social sciences. Crucially for Tagg, concepts of 'documentary', 'truth' and 'evidence' in relation to photography were born of this process, which he describes as 'a social division between the power and privilege of *producing* and *possessing* and the burden of *being* meaning.' (Tagg, 1988, p.6, emphasis in original).

In his essay 'The Body and the Archive', Alan Sekula suggests that Tagg gives 'too much power to photography' (Sekula, 1986, p.9), turning his attention to archival technologies surrounding the camera. For Sekula the central metaphor is the filing cabinet. He charts the invention of the mug shot by Alphonse Bertillon (Figure 10) and the physiognomic innovation of Francis Galton which organised photographs of people according to 'types', as illustrative of a wider archival tendency in nineteenth century society which utilised photography's ability to both celebrate and dominate. For Sekula, the photographic archive 'welded the honorific and repressive functions together. Every portrait implicitly took its place within a social and moral hierarchy' (Sekula, 1986, p.10). Both Tagg and Sekula share an interest in the systems and institutions within which photography operates and are often cited together, despite their differences.
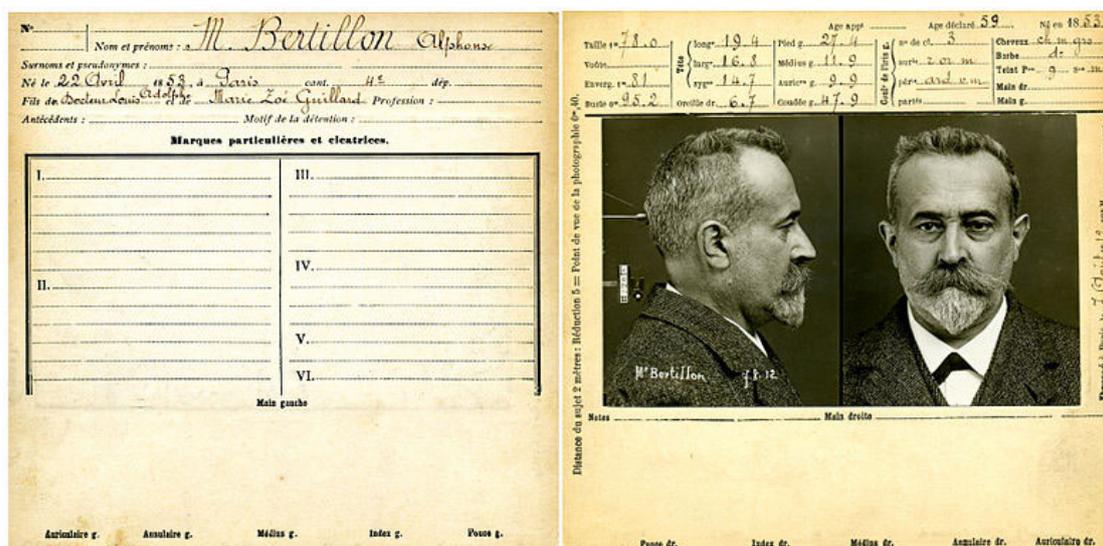
Figure 10: Anthropometric data sheet of Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914) showing the measurements taken from the body of the arrestee, used for locating the photograph within Bertillon's cataloguing system. Source: Wikimedia commons 2022

The picture painted by Tagg and Sekula, based on Foucault, is of total domination. Around the same time, writers such as Martha Rosler (1981/2004) and Sontag (1979) were joining Sekula in questioning the position of the all-powerful photographer. Although these arguments usefully critiqued problematic documentary practices, the message that photography equals dominance does not leave much room for manoeuvre. Tagg, though focussing on state power rather than the power of the individual photographer, does acknowledge that Foucault's all-encompassing theories of power can make action or resistance feel impossible (1988). Gillian Rose criticises both Tagg and Sekula for ignoring 'the possibility of visualities other than those of dominant institutions' (2016, p.24), and Lindsay Smith charts a parallel history of nineteenth century domestic photography, practiced mostly by women, which employed a very different gaze (Smith, 1998). Other writers focus on the photographed people and traces of the interaction that took place. S. Edwards builds on the Bakhtin School's[2] theories of reported speech to suggest that elements in the

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[2] Edwards uses 'The Bakhtin School' to refer to multiple texts that are 'subject to disputed authorship', but which are variously attributed to Volosinov, Medvedev, Bakhtin and Kanaev. My understanding of the dialogical in these works is based on Ken Hirschkop's *Mikhail Bakhtin: An aesthetic for democracy* (2011), which emphasises not only disputed authorship but also the fragmentary nature of the texts, which has lead them to be interpreted in numerous, divergent ways.

photograph may 'speak' even while the photographer retains control (1990). In an anthropological context, Elizabeth Edwards argues that 'photographs as sets of relationships are, like all relationships, subject to negotiation, exchange, trade and multiple performances and meanings' (2005, p.30). These perspectives are unacknowledged but important precedents of both Ariella Azoulay and Campt, whose work I focus on in this research project as it suggests possible avenues for action whilst still acknowledging photography's implication in systems of control.

Azoulay, writing from the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, presents the photograph as a 'space of relations' where subject, photographer and viewer may meet to reclaim a 'citizenship of photography' that may not be completely governed by the 'ruling power' (Azoulay, 2008 p.17). For Azoulay, it is not the panopticon, the camera or the archive but the camera's shutter that can be seen as a synecdoche for imperialism itself. Like Mirzoeff (2011), she traces divisive and compartmentalising operations to the earliest colonial practices, from which 'the shutter' logically evolved (Azoulay, 2019).

Azoulay argues that no one, not even a dominant state may determine the photograph's meaning, as the 'spectator' may detect other information in the frame that allows the subject to address them directly and reveals the social conditions under which the image was made. She suggests that the photographic encounter be considered ongoing: 'The renewal of this encounter is a constant capacity of spectators who acknowledge the photographed persons and see themselves as their actual or potential addressees or partners'. (Azoulay, 2010, p.253). From this perspective the ***indexicality*** of the photograph not only relates to the traces of light emanating from the subject, but also to traces of the social dynamics which shaped the photographic moment, which surface through the attention of the viewer.

Campt attends to the photographed person on a subtler, more embodied level. For Campt, Sekula's 'honorific and repressive genres' may co-exist within a single image (2017, p.25). She presents a powerful and urgent reading of 'compulsory' photographs taken of black people. As to simply look at these images would be to

continue to 'oversee' the people in them, perpetuating the abuse, Campt suggests that images may 'leave impressions upon us through multiple forms of contact: visual contact (seeing), physical contact (touching), psychic contact (feeling), and, most counterintuitively of all, the sonic contact that I have described as a frequency that requires us to listen to as well as view images' (2017, p.72). In practice this means detecting details in the way the sitter is dressed or holds themselves, bringing images into conversation with each other or with illuminating historical information, or simply touching the photographs as objects, all of which allows 'quiet but resonant claims to personhood and subjectivity in the face of dispossession' to surface (2017, p.65).

The accounts presented by S. Edwards, Azoulay, and Campt approach photography and power differently from the Foucauldian perspective. From this position, many contribute to the meaning of a photograph, and the photographic moment is shaped by and contains traces of wider power structures. But there is always the potential of resistance to those structures, always the possibility that the subject (or details in the image) may speak beyond the photographers' intentions, providing access to the wider power structures that shaped the interaction and the photographed person's 'miniscule or even futile attempts to exploit extremely limited possibilities for self-expression and futurity' (Campt, 2017, p.59).

Photography, then, could be described as inherently collaborative with subject, photographer, viewer and wider social dynamics all contributing to the meaning of the image, whether or not this is intended. This idea has become more prominent in recent years, as I discuss below. A smaller group of practices deliberately foregrounds this aspect of the medium, troubling the assumption of single authorship and sometimes directly addressing or challenging power dynamics. These practices are often described as ***participatory photography*** or ***socially engaged photography***, although these terms cover a wide range of approaches to both photographic practice and collaboration, perspectives which have also evolved over time.

2.3 Participation, Aesthetics and Audience

2.3.1 Collaborative Histories

The roots of 'participatory photography' are multiple and tangled. They include the 'Worker photography' of the 1930s, community initiatives of the 60s and 70s such as *Kamoinge Workshop* (Kamoinge Workshop, 2022), *Half Moon Photography Workshop* (Evans, 1997; Starns, 2013; Bertrand, 2019) and the *Hackney Flashers* (Hackney Flashers, no date), pioneers of visual anthropology such as Sol Worth and John Adair (Worth and Adair, 1970) and Elizabeth Edwards (Edwards and Hart, 2004) and the radical pedagogy of Paolo Freire, who used discussion around images as a route to political consciousness (1970/2017). Also important is the work of individuals working out of the documentary tradition such as Wendy Ewald who began her workshops for children in the 1970s (as well as playing a role in instigating *Half Moon*) and Susan Mieselas (1975), Jim Goldberg (1985) and Bruce Jackson (1977) who invite input from the people they photographed in the form of writing, drawing or audio recordings. These multiple histories have led to multiple practices today that could all be described as 'participatory photography'.

Here I will pay particular attention to a moment in London in the 70s and early 80s that was foundational to much contemporary practice. Independent photography spaces proliferated, government funding for photography increased, and critical theory came together with left wing politics and 'community photography' practice (Tagg *et al.*, 2016; Bertrand, 2019). The *Half Moon Photography Workshop* and the associated publication, *Camerawork* were particularly influential, bringing together a diverse network of artists and writers. John Tagg, whose later work informed the development of my research project, was among them, as were many others who contributed to the development of photo theory in the 80s and 90s. Critique of mainstream media and an overturning of the supposed 'neutrality' of photographic technology was key. 'Community photography' responded by aiming to place the means of photographic production in the hands of the 'community' or the 'oppressed', often assumed to be a unified group (Evans, 1997). It was therefore closely bound up with the left-wing political optimism of the time (Tagg, 2008; Tagg

et al., 2016). It also made use of a staunchly documentary aesthetic (although many writers who contributed to *Camerawork* were critical of documentary practices), rejecting 'art photography' as thoroughly bourgeois and commodified (Evans, 1997).

Over the lifespan of the *Camerawork* magazine however, 'community photography' increasingly came in for criticism. The power differential between the instigators and the participants was noted, as was the fact that 'the community', 'was as much the object of the photographer's imagination as it was a reflection of any community photographed' (Evans, 1997, p.26). Later issues of *Camerawork* also challenged the more politically instrumentalised uses of photography seen in earlier editions (Berger, 1978).

These critiques, along with the election of the Thatcher government in 1983, the subsequent disarray of the left, and a decline in arts funding, lead to the decline of this energetic period of community photography. Following on from the critiques of the early 1980s, any remaining optimism about the radical potential of participation truly declined in the 1990s and 2000s, with critics such as Claire Bishop (2004) and Grant Kester (1999) responding with scorn to New Labour's instrumentalization of 'participation'. The adoption of token participatory strategies - utilising multiple art forms - by museums and galleries as part of their education programmes (Bishop, 2022), and the overwhelming evidence post-social-media that access to photography does not lead to raised political consciousness completed the process.

This could sound like a narrative of disappointment, but *Camerawork* and *Half Moon* are important here for two main reasons. Firstly, along with the worker photography of the 1930s, they represent a counter-current of resistance to the symbiosis of photography and state power. This resistance is largely overlooked in Tagg's influential work of the 90s, presumably because Tagg, having been involved in the 1970s political moment, was disappointed by its decline (Tagg, 2008). It is also unmentioned by Azoulay in her account of photography as citizenship, which grows so directly from her own context that many precedents are not acknowledged (Roberts, 2014). Secondly, community photography was an important forerunner of

more recent participatory practice in all its diversity, and many key strategies and tensions that emerged then are still relevant now.

The various ways in which participatory photography is practiced today are as diverse as the roots I have described. In 1999 PhotoVoice was founded to 'combine ethical photography and community engagement, and deliver positive social change' (PhotoVoice, no date). This approach focusses on advocacy, campaigning, education and research. Photography also plays a part in many gallery 'education programmes' which also prioritise 'community engagement' and tend to be positioned as peripheral, often exhibited in a smaller space dedicated to such projects (Shah, 2021, p.238). In these contexts, there is a tendency to focus on the social benefits of the project (PhotoVoice, no date; Shah, 2021, p.236).

Over the last fifteen years participatory photographic strategies have also become more visible in a mainstream art context. This is often in connection with a well-known artist who uses these methods, such as Ewald, Julian Germain or Anthony Luvera. But organisations such as *Photoworks* in Brighton or *Open Eye Gallery* in Liverpool have also contributed through their programming, with *Open Eye* also instigating a Socially Engaged Photography Network and setting up an MA in 'Socially Engaged Photography Practice'. A group including Luvera and Gemma Rose Turnbull have also been active in promoting socially engaged methods, through their own practice and through the website, *Photography as a Social Practice* (no date). Beyond the UK, the *Wide Angle* symposium in Johannesburg promoted a 'healthy scepticism of, and insistence on these [socially engaged] practices at the same time' (Andrew, 2014)

Still, as Ben Burbridge and Luvera discuss, conversations around participatory photography too often focus on the benefits for those who take part, partly due to funders' priorities (2019). This not only leads to overstating 'liberatory potential', positioning the practice as 'fulfilling a lack' (Burbridge & Luvera, 2019, p.359) and overlooking the ways that collaboration enriches the art made, but it also suggests an 'anaemic concept of aesthetics and politics' (Beshty, 2015, p.16). The aesthetic

richness afforded by participatory methods is therefore missed. Conversely, in the visually striking work of Ewald or Goldberg, the complexities of the collaborative process are largely invisible. The nuances of participation, and the dynamics of the wider social field in which the work intervenes are not seen as having aesthetic value. This research project aims to question this assumption.

There has also been a recent upsurge in theoretical interest in photography as an inherently collaborative medium. This is where community practices of the 70s and 80s are under acknowledged. The optimism of the time about the liberatory impact of 'democratising' photography now seems less relevant, but their focus on the *relational* and *material* aspects of the practice: the networks they created, publications they produced, and a recognition of photography's embeddedness in social and political structures (Evans, 1997; Tagg, 1997; Bertrand, 2019) make them important precedents for recent interest the collaborative dimensions of photography.

An early contribution to these discussions was the collection *Face on: The photograph as social exchange* (Durden, 2000), which positioned the interactions of the photographic moment in the context of power dynamics at a societal level. In it, Joanna Lowry (2000) drew on S. Edwards (1990) to explore the degree to which various photographers' practices may be considered as 'dialogical' or 'monological'. More recently, Daniel Palmer challenged the myth of the single photographic author, referencing the multiple people often involved in taking, printing and disseminating images to argue that the medium itself is collaborative (Palmer, 2017).

Palmer prioritises examples where collaboration has been deliberately sought out, but S. Edwards, Campt, and Azoulay suggest that we attend to the 'collaborative' in photographs where this is not necessarily intended. Again, Azoulay has been instrumental in foregrounding this idea, most recently through *Collaboration: A potential history of photography* (2023), itself a collaboration between Azoulay, Ewald, Mieselas, and writers Laura Wexler and Leigh Raiford. Unlike Azoulay's earlier work, this collection does trace a long, global history of collaboration in photography, although it omits the 1970s community photography I have discussed.

The collection includes deliberately 'collective' (2023, p.189) efforts, where those involved share some aims, alongside photographs that taken under exploitative conditions, which the authors ask us to reconsider as 'collaborative'. Like Campt, they invite us to reconstruct and re-interpret the interaction that took place, acknowledging the **agency**, however limited, of the photographed people. These perspectives provide the basis for this research project to consider the photograph as simultaneously liberatory and oppressive, and to explore the *aesthetic* richness of the social dynamics of the photograph, moving beyond the tendency in participatory practice to either focus on social benefit or obscure the complexities of process. To proceed with this approach, the term aesthetics must be examined in more detail.

2.3.2 Aesthetics and the Social

Alongside the development of participatory practice I have described, relational artmaking was increasingly prominent from the 1970s onwards (see, for example, Finkelpearl, 2013). The writers who grappled with critical criteria for these practices continued a long tradition of debate around the relationship of the aesthetic and the social, although they largely overlooked photography. I will not rehearse this history here, but it is worth considering some varied perspectives on what art is supposed to *do*, socially and politically - especially as much writing on art in a prison context focusses on either therapeutic benefit to participants or operational benefits to the system (e.g. Anderson, 2015; Atherton et al., 2022; Mcneill et al., 2011). This is an intensification of the instrumentalization of broader participatory practice I have described. Fleetwood (2020) overturns these assumptions, positioning art made in prisons at the centre of contemporary practice, and challenging the 'art world' to catch up.

Two of the most prominent critics of this 'ameliorative' focus in participatory art are Claire Bishop (2004) and Grant Kester (2004). They disagree vehemently on the remedy. For Kester, what he terms 'dialogical aesthetics' (1999) should tackle social problems at the root through 'collaborative' (as opposed to participatory) community-based projects which can intersect with activism or town planning. Through these processes 'the subject positions of artist and viewer or artist and subject are openly

thematized and can potentially be challenged and transformed' (1999, para. 7). He tends not to explore conflict or power dynamics within the project itself (Bell, 2017). For Bishop, instead of 'surrendering' authorship to the collective, art should draw attention to ruptures and contradictions from a position of autonomy, and potentially 'antagonism' (2012). Kester objects that Bishop places too much emphasis on opposition (2011). In a recent lecture reflecting on her book *Artificial Hells*, Bishop herself regrets her focus on antagonism as the far right increasingly uses these strategies (2022). David M. Bell suggests a possibility that both Kester and Bishop overlook, that a work might 'simultaneously negate the status quo and affirm an alternative' (2017, p.9). This research project explores that possibility.

Both Bishop and Kester critique the neo-liberal co-option of 'participation', but they are also responding to Nicholas Bourriaud's influential *Relational Aesthetics* (2002). This names a moment in 1990s art which Bourriaud sees as a response to increasing alienation and the commodification of social exchange. Art is a 'Social **Interstice**' (a term I shall return to), a 'rich loam for social experiments' (2002, p.9), a space for human relations: 'through little services rendered, the artists fill in the cracks in the social bond … through little gestures art is like an angelic programme, a set of tasks carried out beside or beneath a real economic system, so as to patiently restitch the relational fabric' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.36) Many, including Bishop, Kester and Anthony Downey, reject this idea, which they feel positions the artist as a 'quasi-social worker' (Downey, 2007 p.279). They argue that Bourriaud is too vague about the kinds of 'relations' created and how these might play out politically.

These writers prioritise artworks that overtly invite the audience to participate. They tend to be temporary, and process focussed. Beshty opens out the discussion to include all artworks, proposing a method for understanding how an artwork impacts and is impacted by the social, without either relying on social criteria or prioritising alienation and opposition (2015) He draws on Dorothea von Hantelmann's 'How to Do things with Art' (von Hantelmann, 2014), which does not mention relational aesthetics. For von Hantelmann there is no 'interstice' in the capitalist system, all artworks both reflect and produce the social conditions that surround them and the

only way to affect change is by engaging with those conditions through the format of the exhibition. I find this view a bit stark, but Hantelmann usefully applies Judith Butler's theory of **performativity** (Butler, 1988) to understand the 'reality producing' dimension of artwork (von Hantelmann, 2014). As with performative statements, all artwork shapes the social reality which it is a part of. This is an idea I will return to, and an idea which Beshty uses to propose an 'Aesthetics of Ethics' to ask how the social conditions that produce and are produced by an artwork might be understood aesthetically. Here Aesthetics means 'the perceivable or sensate' (from the Greek, aisthēsis) and Ethics is a method for exploring the social world of an artwork (Beshty, 2015, p.17) This is a more 'affirmative' methodology than Bishop's and it informs my second research question.

Defining aesthetics as 'the perceivable or sensate' is useful in a prison context, as I explain below. First, I would like to consider Bishop's definition which follows Rancière in characterising art as separate from but continually blurring into life, and aesthetics as 'an autonomous regime of experience that is not reducible to logic, reason or morality' (2012, p.18). For Rancière, the term 'aisthēsis' covers both 'apprehension of the given' *and* the 'making sense' of it (2009a, p.1) Complexity and contradiction are therefore part of the aesthetic value of a work. A forerunner of this perspective, Herbert Marcuse, argued that the radical potential of art lies in autonomy, which allows the 'emergence of another reason, another sensibility, which defy the rationality and sensibility incorporated in the dominant social institutions' (1978, p.7). This view of aesthetics can be usefully applied in relation to the prison.

2.3.3 Aesthetics and the Prison

In the context of incarceration, the term 'aesthetics' is even more loaded. Fleetwood writes: '[a]esthetics as conceived in the Enlightenment era developed in tandem with the museum and the prison' (2020, p.28). She places aesthetics alongside other divisive imperial concepts 'foundational to the development of the liberal citizen subject, a category that excluded enslaved and exploited peoples, indigenous peoples, colonised peoples, women of all races, and the criminalised'. Fleetwood invents the term: 'Carceral Aesthetics' to challenge the traditional association of

aesthetics with white, free men. She explores the creative responses of incarcerated artists to limitations imposed by the prison. In this context, pursuing aesthetics may be seen as an act of resistance, essential to survival.

Understanding aesthetics as 'the perceivable or sensate' therefore has different implications in the prison. Like Fleetwood, criminologists Yvonne Jewkes et. al. discuss the sensory deprivation of incarceration as a kind of 'anaesthetics' (2017). This argument is developed powerfully by Michael Kelly, who sets out to 'justify' Fleetwood's aesthetics philosophically (2022). Like Beshty, he interprets aisthēsis as related to sensation, but he also identifies a related definition, that of 'breathing in'. Referencing the horrific cases of Eric Garner (1970-2014) and George Floyd (1973-2020), who died from suffocation whilst being restrained by police officers, Kelly argues: 'If among other things, aesthetics represents every human's right to breathe, and our society denies this right to people who are incarcerable, carceral aesthetics is justified' (2022, p.288). This raises the importance of aesthetics to that which is crucial to sustain life.

Angela Y. Davis draws on Marcuse to argue that because prisons are constructed and normalised through visual culture, aesthetic practice can be a powerful way to challenge those systems. Art is valuable as part of wider social movements, but she still emphasises the power of autonomy for moving 'away from the given' and 'focus[ing] our attention beyond what is to make room for what might be' (Davis, 2016). Aesthetics in the prison is therefore essential not just to assert the right to live of those imprisoned, but also to question dominant narratives and imagine alternative futures.

2.3.4 Process and Audience

The practices discussed by Bishop, Kester and Bourriaud tend to reject the visual. As Downey observes, 'There is not much to actually 'look' at in relational art practices' (Downey, 2007). Photography is therefore seldom discussed. They also, notably, include very few accounts from people who participated in the projects they highlight. Photography has much to offer here, in two related ways.

First, the work of Azoulay (2019, 2023, 2008) and Campt (2017) shows how multiple perspectives might surface in an image, regardless of the photographers' intentions. The medium therefore holds great potential for visualising polyvocality. Second, in participatory photography there is often more emphasis on making work for a secondary audience, beyond the participants themselves. This creates an opportunity for participants to shape the ways that process is communicated to a wider audience.

In participatory photographic practice, audience and output hold different significance than they do and other forms of participatory art. For Suzanne Lacy (1995) the primary audience are participants in the work, the secondary audience 'of myth and memory' is less important. Creating a concrete art object is not prioritised because the focus is on interactions in the moment, which cannot be commodified in the same way. But Bishop (2012) asks that we pay more attention to how the work reaches a future audience, in order to share ideas and assert the value of these practices. As Hal Foster comments, participatory and performance art is notoriously difficult to convey to anyone who was not there at the time. Photography is often used uncritically as a neutral tool for documenting events (Foster, 2004), and Bishop bemoans the 'endless photographs of people' that result (Bishop, 2012). There have been interesting solutions, such as Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave Archive* (2001), which uses an archival format to add layers of meaning to the work through the testimony of participants, but it is unusual for participants to input into how the *process* is shared (Burbridge and Luvera, 2019).

In projects where the camera is central, rather than being used uncritically to 'document' events, a secondary or *future* audience is evoked. This is in part because photographs are understood to travel beyond the place and time where they were made (Barthes, 2000). Azoulay writes that the camera is seen as an opportunity to 'address others', so that 'an encounter between photographer and photographed is created and inspired by a relation to an external eye, the eye of the spectator' (Azoulay, 2008, p.129). Whilst it is possible that she places too much emphasis on

the liberatory potential of this address (Palmer, 2017), photography does present the potential to communicate with a future audience.

Participatory photography, by overtly involving participants in creating artwork intended for a secondary audience (usually a series of images), potentially gives them more control over that output, and therefore over how the process is shared, than in other forms of participatory art. This awareness of a future audience changes the dynamic in the room in ways that can be both problematic and productive (see Chapter 2.3.4).

This great potential in participatory photography to both register traces of social dynamics *and* give participants input into sharing process is underused. Burbridge and Luvera discuss how rare it is to share participant perspectives on process, with Burbridge suggesting that doing so might 'help expose another set of naturalised hierarchies' (2019, p.357). Luvera addresses this through participant blogs and involving participants in exhibition design. A different approach is taken by the *No Olho da Rua* project in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, which gave disposable cameras to children. In an exhibition at Fabrica (Germain, Azevedo and Godoy, 2012) all photographs taken were included, with some selected for enlargement. Also included were notebooks used for co-editing with participants. These practices allow participant involvement in the editing process – and those involved - to become visible, adding layers of meaning to the project, contributing to its aesthetic value.

To summarise, although participatory photography is often discussed separately from participatory art, critiques of both rest on different ideas about the relationship of politics and aesthetics. Aesthetics, as a space apart from and connected to the social, is essential for resisting a carceral regime that denies sensation, and for imagining alternative futures (Davis, 2016; Fleetwood, 2020; Kelly, 2022). To address Beshty's (2015) question of how the social becomes perceivable in an artwork, this research project makes use of Rancière's proposition that aesthetics contains political potential through its simultaneous connection to, and distance from the social (Rancière, 2009a). Participatory photography holds possibilities for

generating these complex layers through the camera's potential to register the polyvocal, as well as its capacity to invoke a future audience. This potential will be explored throughout this research project.

Participatory photography emerged in part as a response to the oppressive histories I discuss above. I will now discuss another group of practices which work creatively with these histories through engagement with photographic archives. All these approaches are collaborative in a broad sense, but some deliberately employ participatory strategies. In some cases, the structure of the archive extends the capacity of photography to record and reflect on the social dynamics of a project, and to invoke a future audience.

2.4 Imagining Alternative Archives

Interest in artworks that engage directly with the inherently archival nature of photography is growing, especially as decolonial perspectives become more prominent[4]. In his catalogue essay for the exhibition *Archive Fever*, Okwui Enwezor writes, 'because the camera is literally an archiving machine, every photograph, every film is *a priori* an archival object' (2008, p.12, emphasis in original). Almost any artwork using photography could therefore be seen as engaging the archive. To narrow the scope, I will focus on projects which work creatively with the role played by photographic archives in systems of control. This includes work by institutions, communities and individuals and can be divided into two categories. The first recontextualises or reinterprets existing archival material and the second creates alternative archives for specific communities by collecting existing materials or generating new ones. In both categories approaches to collaboration and shared authorship vary widely, as does criticality towards archival structures and photography's truth claims, suggesting possibilities for intervention in the relationship between photography and systems of control.

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[4] See for example *Histories*, a recent (2021) issue of Foam dedicated to archives.

2.4.1 Artistic Interventions in the Archive

The question of what should be done with the many thousands of images that have been produced in the history of imperial domination is increasingly urgent, especially in the case of 'compelled photographs' (Campt, 2017) where subjects have been photographed against their will. To simply reproduce those photographs with the aim of 'raising awareness' risks repeating that abuse. This was demonstrated by the heavily criticized book, *Sexe, Race et Colonies* (Blanchard, Bancel and Boëtsch, 2018) containing sexualized images taken in a colonial context. In the words of Cases Rebelles Collectives this 're-stages the horror in a sensationalist way, displays and renews the humiliation, shines a voyeuristic light on the crime without any consideration for the victims' (2020). There is a vast array of decolonial interventions in photographic archives that handle the visual legacy of domination more sensitively. I will focus on examples that extend the quality of attention that Campt brings to 'compelled photographs' (2017).

A visualisation of Campt's careful attention can be found in Wendy Red Star's *1880 Crow Peace Delegation* (2014). These are annotated portraits of Crow chiefs from the National Anthropological Archives. The originals are not 'compelled photographs' but they are bound up with colonial domination. Red Star's annotation creates a conversation between herself and the sitters, drawing attention to their agency and individuality. 'Elaborating' images in this way (Butet-Roch and Del Vecchio, 2023) is a common strategy in participatory photography as I will discuss in Chapter 4.4.

Nigel Poor's *San Quentin Project* (2021), grew out of her long-term engagement with the prison, which began with teaching photography classes and culminated in the acclaimed *Ear Hustle* podcast. Poor was given access to images from the prison archive and imprisoned people used a similar strategy to Red Star to interpret archive images of the prison. They provide a powerful analysis that makes use of their expertise to comment on the sometimes humorous, sometimes chilling, and often banal images produced by prison guards (Figure 11). Alongside these works, Poor presents her own selection of images, which she has grouped into categories. She explains that this categorisation was an earlier stage of the process, as she got

to grips with the material (personal communication, 2024). These images make for uncomfortable viewing as we are seeing people who did not necessarily consent to be photographed, without the critique provided by annotation. I find myself wondering what categories participants would have chosen for the images. The line between exposing the structures that produced these images and re-exposing the photographed people feels very thin here, but perhaps this discomfort is part of the power of the project, as Poor invites us to question our own position as viewers.
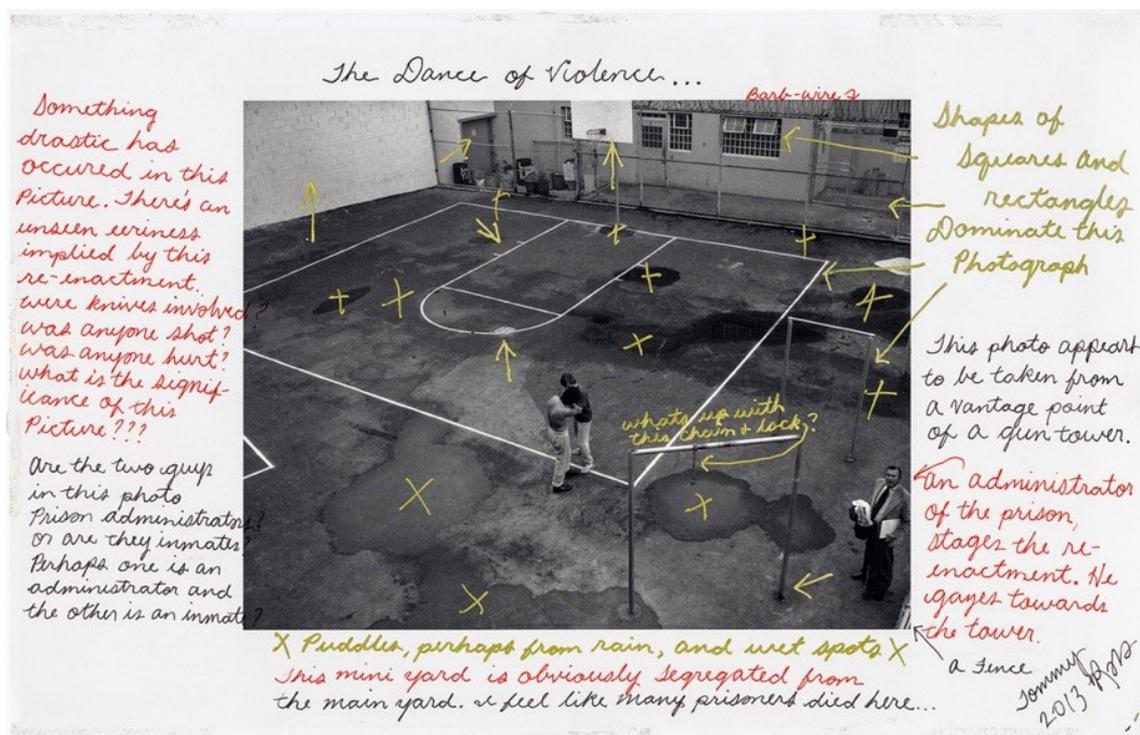
Figure 11: From 'The San Quentin Project' by Nigel Poor, Re-Creation 1.6.75 by Tommy Shakur Ross (2013).
Source: Nigel Poor

Diverse artworks by Azoulay, Ken Gonzales-Day, David Birkin and Livia Melzi each direct scrutiny towards the structures that produced these images rather than the people unwillingly pictured. Azoulay *refuses* to reproduce archival materials as they support an imperial version of events (2019). She instead presents tracings of archival photographs of the eviction of Palestinians, in part because reproducing them would continue the objectification of those pictured, in part because she was not given permission to print them with her own captions, which focus attention on the Israeli state which created these records (Figure 12). The act of tracing draws

attention to the indexicality of the photograph, visualising a certain quality of attention which, like Campt, she uses to detect alternate histories in the images. This includes the subtle resistance of those photographed, but also the questionable actions of the state that aimed to present the evictions as 'peaceful'. Using different methods to similar ends, Gonzalez-Day erased the bodies of lynched people from photographs, drawing our attention instead to the perpetrators of these crimes (2005).

Figure 12: 'Unshowable photograph, This is Not Repatriation but Deportation, Kfar Yona' [original caption at the CICR "Repatriation of 1,200 Arab civilians 1949."] Source: Ariella Azoulay

In the series *Midnight Blue* (2017), David Birkin draws attention to racist oppression through the materials he uses to reproduce archival images of the Mississippi State Penitentiary where Edward Earl Johnson was wrongfully executed in 1987. The original photographs were not made by the state, but by documentary filmmaker Paul Hamann. By making **cyanotypes** of these images, Birkin draws attention to the chemicals sometimes used in executions in the United States, which were the same as those used in Nazi gas chambers. A by-product of these chemicals is used to

make cyanotypes. Birkin uses the **materiality** of the images to make these connections.

Melzi's work sits in a rich seam of artworks which address museum and collection practices, of which Mark Dion's work is a well-known example. Melzi emphasizes the role of photography in these collections. In *Collection of Unjust Enrichment* (2021), she explores the archive's colonial roots. Almost as though investigating a crime, she traces the European practice of collecting Brazilian Tupinamba cloaks, using varied materials which often reflect on the role of photography in this process (Figure 13). Her approach to archival photographs is to pull back, to show their edges - the curators' notes and cataloguing procedures that surround them - and to present them alongside other materials which question their existence. She employs a poetic, aesthetically led approach which counters the hierarchical logic of the archives she investigates. Melzi points to the contingencies, the human gesture and the poetry of the photographs, creating opportunities for alternative interpretations that neither cover up nor re-enforce past injustices. In addition, by collecting diverse materials, Melzi creates a **counter-archive**. Counter-archiving is an approach used in different ways by a wide range of organisations and artists discussed below.

Figure 13: 'Musee du Quai Branly' (2020) Source: Livia Melzi

2.4.2 Polyphonic Testimony

'On the one hand there is no state without archives…on the other hand the very existence of the archive constitutes a constant threat to the state'.

Achille Mbembe (2002)

Campt's statement on the simultaneous liberatory and oppressive potential of the photograph could well be extended to photographic archives, which can be used to sustain or challenge domination. The second group of examples I will consider make use of 'polyphonic testimony' (Sekula, 1986) to challenge dominant narratives or preserve alternative histories. Some, such as the Lebanese photo journal *Cold Cuts* (2024) serve an underrepresented group. Communities are also represented through experimental museum-based projects, such as *The Museum of Homelessness* (n.d.) and *Lande*, an exhibition of visual culture from the Calais 'Jungle' (Hicks and Mallet, 2019). However, photography is only a part of these projects, not the main focus.

Organisations such as the *Arab Image Foundation* (AIF), *Belfast Exposed* and *The Nepal Picture Library* are associated with a place or geographic area. Some of these projects utilise traditional archival techniques for collecting and cataloguing images, but *AIF* encourages critical dialogue by working closely with artists and researchers and mounting exhibitions reflecting on archival practices. Belfast Exposed is embedded in the local community, using socially engaged strategies 'to ease the trauma of the past and support people using photography as a method of healing' (Belfast Exposed, n.d.). The Nepal Picture Library aims to preserve 'multicultural, pluralist representations, that have the potential to counter monologic national histories' (Kakshapati and Hussey-Smith, 2019: 384), with recent focus on feminist and indigenous history. While all three projects aim to present the full diversity of their constituencies beyond recent political events, a recent project run by the AIF to preserve historical artefacts in Yemen amidst the conflict there underlines the urgency of both preserving and activating images in the face of socio-political upheaval.

This urgency is a factor in the archival work of individuals as well as organisations. Susan Mieselas' monumental project *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (Mieselas, 2008) documents the genocide of the Kurdish people, preserves their personal photographic collections and records Western interactions with Kurdistan through photographs. The work forms an archive for a people without a state. By recording the colonial use of photography in the region, *Kurdistan* draws attention to the role of the camera in that history.

Annette Krauss' project *Hidden Curriculum* (2012/13), created with high school students, does serve as a record of a community, but it is also a record of a collaborative art process. The archive consists of videos where students share lessons they have learned in school that are not part of the official curriculum. They specify some of these videos, which sometimes share practices which are against school rules, as only available to other students, whilst all other videos are available via an online platform. This is an effective approach to making participants' editing decisions visible, as discussed above. Using an archival format, and paying attention to who controls what is visible, engages and interrogates the power structures that exist within institutions, including the power dynamics that exist within the project itself.

Yasmine Eid Sabbagh similarly draws attention to refusal and negotiation. She describes her work digitising the personal photographs of Palestinian refugees in the Burj al-Shamali refugee camp as linking existing archives rather than generating a new one (Eid-Sabbagh, 2019). In this work polyvocality is not only the result of multiple contributions. The image itself can become polyvocal, holding what Sabbagh describes as 'meta-medial layers' (2019) made up of the histories, associations and uses attached to it. She writes that 'conflicts and ambivalences are not necessarily resolved but are kept active in the collection' (2019, p.315). Contributors place conditions on the collection and viewing of the images, in one case even designating a certain day of the year on which an image becomes accessible, and public presentations of the work (sometimes alongside the AIF) mostly imagine possible futures for the archive, rather than showing the images

themselves. Eid-Sabbagh marks out a space for criticality within or alongside the archival institution through a combination of rigorous documentation and **fabulation**.

Walid Raad, also a member of the AIF, uses imaginative fiction in a different way to respond to the Lebanese wars. *The Atlas Group* (2006) is a (semi)fictional archive consisting of film and photography, often in the form of 'donated' notebooks which house the idiosyncratic projects of (probably) fictional characters or Raad himself (Figure 14). Raad uses humour and fabulation to underline the importance of collective memory while drawing attention to that which is inherently fictional in our recording and recounting of history. This archive provides a useful structure to maintain in collective consciousness that which is difficult to bear.
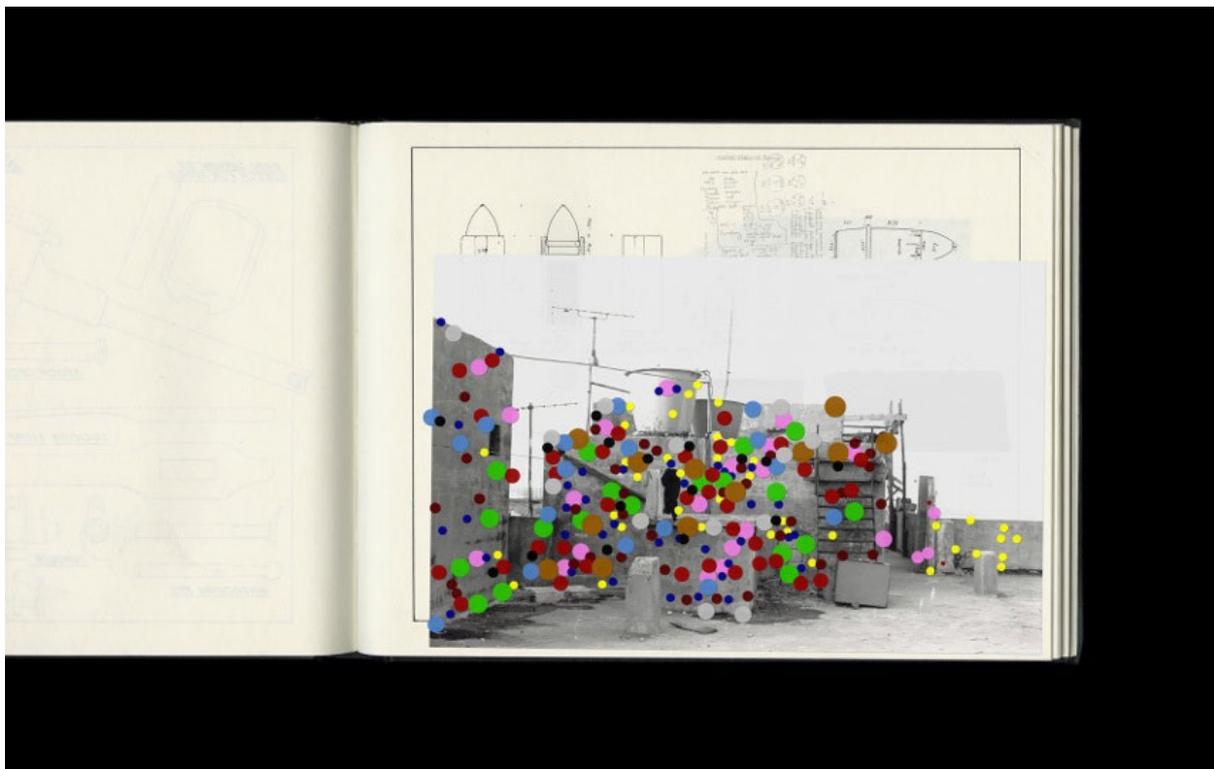
Figure 14: 'Let's Be Honest, the Weather Helped' (Walid Raad The Atlas Group 1989-2004) Source: https://www.widewalls.ch/artists/walid-raad [accessed 24/05/22]. Courtesy: Walid Raad

These examples navigate the potential of alternative archives for complicating dominant narratives. The structure of the archive is put to different uses. It confers importance (Mieselas, Eid-Sabbagh), questions importance (Krauss) or creates an imaginative space (Raad, Eid-Sabbagh). These approaches vary in the trust they

place on the documentary value of the photograph and the authority of the archive, versus their openness to the mutability, the contingency and the imaginary possibilities of the image. They also adopt different approaches to polyvocality, from inviting contributions (AIF) to decades-long collaborations (Mieselas), to sharing control over materials (Krauss). Polyvocal approaches to photographic archives gain a different significance in contexts of incarceration, where systems of oppression developed with and are maintained by photographic archives.

2.5 Participatory Photography in Prisons

The production of art by people in prison is a vast topic, reaching back through the history of imprisonment, and is beyond the scope of this review. A parallel history of documentary photography in prisons is also too broad to cover in detail[5]. At the intersection of these histories sit a group of projects instigated by non-incarcerated people that use photography and foreground collaboration. I have chosen to focus on an art or documentary context, rather than instances where the focus is participatory research. These examples show the rich potential, and some of the challenges of participatory photography in prisons.

Each example engages with archival issues in some way. This may be unavoidable considering the weight of the institutional archives that sustain prisons. Both Poor, working at San Quentin (2021) and Ed Clark working at Guantanamo (2010) reinterpret the archival material generated by the institution itself. Raphaella Rosella's long-term collaborative documentary with family and friends in Australia (Rosella, 2022a), the *Answers Without Words* project in Oregon (Schüttler, 2019), and *Photo Requests from Solitary* in Illinois (Reynolds, 2016), all generate counter-archives in different ways. Two projects related to the Maze and Long Kesh prison,

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[5] A useful collection covering arts and documentary in prisons is *The Arts of Imprisonment: Control, resistance and empowerment* (Cheliotis, 2012). Fleetwood's book, *Marking Time* (2020) covers recent artistic practice in the USA. The exhibition and associated publication *Prison Nation* at Aperture Gallery presents (mostly) recent photographic work relating to prisons in the USA (2018). Another excellent resource on recent practice is Pete Brook's blog *Prison Photography* (n.d.).

the *Prisoners Memory Archive* (McLaughlin, n.d.), and *Restaging the Object* (Krenn and O'Beirn, 2019), also generate their own archives. In these cases archival structure makes space for multiple narratives to exist around a contested site.

Ed Clark's *Letters to Omar* (2010) places scrutiny on institutional mechanisms. Clark reproduces photocopies of letters sent to a detainee at Guantanamo Bay. All detainees' correspondence was photocopied, and the originals destroyed. Clark reproduces the full photocopy, with official stamps and redactions (Figure 15). Not only does this draw attention to the petty cruelty of bureaucracy inherent in the archives created by the state, but it enlists the prison officer who made the photocopies as an unwitting collaborator, reframing the original images.

Figure 15: 'Letters to Omar' (Clark, 2010). Source: Edmund Clark

During a residency at HMP Grendon (*In Place of Hate*, 2018), Clark responded using multiple strategies, including photographing staff and imprisoned people using a long

exposure pinhole camera. In the book he presents these images alongside transcripts of interviews conducted during the exposure (Figure 16). We can read their words but not see their faces. This anonymises participants but it also references early mug shots, which would have required the sitter to remain motionless for several seconds. Clark also includes a handful of reworkings of the images made by the imprisoned people themselves, but these form one element amongst many. He works closely with imprisoned people but retains authorship (and ownership) of the project[6]. His personal responses provide the work's organising logic, but other voices also surface.

Figure 16: 'In Place of Hate' (Clark, 2017). Source: Edmund Clark

Like Poor and Eid-Sabbagh, the *Immigration Detention Archive* works with existing materials, in relation to spaces that are not strictly prisons but are nonetheless extensions of the carceral state (Liebeskind & von Zinnenburg Carroll, 2023).

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[6] For a more stylized, conceptually lead response to conversations with prisoners see Edgar Martins *What Photography and Incarceration Have in Common with an Empty Vase* (2020).

Bordered Lives: Immigration Detention Archive (Bosworth, Von Zinnenburg Carroll and Balzar, 2020) gathers visual materials (mostly drawings) from those in immigration detention in the UK. Because many of the materials were found in detention centres rather than actively contributed, this presents an interesting ethical dilemma about what to do with this material. Without participant input into editing and archival decisions the project lacks the nuance and sensitivity of Eid-Sabbagh's work.

Other projects generate new materials to stand as counter-archives. In Raphaela Rosella's *You'll Know It When You Feel It* (2007-2022), creative authorship is shared between Rosella and her 'co-creators': close friends and family whose lives intersect in various ways with the carceral state. She combines staged portraits with fragments of letters, diaries and family photographs to create a record that resists 'bureaucratic representations of women whose intimate relations extend across carceral geographies' (Rosella, 2022a). A three-channel film, *HOMEtruths* (2022), also developed out of their collaboration, combining observational footage of the women with their families, personal videos shot on mobiles, audio recordings of telephone calls and video portraits of the women. The poetic nature of the work allows for emotional depth and demonstrates the authors' determination to reject the oppressive official record. Rosella is obviously very aware of ethical issues. In a recent discussion she described the necessity of slowing down production schedules to ensure consent from all participants (Photography Ethics Symposium, 2022), but unlike Krauss' or Eid-Sabbagh's work, the exact nature of the collaboration and negotiations involved is left unclear.

Two projects where imprisoned people create prompts for image generation are *Answers Without Words* (Figure 17) and *Photo Requests From Solitary*. Neither describes itself as an archive but the results are collections of images which grew from the curiosity of the participants, who take the role of commissioners or researchers. *Answers* was part of Columbia River Creative Initiatives, a play on the name of the prison, Columbia River Correctional Institution, where a series of artist run programmes took place. Imprisoned people wrote lists of questions for

photographers in other countries to respond to with images. For example, 'what does love look like in your country?' Participating photographers (including myself) then wrote questions in return. The project created a space for curiosity and exchange between incarcerated people and those outside, particularly significant considering how difficult it is to access knowledge from inside a prison.

There are parallels between this question/response format and that used by Mohamad Barouissa in *Temps Mort* (2014)*.* In contravention of rules banning cell phones in prison, Barouissa texted instructions to an imprisoned friend, asking him to film certain aspects of his life. Their text conversation is reproduced alongside the footage, emphasising the interaction. For *Photo Requests* the instructions came only from those inside, specifically people subjected to solitary confinement in the infamous TAMS prison. Their requests form a poignant portrait of people who had been demonised as 'the worst of the worst' (Reynolds, 2016, p.88). This was the first step in a campaign that eventually led to the closure of TAMS, the only example discussed here that directly contributed to such a result. All three projects use questions or instructions to render the barrier between inside and outside more porous.

Figure 17: The answers without words team assesses collaborators' 'answers'. CRCI Portland, Oregon. Source: Anke Schüttler

In Northern Ireland, government indecision around the future of the Maze and Long Kesh prison sites made space for two creative responses to the problem of remembering a contested place. For Cahal McLaughlin, the material in his *Prisons*

Memory Archive constitutes not 'historical documents' but 'interpretive documents' of the past (Mclaughlin, 2011, p.20). The archive contains testimony from formerly imprisoned people and prison staff, filmed on location within the abandoned prison. As in Krauss' work where participants control who sees material, these films are co-owned and managed by participants, a precondition of the project going ahead. The videos, with minimal edits, were screened in parallel in a gallery setting and are available online (Figure 19). Accounts from opposite sides of the political divide sit alongside one another.

Figure 18: 'Restaging the Object: A participatory exploration of Long Kesh/Maze prison' (Krenn & O'Beirn, 2019).
Source: Aisling O'Beirn

More recently, *Restaging the Object* (Krenn and O'Beirn, 2019) tracked down objects related to the prison. The artists worked with contributors to label and document the objects, later working with community groups to collaboratively make models of the buildings. Although *Restaging* does not seem to involve shared ownership of the materials, in both cases the archival format makes space for different versions of history to co-exist. Suzana Milevska describes the project as an 'interstice' (echoing Bourriaud), a space for discussion amidst a fraught political landscape (2019). A third photographic response, Donovan Wylie's *The Maze* (Wylie and Purbrick, 2004),

rigorously documents the interior of the prison. This is a powerful monument, but collaboration plays a smaller role.
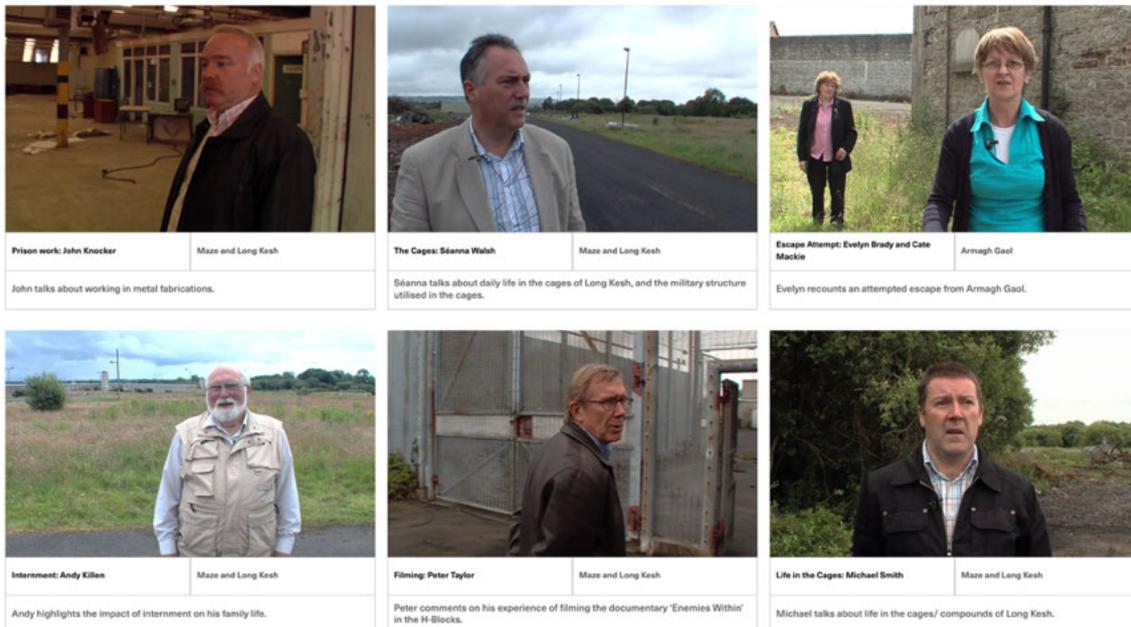
Figure 19: Prisons Memory Archive website. Source: Cahal McLaughlin

Many of these examples - *Answers*, *Photo Requests*, *Temps Mort*, *Immigration Detention Archive*, and the work of both Poor and Clark - involve non-incarcerated artists working with people who are currently incarcerated. Some of Rosella's collaborators were incarcerated during her long-term project, but they are part of the same community and their relationship with her extends beyond those periods in their lives. Pursuing creative collaboration with imprisoned people brings a specific set of ethical and practical challenges. This might be one reason why all these projects have a clear, straightforward call/response format for collaboration. Everyone knows what they are getting into and what they are being asked to do. Other projects that have a clear structure for participation are *Prisons Memory* and *Restaging*, where the structure allows those from opposite sides to feel comfortable taking part. This is not to say that these projects did not evolve in response to participants over long-term engagements with a setting, but that the roles of everyone involved and the structure of the collaboration are more fixed than in Rosella's and Eid-Sabbagh's work. This research project aims to bring a more open-

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ended approach to working inside the prison itself, allowing the shape of the project and the roles of those involved to shift in response to co-creators.

Collaborations between incarcerated and non-incarcerated artists, especially those instigated by the latter, have been soundly critiqued, most extensively by Fleetwood. She asks how these interventions question or attempt to change the status quo and whether 'meaningful collaboration' is possible in this context (Fleetwood, 2020). Fleetwood's questions are worth considering in relation to any project that addresses incarceration, whether participants are currently incarcerated or not. It is difficult to comment on her second point in relation to the examples discussed here, as they do not provide enough information to assess the nature of the collaboration, and what is 'meaningful' may differ for the different people involved. In fact, one aim of this research project is to unpack what 'meaningful collaboration' might mean in this context. Nevertheless, each example does involve people in complicating their own representation and that of the prison system. In doing so they trouble the dominant view of prisons as normal and people in prison as deviant. They do so partly by allowing the collaboration to surface aesthetically.

What does this mean in practice? Many projects make use of classic markers of participation such as a focus on participants' hands or handwriting. A sense of conversation and collaboration certainly comes through as one participant holds an object for another to photograph in *Answers,* and even though each image in Poor's project is by a single author, it feels as though a conversation is unfolding through the writing on the image. Handwriting also appears in personal notes included in Rosella's work alongside family photographs. In Clark's work conversation is conveyed through motion blur and interview transcript, and in *Restaging* it is visualised through labels made at each photoshoot, along with a short statement from each person. Hands occasionally appear here too, indicating the participant's involvement in setting up the shoot.

In the cases of McLaughlin and Eid-Sabbagh collaboration surfaces differently. The PMA interviews are visually reminiscent of a classic documentary approach, but the

difference here is McLaughlin's decision to barely edit the footage, allowing the encounter to unfold in close to real time (Mclaughlin, 2011). Eid-Sabbagh also makes use of film (among other strategies), videoing a bag that contains photographs that are not revealed, visibly including refusal. In each example the tensions that surface add layers of meaning and contradiction to the work, enriching it aesthetically.

Some projects draw attention directly to the structures that sustain the prison system through archival processes. Clark's focus on censorship and Poor's interrogation of institutional photography are two examples. Some go further by drawing attention to how these structures might be mirrored or questioned in the project itself. This happens when Rosella compiles an array of documents in direct opposition to carceral archives, or when the Prisons Memory Archive explicitly states that participants own the material. In Krauss and Eid Sabbagh's work participants also determine when and how their images are viewed. These decisions not only give participants more control, but they also draw attention to participation as an ongoing negotiation. Highlighting process in this way enriches the work both ethically and aesthetically.

The collaborative aspects of image generation are visible in these examples to different degrees, and participants have different levels of control over the materials. What is less visible is the *process* of editing, curation and other decisions surrounding sharing the work with an audience, although it's likely that in many cases participants were involved in this. *Answers* does include annotated contact sheets and in some cases it is possible to understand the process through reading supplementary texts, but the editing decisions have little visible presence. This, as I noted above, is a potential area for both ethical and aesthetic exploration in my own work.

2.6 Summary

This chapter introduced some key ideas for grappling with the entwined histories of photography, archives and power. Beginning with the Foucauldian accounts of Tagg (1988, 2009) and Sekula (1986), I moved on to consider the contribution of the subject and viewer to the meaning of the photograph (S. Edwards, 1990; Azoulay, 2008; Campt, 2017). Doing so makes for polyvocality within the image itself, and allows an understanding of the social context in which it was created.

Largely unmentioned in both Tagg and Azoulay's theoretical work are the multiple threads of participatory practice, which developed especially energetically in the 1970s, alongside socially engaged art practice, visual anthropology and radical pedagogy (although Azoulay et. al's recent book, *Collaboration* (2023), addresses this omission to some extent, the links between the examples it contains and Azoulay's earlier writing are not always clear). In discussing this history, I took the example of the 'community photography' of 1970s London as an important precedent for current theory and practice. This is an early example of belief in the 'liberatory potential' of participation that persists today despite the critiques it attracted even at the time. But the movement also pioneered a relational understanding of photography as embedded in the social field, which underlies much recent discussion of photography as inherently collaborative.

I closed my discussion of the development of participatory photography by arguing that the aesthetic richness of the complex interactions it entails are often overlooked, either due to a focus on benefits for participants (more common in a community development setting) or due to a prioritisation of the aesthetic results over details of process (more common in a gallery setting). I then looked more closely at the term 'aesthetics' as linked to layers of complexity and contradiction (Bishop, 2012), and as closely related to sensory perception (Beshty, 2015) even to the act of breathing itself (Kelly, 2022). In this reading aesthetics is essential for resisting oppressive structures, but it might also register evidence of those structures as the social field becomes visible (Beshty, 2015) How this unfolds in practice is one of my research questions.

I proposed participatory photography as useful in this context for three reasons. The first is that by using technologies that are bound up with systems of power, we might understand those systems better. Unequal power dynamics and limitations to what may be seen, by whom, might become visible through attempts to use the camera in this context. The second applies Azoulay's thinking to Beshty's question of how the ethical might register aesthetically, suggesting that as photography is 'a sampling or a trace of a space of human relations' (2010, p.251) it allows some aspects of the social field to become perceivable. The third relates to photography's capacity to invoke a future audience, an awareness that could allow participants more input into how process is presented. All three of these aspects of photography involve important ethical questions, whilst potentially contributing to the aesthetic richness of a project.

I then explore strategies that engage photographic archives, moving on to practices that do so in a context of incarceration. Many of these follow a straightforward collaborative structure and this research project will explore a more open-ended approach, aiming to make space for the roles of everyone involved to shift. The examples I find most compelling bring the status of the photographic document and the archive into question, addressing the ways that power structures might be challenged or reflected in the structure of the project itself. Some do so through drawing attention to process or through involving participants in decisions around how the work is shared with an audience. This is a rich area for further investigation. It is clear from this brief survey that working in this context raises multiple ethical issues, which I unpack in the following chapter.

3 Ethics

Figure 20: Assisted Self-Portrait of Maggie Irvine from Residency (2006 - 2008) by Anthony Luvera. Source: Anthony Luvera

3.1 Introduction: Ethics in Practice

Art critics are sometimes suspicious of the term 'Ethics', equating it with restrictions to artistic 'autonomy'. Bishop often conflates ethics and morality, associating both with the 'Christian good soul' and restrictive social codes (Bishop, 2012, p.39). Not only are ethics the enemy of free expression, but they distract from systemic change through 'a meaningless politics of "humaneness"' (Möntmann, 2013, p.18). This blurs an important distinction between ethics and morals. Rather than a rigid set of moral codes, or a universalisation of dominant values (Möntmann, 2013), this research project takes ethics as a context-specific approach to social interaction, 'grounded in the immediacy and the specific tissue of circumstances in the moment' (Bolt and MacNeill, 2019, p.10). This resonates with Beshty's description of ethics as illuminating 'the specific quality and nature of the social field the art object constructs and of which it is simultaneously a part.' (2015, p.17) Ethical concerns sit as the foundation of my research questions and the centre of the collaborative creative process, and I explore how they become visible in the artwork itself.

Ethics is also contested at the intersection of arts and academia, with complaints of a disconnect between university ethics procedures and art practice in the 'real world' (Bolt and MacNeill, 2019). There is nothing special about art here. In 1995 physician Paul Komesaroff used the term 'Microethics' to deal with the gulf between 'big issue' bioethics and everyday dilemmas that came up in clinical practice (2020). Marilys Guillemin & Lynn Gillam reference Komesaroff as a forerunner of their distinction between '***procedural ethics***', the professional codes and procedures that aim to limit harm caused by research, and 'ethics in practice', which is more situational and responsive (2004). Crucially, this emphasises the variety and subtlety of potential harms caused by research, which extend beyond those covered by 'procedural ethics' (2004, p.262). Guilleman & Gillam suggest a reflexive approach to 'ethics in practice'. This includes an awareness of how the researcher's bias and assumptions might influence the research process as well as a sensitivity to 'ethically important' moments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While these moments may be difficult to predict, an awareness that they will arise should be built into the research planning process.

This research project also asks how these moments might surface in the artwork created, and what the aesthetic value might be of attending to ethics in this way.

The ethical concerns outlined here grow from my previous artistic practice (see Chapter 1.2), but working within the stark *inequity* of the prison brought them sharply into focus. Broader imbalances of power are reflected within the research project, stemming from the fact that I was free to come and go while co-creators were incarcerated. I was being paid while co-creators were not. I can be credited with my full name, they cannot. I am permitted to move around the prison and to use a camera in ways that co-creators are not. I also have perceived status as an artist and academic, and because workshops take place in the Learning Centre I am seen by co-creators as a teacher (see Chapter 4.5). There are many potential pitfalls here and Fleetwood devotes a chapter of her book on prison art to them (2020). There is the potential for voyeurism, coercion, and extractive and exploitative practice, along with the potential for misunderstanding that comes with the ignorance of an outsider. There is also a risk that art in these contexts merely supports the prison system through emphasizing rehabilitation or becoming a tool of pacification (Kelly, 2022). And yet there is also a great deal of potential richness in the tensions and opportunities that arise when working across the divisions described (see Chapter 2.5). The importance and urgency of collaborative work in this context makes it worth navigating the potential pitfalls.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first lays out an ethical framework in the form of a series of questions and contradictions that are never considered closed, but must be repeatedly returned to throughout. This framework is a method of reflexive planning for the emergence of 'ethically important moments' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p.262). It also informs my approach to the second section, which deals with the narrower topic of 'procedural ethics': aspects of my project planning relevant to the Glasgow School of Art ethics approvals process and the SPS research access application. My approach to procedural ethics is very much in the spirit of 'ethics in practice', as I respond to the numerous issues that arise in this setting.

3.2 Ethical Framework

As there is no way to work in prisons without holding a great deal of ethical complexity and contradiction, it is important that ethical questions remain live, never considered closed or resolved. Underlying the entire research project is Fleetwood's question of whether 'meaningful collaboration' is possible in this context, another version of Anthony Luvera's question: 'Should I even be doing this at all?' (Briggs and Luvera, 2022). This framework is therefore an attempt to act creatively from a position of doubt.

The core of my ethical approach is to point to inequity, while simultaneously aiming for and assuming equity. Central to this aim is a recognition of simultaneous connection and disconnection, between those engaged in making an artwork, as well as between the creator and viewer of an artwork. This follows the suggestion of both Bell (2017) and Oliver Davis that dissensus and consensus might 'coexist or alternate' (Davis, 2010). For Carolyn Ellis, 'Relational ethics', a form of 'ethics in practice', 'recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity and connectedness' (Ellis, 2007). In this research project *dis*connectedness is also important. Hannula, Suoranta and Vaden (2005), describe ethics as what takes place when different spheres of experience - 'ethoses' – overlap. Misunderstanding is the inevitable starting point for ethical encounter, and indeed for any understanding. They do not use the term, but what seems to be required is ***Standpoint Epistemology*** (Harding, 1992) - the recognition that things look different depending on where you stand - which forms the basis of Nira Yuval-Davis' account of transversal politics (1999). This perspective is also expressed in radical pedagogy, which honours diverse forms of knowledge and experience (see Chapter 4.2).

In Rancière's formulation, the 'Ethical Regime' entails an assumption that some are excluded and that socially given roles are fixed (O. Davis, 2010, p.16). This could be an issue with Hannula's model of overlapping 'ethoses', unless the misunderstanding they emphasise is taken as productive of change. However, in transversal politics there is a crucial 'differentiation between positioning, identity and values' and 'the

encompassment of difference by **equality**' (Yuval-Davis, 1999, p.94). With these principles in place, the space of ethics holds political potential.

Attempting understanding while acknowledging that full understanding is impossible could be one way to honour these principles. This is true in collaborative practice as it is when artwork is shared with an audience. For artist Sharon Lockhart, occupying this position allows the viewer to bring themselves to the artwork:

'I think you have to recognize the distance you have from the subject of a film in order to create the space for viewers to participate through their own thought processes… I don't know if I want viewers to feel they "know" the subjects at all in the conventional sense. I want them to think about their own lives.' (Lockhart & Norton, 2016, p.7)

Viewing Lockhart's work, I find myself in that position of stretching my imagination towards another, while being aware of the distance between us. I am therefore unable to put them in a convenient box. Allowing, and trusting, the viewer of an artwork to occupy this position is a key aspect of Rancière's politics of aesthetics, where presuming an 'equality of intelligence' between artist and audience and challenging 'the opposition between viewing and acting' (2009b, p.13) is essential for the political potential of aesthetic experience. Similarly, Azoulay's *Civil Contract of Photography* (2008) relies on the freedom - and responsibility - of the viewer to attempt to understand the photographed person, though she sometimes brushes over the potential for misunderstanding. As Lockhart explains, by acknowledging misunderstanding and 'distance' within a collaborative process, space is created for the viewer to bring themselves to the attempt to understand the people involved, and in the process a space of potential 'equality' is created.

Working within the prison presents many obstacles to asserting equity in the ways I have described. A second question therefore concerns how the methods used challenge or re-inscribe pre-existing inequalities and to what extent that is acknowledged. Krauss addresses this issue in relation to her work in schools: 'What

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is challenging about working within such different kinds of (power) structures is that you cannot deny that you are part of them, so you have to find a way to question them, interrogate the premises which affirm certain roles within these processes, and at best start a process of renegotiation.' She describes a process 'that posits equality as a desire that can be actualized, and then figures out how, and why it fails when it does' (Krauss, 2015, p.30). I hope that by taking account – in both planning and evaluation - of how and why this research project fails in the equity it aims for, new understandings of systems of power and their relationship to photography might surface. Still, 'taking account' may not be enough, if I am not also attempting to remove the difference between the ideal and the actual (Kelly, 2022). Like the poet Saradha Soobrayen, therefore, I am 'writing with a sense of failure'[7] but also with a sense of hope (2019).

This research project asks how the social, including the contradictions and inequalities discussed here, might surface aesthetically. One answer might be that durational, dialogical modes of attention to the photograph make space for this emergence as traces of the social field in which the work was made may be detected, irrespective of the photographer's intentions (See Chapter 2.2). Conversely Azoulay (2019) emphasises all that *cannot* be seen in an image, as well as all that is not seen in the photographs not taken. This resonates with my aim of acknowledging all that cannot be known while still trying to understand. For Azoulay, images, like the questions posed in this section, are never considered closed. Extending my ethical

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[7] 'At the 2016 launch of 'Kayo Chingonyi: A Creative/Critical Residency on Migration', I read a short poem on the long poem as a space for marginalized voices: '[a] poem can buckle under that kind of expectation to represent or speak for another, there needs to be self-doubt, **writing with a sense of failure**' (Soobrayen 2015a). I find myself questioning the ambition of such a poem while no one with a marginalized voice was present at this event or writing poetry, and why would they be? The Chagossians were writing letters to the UK Home Office, requesting visas for the children and family left in Seychelles and Mauritius.' (Soobrayan, 2019)

framework to photographs and extending Azoulay's respectful approach beyond images to people is one way to approach creative collaboration in a situation of stark inequity.

This framework consists of key ethical questions which must be kept live as I pursue my overarching research questions. Ethical questions include: is 'meaningful collaboration' possible across a stark power differential and what does it look like? How can understanding be attempted while leaving space for misunderstanding? How can I take account of the many ways in which the research project fails to achieve the equity I aim for? How might a deeply unequal social field shape and be shaped by the process of making artwork? Some of the contradictions presented here may be held with acceptance - the impossibility of ever fully understanding another human being, for example. Some must never be accepted, such as the gap between the aimed for equity and reality. The open questions outlined here run through my methodology, informing my art making, collaboration, research and writing. They also underlie my approach to the narrower field of Procedural Ethics.

3.3 Procedural Ethics

Research Ethics forms must fulfil multiple institutional and legal criteria. There is not much space for uncertainty or contradiction here (Bolt and MacNeill, 2019). More importantly, forms and approvals can give a sense that ethical questions should be neatly resolved, whereas keeping questions live is an important part of my approach. Nevertheless, procedural ethics are essential in limiting harm to participants and researchers, and they often raise important issues. Yet more useful is specialist ethics guidance such as that recently published by the participatory photography organisation PhotoVoice (2023), which is more nuanced and specific. Here I will discuss working with **gatekeepers**, consent, incentives, copyright, and attribution, areas I was required to address in various levels of detail by Glasgow School of Art. I also include additional measures, not required by the University, taken to minimise harm to co-creators. In many cases there are no easy and satisfying answers, only

further questions. I therefore use this chapter as one place where I aim for equity and take account of the ways in which the research project falls short of that aim.

3.3.1 Gatekeepers and Recruitment

Working with 'gatekeepers' in any setting presents challenges in communicating clearly with participants. When recruitment is handled by a 'gatekeeper', it can be difficult to be sure that it took place fairly and that participants have not been coerced. In a prison, where some 'gatekeepers' literally lock the gates, these uncertainties are exacerbated. For this research project there were two sets of 'gatekeepers': SPS staff who run the prison, and Fife College staff who run the Learning Centre. This further increased the possibility of miscommunication between everyone involved.

To address these issues, I aimed to communicate directly with co-creators wherever possible. I visited several art classes to spread the word about the workshops. I made leaflets, posters and a promotional video (Appendix 1). These were available two weeks in advance and were used by Learning Centre staff when discussing the workshops with potential participants. I made it clear to staff and in the leaflets that participation was voluntary, and anyone was welcome to sign up. To ensure everyone was on the same page and to gauge whether people were there willingly, I began workshops with a discussion of participant expectations. Once people had attended a workshop and given their details, communication by mail and through the *E-mail a Prisoner* service provided essential direct lines of communication.

Even so, much was beyond my control. I was dependant on staff to distribute promotional materials and I could not control who had access to them. I also could not control the sign-up process to ensure everyone had equal opportunity. Miscommunications occurred. Sometimes e-mails or letters went missing. Several people showed up to workshops expecting cake and a visit to the garden, neither of which had been mentioned in the materials I provided. On one level these are the realities of working in prison. But they do impact imprisoned people's ability to contribute to a project, as well as muddying the waters around participant consent.

3.3.2 Consent

The extent to which imprisoned people can truly consent to a project like this is debatable (Fleetwood, 2020). Attending the Learning Centre at HMP Dumfries is always voluntary and imprisoned people can return to halls at any time or move between classrooms. Still, choosing between a classroom and a cage does not feel like much of a choice. In her detailed critique of prison arts projects, Fleetwood points out that there are other reasons beyond direct pressure from gatekeepers - such as hoping it may improve their chances of parole - why participants may feel coerced to take part (2020). At the same time, for the co-creators in this research project, being asked for consent could be an important choice in a context where choice is so limited.

Aware of these limitations, and the limits of what I can know about a person's reasons for taking part, I approached consent as an ongoing conversation, providing space on consent forms for modifications and drawing up a list of works for each participant where they could indicate their preferences for each individual artwork. This was then used in a separate Licence Agreement towards the end of the project, allowing co-creators to review and give approval for their work to be used on an image-by-image basis. A similar two stage process is recommended by PhotoVoice (2023).

At each stage I aimed to write documents in clear and concise language (Appendices 2-4), providing large print copies and copies on coloured paper. Written information was always additionally delivered verbally, and questions were encouraged. Verbal discussion gave me some sense of participant understanding. The voluntary nature of their participation and the fact that they could revoke consent at any time was especially emphasized. Co-creators took information sheets away before returning to ask questions and sign consent forms.

Despite my intention to continually return to and review consent forms, co-creators were mostly reluctant to ask questions and would sometimes just check the boxes and sign immediately. The box for modifying consent was not used. This is hardly

surprising as even written concisely these documents make for dry reading. They told me that prison life is full of forms: official forms, laundry forms, dinner menu forms. From my notes:

My intention is to ask people to sign consent forms after the break but everyone fills them in right away ('we are well practiced'). I return to the information sheet repeatedly throughout the day to check if anyone has any questions but they don't.
09/08/22

This is where verbal discussion of key information was particularly important, as was leaving copies of the information sheet for co-creators to return to. Audio recording of consent might have led to a more conversational approach but would not have resulted in a clear document that we could refer to later in the process. In addition, in initial workshops not all co-creators were comfortable with audio recording. The List of Works and Licence Agreement prompted more detailed and ongoing engagement, in part because they referred to specific artworks that co-creators cared about. They used these documents to correct or change titles (often multiple times), and to indicate works they did and did not want to include. Although the consent form and information sheet were useful to ensure clarity and transparency, the nuances of negotiation around the collaborative process were more effectively dealt with through other methods – such as recorded discussions or reflective writing - for eliciting participant preferences, feelings and opinions (see 5.1).

3.3.3 Incentives/Copyright/Attribution

The Research Ethics process at Glasgow School of Art requires detail about consent and gatekeepers. Much less detail is requested on the related topics of 'Incentives', copyright, and attribution of artworks. It seems the process is not designed with participants making artwork in mind.

The convention in Research Ethics is that participants should be given a small financial incentive. Anything more would be seen as coercion. In any case, imprisoned people are not permitted to earn money (besides a token amount for

doing prison jobs) while in prison, so two institutional restrictions with different aims achieve the same outcome. But in art making, and especially participatory art making, ethical questions around who gets paid are so manifold they would merit a separate project. In some artworks, such as those by Di-Corcia (2013), or Mikhailov (1999), payment of a pittance is a deliberate choice to draw attention to exploitation in wider society. The artwork then risks re-enforcing those conditions. Burbridge and Luvera discuss paying participants fairly for their time (2019), addressing the inequity between paid artist and unpaid collaborators. However, Luvera is wary that this might set up an employer/employee relationship, or prevent participants from feeling free to contribute as much or as little as they like. Artist Treacy Ziegler volunteers her own time, though she acknowledges that this option is not open to everybody (Fleetwood, 2020). One of the difficulties here is that money can mean many different things in different contexts. It can be an acknowledgement, incentive, exchange, indicator of (in)equity or a coercive or exploitative strategy.

In this research project the fact that I was being paid added another level of inequity, that I struggled to address. The limited access to money and materials within prisons also has impact. Materials such as high-quality paper, pens, stickers, masking tape or real teabags become extremely valuable in this setting. While access to these materials certainly does not qualify as a fair exchange for the time of participants, could providing them in a workshop be considered coercive? Although the participant feedback below showed that they did get non-material benefits out of the workshops, I hesitate to make any grand claims about this, and it does not negate the basic unfairness of the situation.

Again, I approached these issues through transparent dialogue with co-creators. The information sheet clearly states that this is a funded PhD, and the licence agreement stipulates that any profits from the artwork should be donated to a charity chosen by the group. One participant brought up the issue for discussion:

NC:…How big of an influence d'you think we would have had in…the end product which is gonna be a PhD?

AM: So at the start how much influence did I think you would have on the end product?

NC: Yeah. It's your PhD but its a, I don't' want it sounding really bad, but like we're doing work…'

<div align="right">*13/06/23*</div>

I was so keen to encourage his raising this issue, that I did not sufficiently gauge the responses of other participants. I therefore brought it up again in a reflection session (as noted in my journal):

I bring up the compensation question referencing NC's question about the PhD and who is doing the work. He insists not to take it too seriously and he was only joking but I say it's an important point. There is a general sense that they feel adequately compensated. AK mentions getting recognition for their work. They nod when I suggest [crediting them as] co-researchers or co-creators. NT mentions certificates. SP mentions chocolate medals.

<div align="right">*29/08/23*</div>

There was a technical hitch on the recording of this session, so I only have my brief notes, but these do record my impression that co-creators felt on the whole adequately compensated, but they were also able to request other things that felt important to them, such as certificates. Asked what they felt had been the benefits of taking part, they responded:

NT: … when you take a photo it's like a different world, when you do it with… [macro equipment] like creating a different planet. (Figure 24)

…

JP: I like how it can show what we see visually… It gives people insight into our minds, and how we are mentally'

YB: It helps mentally as well.

AM: Helps mentally? In what ways?

YB: Some of the work we do gives you peace of mind. Or hope sometimes. As much as you see hardship in the life there is always hope somewhere. Never give up.

13/06/23

These comments demonstrate the value of the workshops to co-creators, but they do not remove the material disparity. Clarity around who owns and receives credit for artworks is also both essential and problematic when working across such a stark power differential.

In Scottish prisons, artwork made with materials provided by the prison during the working day belongs to the prison. The artist can buy it back for a fee. These rules seem to apply to the object itself, not the intellectual property rights. It therefore felt important to be clear on the ownership of the artworks we made during this research project. Following the model set out by PhotoVoice (2023), the Licence Agreement and List of Works (Appendix 4) record the fact that co-creators own the copyright to their artwork and are licencing me to use it for certain named purposes. While imprisoned people cannot benefit from the commercial rights to the work, they can determine who does, and they hold the 'moral rights': the right to claim authorship and determine how it is used. It seems odd to apply capitalist legal structures premised on individual ownership to a collaborative project. I did consider a Creative Commons licence, as this stipulates that no-one can profit from the work. Unfortunately, these are non-revokable, and I felt artists should have the option to change their minds in future. I later realised that collective ownership could allow one participant to block the exhibition of group work, and it might be better in future to insert a clause to limit this possibility. That said, I still felt that the Licence Agreement was a useful, if flawed, tool for clarity around ownership.

The right to be named as author of an artwork holds different significance if you are only credited with your initials. Due to prison rules, co-creators could choose between being credited with initials and remaining anonymous. Pseudonyms were not permitted. There are good safeguarding reasons for this rule, but The Koestler Trust, a high-profile award for prison art, recently took things a step further by

completely anonymising artists (Syal, 2024). It is also common in research to anonymise. The Glasgow School of Art ethics form asks: 'What methods will be undertaken to guarantee anonymity?' as though this is always the preferred option. But in the commercially driven art world the artist's name, their signature, is a key part of the value of an artwork. Anonymising, or using only initials further highlights the inequalities between incarcerated artists and non-incarcerated artists including myself.

I attempted to discuss this issue with co-creators, but it did not seem problematic for them. SW said: 'You're the conductor. I wouldn't be doing any of this if it weren't for you. You should have the credit' (more discussion of my role in Chapter 6). GD said that he was used to using pseudonyms or remaining anonymous when he wrote poetry. These responses did not make me feel more comfortable with the situation.

I considered several solutions. To credit myself only with initials felt disingenuous, as I have the option to use my full name. Anonymity for myself would also be a way to avoid responsibility for the work. The Justice and Equity Through the Arts project in Perth, Australia, humorously named all participants 'Dave', drawing attention to compulsory anonymisation (Dagnall, 2015). But in this research project, where many works are collectively made, using one name would gloss over the particularity of the process. By using co-creators' initials (or 'Anon') alongside my full name, I hope to draw attention to the inequalities between us as well as clarifying who made what (e.g. Portfolio p.20). Co-creators also voted on a group name (Jessiefield Con Artists Collective) to be used when a list of initials might be unwieldy. This is another case where transparent dialogue with participants, underpinned by a clear written information (Appendices 2-4) is essential, because there are no easy solutions.

3.3.4 Additional Concerns

Much of the literature around participatory photography (in both art and research contexts) cautions against more subtle harms to participants (Prins, 2010; Azoulay, 2016; PhotoVoice, 2023). There is a risk that participants feel abandoned at the end

of the project. As the project progressed and things did not always go according to plan, I became concerned that I was setting them up for disappointment. As well as regularly making space for co-creators to feed-back on this, I designed a long 'exit phase' (Phase Four), to give plenty of space for people to voice disappointment, to reflect on successes and prepare for the end of the project.

Another risk is that the choice of topic can be re-traumatising or dangerous for participants (PhotoVoice, 2023). They might feel obliged to share personal information and stories they would prefer not to re-live or that others could use against them. I therefore chose a topic that was unlikely to trigger difficult memories, and actively discouraged the sharing of personal details, especially anything related to sentencing. I also did not share any personal details about myself. This is not an approach I would take in a different setting, but given the context this created a relatively safe container in which to work.

3.4 Summary

I was aware in advance of many of the issues discussed in this section, but some things, such as ownership of the work, needed closer attention than expected. I used my ethical framework as a reference point in these cases. Each of the tensions outlined speaks volumes about the status of imprisoned people and the world they inhabit, as well as the challenges of making art in that world. In the light of the barriers to equity described the question of how meaningful or ethical attempts at collaboration can be in this context persists (Fleetwood, 2020). As starting points this section proposes transparency with co-creators and audiences, making every effort towards equity, taking account of where that is not possible, and developing an ethical framework of questions which remain live. How this played out in practice is detailed in the following sections.

4 Methodology

Figure 21: Group editing session, HMP Dumfries (Myers 2024)

4.1 Introduction

This practice-based research project centred on a year-long cycle of photography workshops with people in prison at HMP Dumfries, taking existing archival images, and the question of what a prisoner-led museum might be like, as starting points. In this chapter I examine the interrelation of socially engaged photography, Participatory Action Research (PAR), and radical pedagogy, all of which emphasise dialogue and knowledge sharing. I locate this research project as a practice-based inquiry in which the aesthetic output is crucial to the knowledge created. I discuss the value of different forms of knowledge, the contribution made by aesthetics, and the impact this might have on understandings of the carceral state.

I then lay out my research strategy, which builds on existing socially engaged practice as well as my art practice and my ethical framework. I describe the overall research structure and adaptations made to the prison environment, before focussing in detail on the methods I used as starting points, followed by my approach to documentation and analysis.

4.2 Participation, Aesthetics and Knowledge

Socially engaged photography, participatory research and radical pedagogy developed alongside each other, sharing many values and methods (See Chapter 2.4). My methodology therefore has some aspects in common with Participatory Action Research as defined by Bradbury & Reason (2008) as well as the pedagogical work of Paulo Freire (1970/2017) and bell hooks (1994). There are however some important differences.

PAR places emphasis on honouring different forms of knowledge, on iterative planning, on acknowledging power dynamics and on reflection and reflexivity as approaches to ethical complexity, all of which were important in this research project. Making the artwork involved collaborative inquiry into the prison environment, analysis of artworks was largely done collectively, and co-creators did shape the direction of the project. Still, research questions were not devised in collaboration

with co-creators (although they did grow out of conversations with imprisoned people) and research analysis is my own, except where stated.

This is not to minimise participant contributions but to emphasise that they did not have the levels of control that characterise a PAR project (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). It is difficult to plan research questions with participants in this setting, as so much must be decided before applying for access. There are ways around this, but I also had certain questions I wanted to answer from years of working with photography in different settings, including prisons. This research project therefore has much in common with *Practitioner* Action Research in that I made use of a cyclical process of action and evaluation to develop new methods. Though in this research there are forms of knowledge that can only be accessed through the artwork itself, placing it firmly as practice-based research as described by Candy & Edmonds (2018).

This research project also lacks the emphasis on being 'directly useful' to participants through concrete change to social reality that characterises Action Research (Riecken et al., 2005, p.127). My reasons for working collaboratively are – as for many researchers and photographers who invite participation – ethical and political, but they are also aesthetic (see Chapter 2.3). The various forms of knowledge brought to the work, the interactions that take place result in richly textured artworks that may prompt new understandings (Burbridge and Luvera, 2019; Eid-Sabbagh, 2019)

The debate around aesthetics and knowledge creation is embedded in assumptions about art's autonomy and 'usefulness' (See Chapter 0). Estelle Barrett (2007, p.155) argues that artistic research can bring us closer to experience in ways that other research cannot, generating knowledge that is 'useful' to other fields. Candy & Edmonds draw on Scrivener to reject this instrumentalization in favour of the idea that art creates 'apprehensions' and new 'perspectives and ways of seeing' (2018, p.66). It is herein that art's value for knowledge creation lies, in making space for 'unfinished thinking' (Borgdorff, 2015, p.44) and contradiction that does not exclude

cognition but extends beyond it. Participation holds even greater potential for holding contradiction and multiplicity. In this sense, collaborative creative practice is central to the knowledge created in this research project.

Although I share many values and methods with **engaged pedagogy**, this is not a pedagogical art project. It does not innovate pedagogical forms and pedagogy is not the end goal. As Bishop summarises: 'Viewers are not students and students are not viewers, although their respective relationships to the artist and teacher have a certain dynamic overlap' (2012, p.241). In this research project I considered the pedagogic elements to be in support of creative collaboration. I was also wary of being placed in the role of 'teacher' as I felt this would amplify my power in the group (see Chapter 6.2.3).

Yet as I reflected with co-creators, the importance of knowledge sharing, listening and conversation became clear. As Freire writes: 'Through dialogue…the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn…also teach' (Freire, 2017). Laura Wexler, more succinctly, assumes that 'everyone around the table has something to say' (Mieselas *et al.*, 2021). hooks, who draws on Freire, sees teacher and students as whole, embodied human beings dwelling in the world. Both may be vulnerable, both may grow intellectually and knowledge flows both ways. hooks recommends sharing personal histories, which was not appropriate in this context, but different forms of knowledge were shared. This ranged from practical information about prison life and the spaces we were working in, to experience that is embodied and 'everyday'; awareness of the direction the light comes from in the cell or the bedsprings that are the first thing you see upon waking.

This emphasis on dialogue and honouring everyone's knowledge is especially valuable when applied to emotionally fraught political situations that tend towards binaries, in that it allows multiple narratives and perspectives to co-exist (see Chapter 1.1). Opposing dominant forms of knowledge is clearly part of the motivation for Freire's radical pedagogy (1970/2017, p.69), but both Kelly (2022) and Davis

(2016) also emphasise the role aesthetics plays in this process, especially as the normalisation of prisons takes place in part through aesthetic means (Kelly, 2022, p.290) (see Chapter 1.1). In this research project collaborative contributions to knowledge are invited, as they are in PAR and radical pedagogy, but new apprehensions emerge through aesthetics, understood as a multi-layered space that is both separate from and inextricably linked to the social world. These methodological issues shaped my project planning, including overall structure, workshop content, documentation, and analysis.

4.3 Project Structure

Most workshops at HMP Dumfries took place over the course of an academic year, with exhibitions in the prison in February and July, and reflective workshops in the following September and May (See Appendix 6). I aimed to create a flexible framework that would allow space for co-creators to shape the research project. Day-long workshops mostly took place on consecutive weeks, running for a 'block' of three weeks with a (roughly) month-long gap between blocks. Towards the end of the project this changed to half-day workshops to accommodate the prison schedule and co-creators' work commitments. Co-creators were asked to commit for a block at a time, with the option to attend throughout the year. I knew from experience (see Chapter 1.2) that flexibility was necessary to accommodate varying circumstances, needs and interests.

Between blocks, we kept in touch via post and e-mail. I experimented with additional creative activities using the mail, but there was not much interest from co-creators, so I shifted to using e-mail to keep in touch, send notifications of what was coming up, invite additional feedback and to confirm exhibition decisions. This was an invaluable communication channel.

The workshop format is common in participatory practice (Ewald and Lightfoot, 2002; Blackman, 2007), though it is by no means the only method used (see Chapter 2.5). This is a format that I am familiar with from previous projects (see Chapter 1.2).

Workshops allow exploration of the dynamics of collaboration while offering opportunities for rich discussion and photographic experimentation. From a practical perspective, it can be difficult to do anything unusual in a prison, and workshops also provided a structure with which everyone was familiar. This familiarity brought with it the drawback that I was automatically seen as a teacher (see Chapter 6.2.3).

The workshops were iterative, with reflection and feedback from co-creators on each phase informing the design of the following phase (Figure 22). This is a common approach in Action Research (Bergold and Thomas, 2012), practice-based research (Candy and Edmonds, 2011) and some socially engaged photography (Butet-Roch and Del Vecchio, 2023).

Phase One

Initial Conversations
(Informed the direction of subsequent workshops)

August 2022

Phase Two

Exploring

September 2022 - February 2023

February: Exhibition in Visits Room

Phase Three

Resolving

March 2023 – July 2023

July: Exhibition in gardens

Phase Four

Reflecting

July 2023 – May 2024

September: Garden exhibition transferred to Visits Room
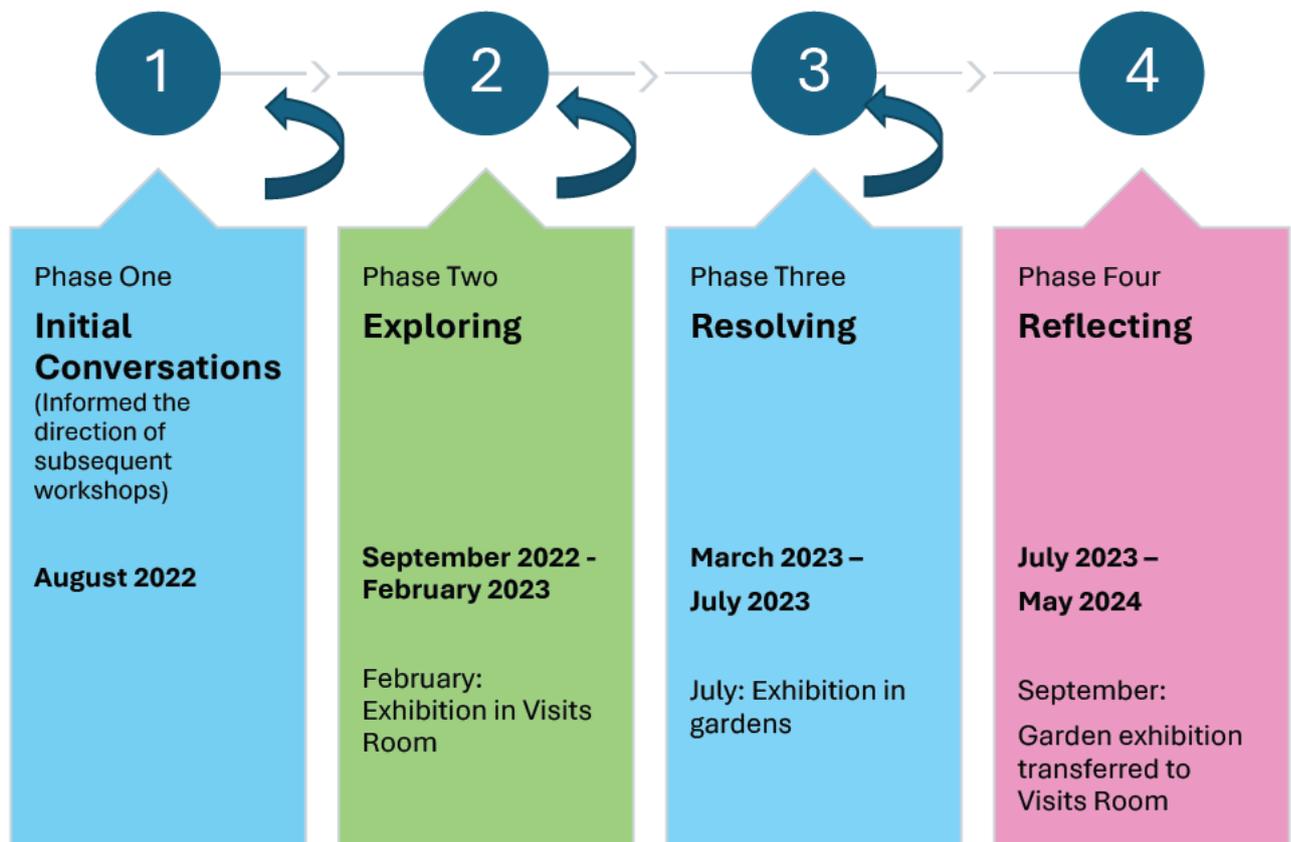
Figure 22: Diagram of planned project phases, including the actual dates the phases took place.

My ongoing creative process of reflection, journaling and visual experimentation ran alongside the workshops. This was one method for 'taking account' of where the research project fails to achieve *equity* as described by Krauss (2015), (see Chapter

3.2). In PAR this might be described as 'reflexivity', both 'epistemological' and 'personal', a method of attending to 'ethics in practice'. This means 'acknowledging and being sensitized to the microethical dimensions of research practice' (2004 p.278) but for Borg et. al. the emphasis is also on the researcher's awareness of 'themselves as the instrument of research' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p.14). I aimed for this awareness through dialogue with co-creators around the roles we took during the process (see Chapter 6.2.3), through reflection in my journal and conversations with peers and supervisors.

In advance of workshops, I conducted research into how prisons - especially HMP Dumfries - show up in public image archives. I gathered local maps and aerial views, as well as identity photos taken by Dumfries police in the early twentieth century. Most importantly, I found a photographic survey of the listed areas of the prison, conducted in the 1990s by architectural archaeologists. These materials formed the basis of initial workshops. I also exhibited *Commonplace* (see Chapter 1.2) at The Stove, a gallery in Dumfries, taking the opportunity to reflect on this earlier project. I presented a video of this exhibition to the art class at HMP Dumfries and was also able to discuss my ideas and adapt accordingly (see Chapter 5.5.1).

Exhibitions in February and July were planned to give us a sense of achievement and to provide opportunities for learning and reflection. In December I also presented the group with a selection of postcards of their work (Figure 23). It is good practice in participatory photography to exhibit work in the place where it was made, with participants forming the primary audience (Ewald and Neri, 2006; Blackman, 2007; Azoulay, 2016; Burbridge and Luvera, 2019). Previous projects showed me how much these events meant to co-creators (see Chapter 1.2.) In this research project, sharing work became yet more essential for the development of the artwork and our understanding of the role of art in prison, as discussed in Chapter 6.3.

Figure 23: Envelopes of postcards of project work given to the group at the end of Phase 2.

Exhibitions also provided justification for the group to access areas of the prison beyond the Learning Centre. Much of my planning was in uncomfortable collaboration with the institution, adapting to what was allowed and to prison staff preferences to make things happen. Activities such as cyanotypes or macro photography (Figure 24) were chosen in part because they fitted within the confines of the Learning Centre, and I first started working with archive images due to camera use restrictions. Flexible session plans were essential, to respond not only to the group but also to the operational whims of the prison. Making these adaptations in some ways supports the prison's control over what or who may be looked at and who does the looking (see Chapter 2.2). My hope is that it also draws attention to that control, as the surrounding power dynamics impact the creative process.

Figure 24: 'Untitled' macro photograph by NT

4.4 Workshop Content

The sequence of activities over the course of the workshops was common to many participatory photography projects, as shown in the diagram (Figure 25).
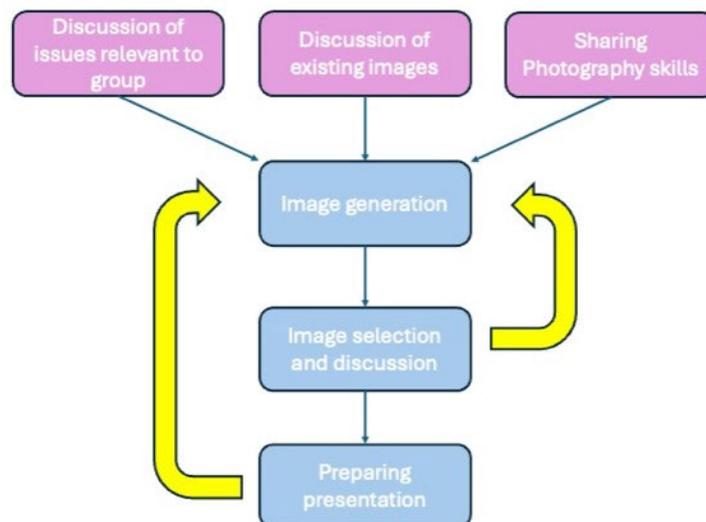
Figure 25: Diagram of participatory process in this project

Our process was more cyclical than in some projects, with many cycles of image creation and reflection, contributing to a growing archive of images which could be repeatedly revisited and recontextualised, and used as the basis of more image generation. As such there was more emphasis on editing and curating collaboratively than is common practice. Co-creators also sometimes directed me from a distance, as I could photograph areas of the prison they could not. Our various roles are discussed in Chapter 6.2.3.

As starting points, I used two interconnected socially engaged photography methods, also common in *PhotoVoice* research and radical pedagogy. These were photo-elicitation and what Butet-Roch calls 'Elaborated Images' (2023). In photo-elicitation, which was pioneered by Freire among others, photographs are used as a prompt for discussion (Harper, 2002) or may be intimately connected with oral histories (E. Edwards, 2005). I knew from experience how effective this method could be, especially if the images contained something familiar to participants, inviting knowledge sharing. I therefore brought visual materials related to the prison to the first workshop. Co-creators were interested in all the materials, but the 1990s shots of the prison interior were most discussed.

I made detailed notes of the discussion on flipcharts, but responses were also recorded through 'elaborating' the images. In the 1970s artists such as Wendy Ewald (2000), Jim Goldberg (1985, 2009) and Susan Mieselas (1975) each began asking those photographed to write or draw their reflections directly onto or beside images (Figure 26, see also Chapter 2.3). This method has since been used in multiple contexts, allowing researchers, artists and participants to 'emphasise polyphony, show refusal, support truth-telling, contribute to the restoration of relationships, and imagine alternative futures' (Butet-Roch & Del Vecchio, 2023, p.1). Nigel Poor's work in San Quentin (2021) and Azoulay's tracings of archive images (2020) are recent examples that visualise a photographic encounter (see Chapter 2.4.1). In some cases, especially in the work of Ewald and Goldberg, there is little information about the conversations surrounding the event of elaboration. Handwriting can signal

participation without giving much sense of the interactions involved. I therefore used this method as a starting point on which to build.
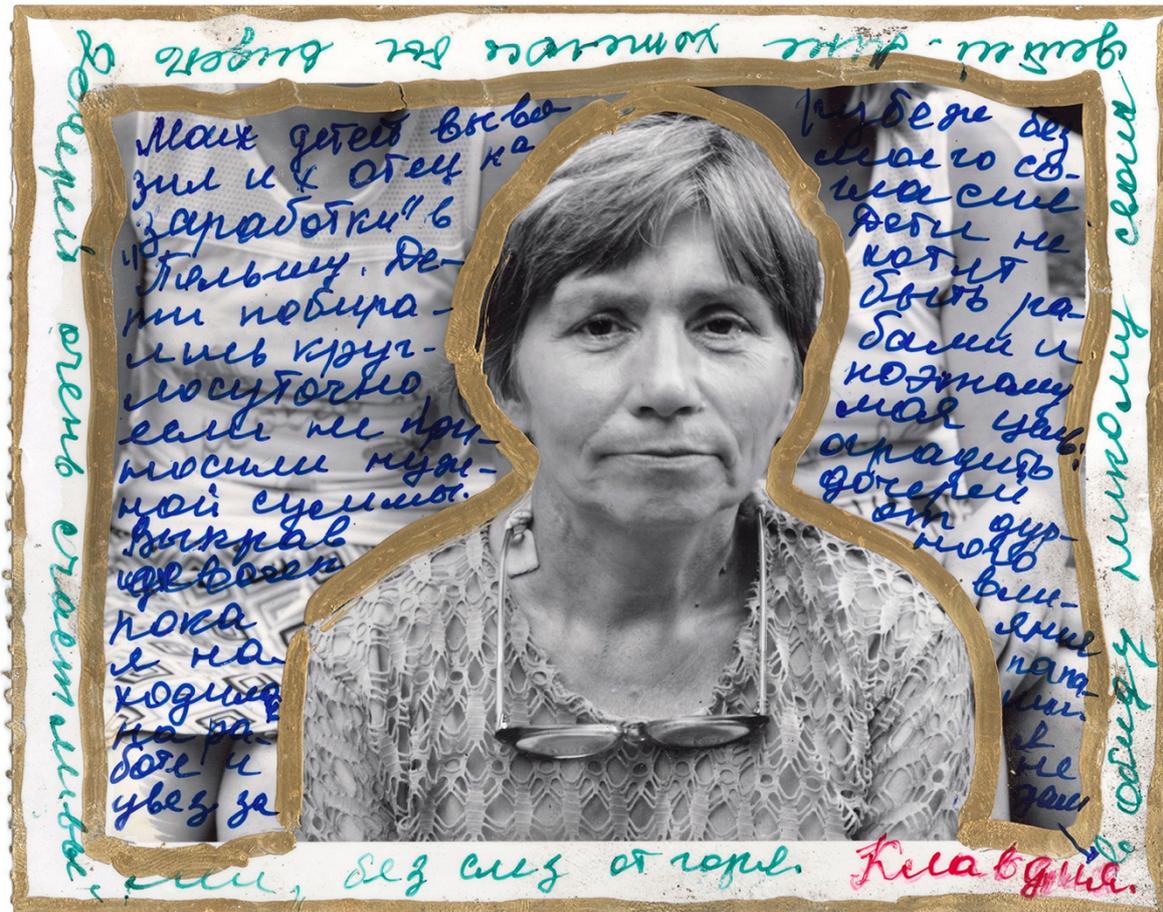
For *Commonplace* (2019), in a different take on the elaborated image, I asked incarcerated people to re-frame archive images of the local area, selecting and cropping areas they found interesting (see Chapter 1.2). Collage is commonly used in socially engaged photography (see for example *Wild Pigeon* (2007-14) by Carolyn Drake and the Uyghur community) but in this case emphasis was on using the frame to select what is excluded or included. I planned to use this method again, alongside written annotation, but neither re-framing nor writing proved popular with the group. They preferred to trace the elements of the image they found most important (although, as discussed in Chapter 5.5.4, collage became important again later). As

with Azoulay's tracings, this was both a re-reading of the photograph and a foregrounding of human gesture in both the act of tracing and the photograph itself. Tracing held a different significance in the prison, in that co-creators were interpreting an environment which they inhabit, like the artists in Poor's San Quentin Project. This is a case of layers of meaning, rather than a complete re-signification of the images, as new readings contrast with the original creators' intentions for the images.

Two interlinked questions guiding discussion of archive images were 'what is missing?' and 'what would you choose to donate to a museum?' (i.e. 'what should be there?'). Co-creators drew or photocopied the items they selected (Portfolio p.8-9). Another early method for generating images was scavenger hunts, where co-creators made lists of things for each other to find and photograph (Figure 27 & Figure 28). I later encountered Azoulay's work on the 'untaken' photograph, that which is not photographed, and all that cannot be seen in the frame (2019, p.171). In Azoulay's work these untaken photographs are visualised as blank squares, inviting the viewer to imagine what might have been there. In our case we found ways to visualise that which had been omitted.

Figure 27: Scavenger hunt list

Figure 28: 'Eye in the Sky' by SW

Non task-focussed activities are essential for 'group maintenance' (Jeanes, 2019). These included a go-round at the beginning of each session, walks around the gardens, a bookbinding workshop (Figure 29), a workshop with an educator from the Dumfries Museum, a silent sit in the gardens, reflective discussion and many, many tea breaks. In addition, I knew from previous experience in prisons to offer a choice of activities, including solo, low-key options such as browsing books to allow down time if needed. Occasionally the books made their way into the artworks (Figure 30) The aim was to provide enough structure that co-creators would feel comfortable taking part, while providing enough freedom to meet different needs and preferences and allow for creative expression. This balance is described in pedagogical terms as 'supportive scaffolding' (Saxena, 2011).

Figure 29: Bookbinding session (Myers 2023)
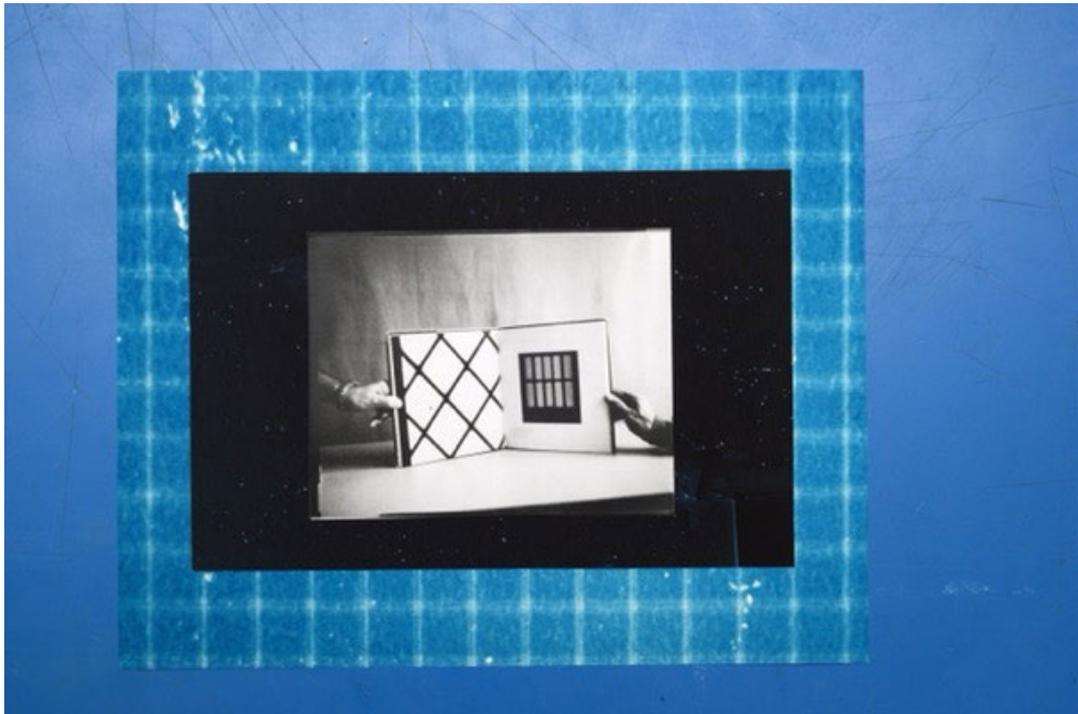
Figure 30: 'Even the Books Have Bars'. Collage by SW and Alice Myers. Central image by AK, supplementary images by Alice Myers. Photograph by Alice Myers

4.5 Documentation

Participatory photography provides avenues for documenting and sharing collaborative process that are not available in other forms of socially engaged art (see Chapter 2.3.4). It is nevertheless difficult to adequately record the nuances of participation. In this research project I planned to audio record sessions and feed transcripts back into workshops as inspiration for further creative work. Referring to transcripts of previous meetings is a method sometimes used in PAR (Borg *et al.*, 2012) and I thought this would facilitate open discussion of ethical issues. However, after asking the group if I could record an early session, I noticed it made one participant uncomfortable so did not proceed. This participant did not return to workshops, and I therefore felt wary of bringing it up again until I knew the group better. In the meantime, we made detailed notes on flipcharts, I recorded voice memos immediately after leaving the prison, took snapshots of activities, and asked co-creators to write key points and image captions on index cards (Figure 31). I later instituted a group sketchbook where we could post any visual inspiration people brought to the group (Figure 32). This was useful for continuity between sessions as well as using everyone's contributions.
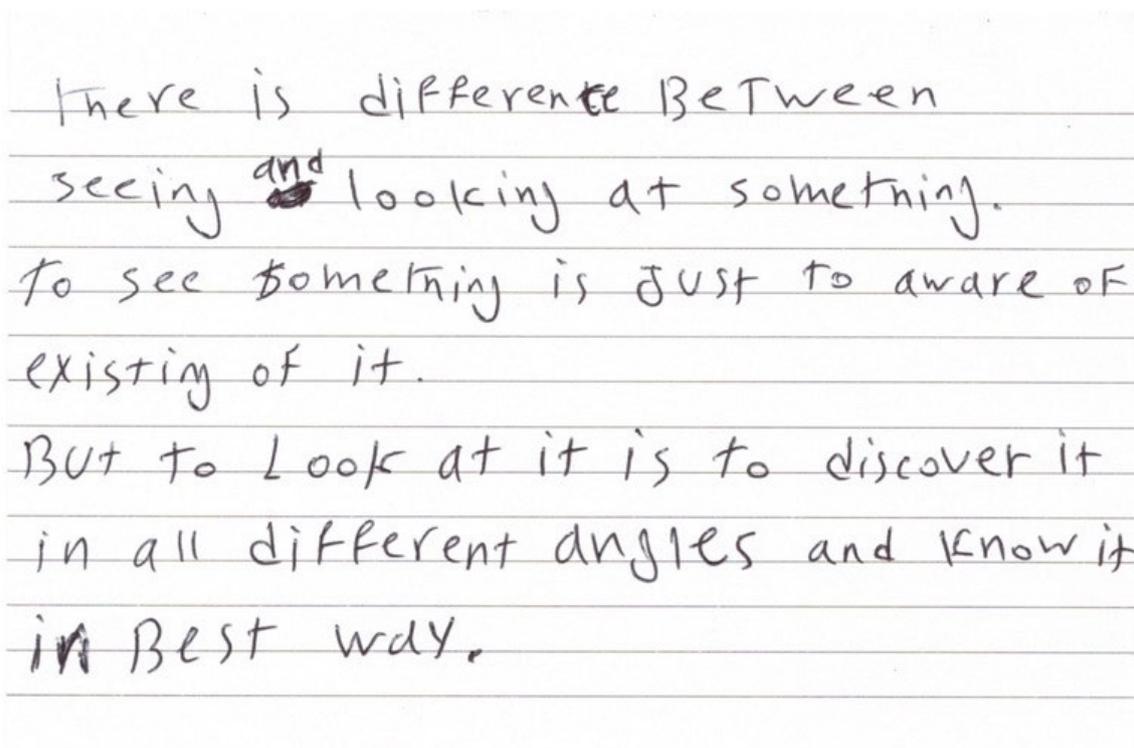
Figure 31: Index Card notes written by YB

Figure 32: Group Sketchbook. This was on a flipchart that could be brought out for each session (Myers, 2023)

As collage and installation became a more significant part of the process, documentation of this became increasingly important (Portfolio p.17-20). This not only captured a sense of the editing process, but it allowed these temporary **assemblages** to enter our archive, to be re-used as co-creators saw fit (Portfolio p.20). In this way, documentation was not just about evidencing what we had done but was an important part of the collective creative process (see Chapter 5.5.4), whilst giving co-creators input into how that process was recorded (see Chapter 2.3.4). As the workshops progressed I began to recognise this gathering and arranging of images as '**Para-archival'**, a term elaborated by Henk Slager (2015), as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5.5.4.

Halfway through Phase Three, I felt I had established enough trust with the group to ask about audio-recording workshops. This met with unanimous approval. Audio

recording became a useful tool for my own learning, as well as for recording insights that would be difficult to capture in writing.

4.6 Analysis

As this is a practice-based research project, some analysis takes place through the making of the artwork itself. Commentary is also required to outline the significance of the research findings and contextualise them (Candy and Edmonds, 2011). In Chapter 6 I therefore present my analysis of collaborative dynamics - with reference to key moments - followed by my reflection on the works presented to the public.

Some analysis was conducted with co-creators. Discussing, editing, captioning, arranging, and installing the artworks functioned as rolling collaborative analysis of the materials created. I made book dummies at the start of Phase 3 and end of Phase 4 (see Appendix 6), which I shared with co-creators, inviting them to add comments on Post-its (Figure 33). Co-creators also interviewed each other, analysing the artworks they created (e.g. Portfolio p.19). Phase Four involved three reflective sessions, where we discussed the artwork as well as co-creator perspectives on the process and the roles we had taken, plus two sessions in Spring 2024, when I returned to discuss findings and artwork presentation decisions. Some responses were verbal while others were written. Many fundamentally changed the way I saw the research, as is evident from the discussion in Chapter 6.
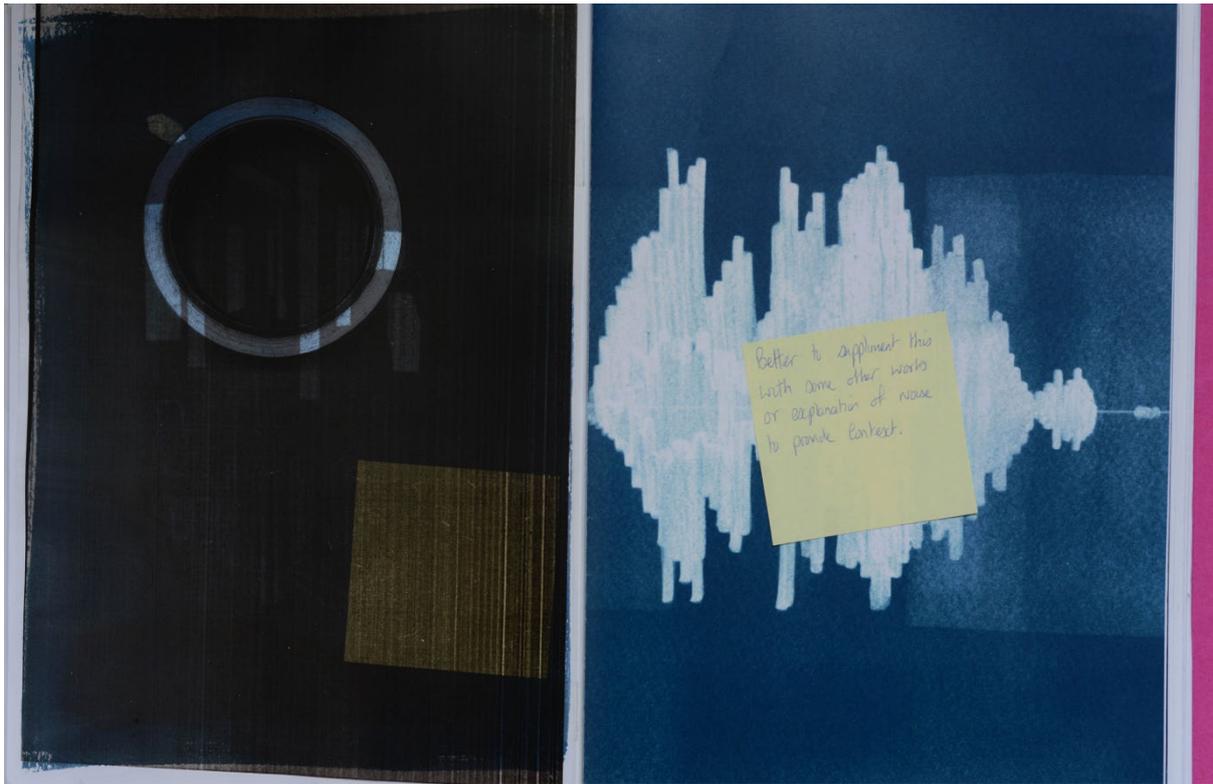
Figure 33: Book dummy made by Alice Myers with images by SW and Anon. Multiple images are layered using acetate. Post-it comments from SW

I conducted my own analysis at the end of each block through journaling, written reports to supervisors and colleagues, selecting images to print, and making a book dummy. At the end of Phase Three and throughout Phase Four I transcribed all audio and coded it - along with e-mails, letters and index cards written by co-creators - using an approach similar to Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). I did not use the coding process to generate theory directly however, using it more as a way of indexing the material. This threw up some interesting questions about the archive concerning the power of deciding what to include and how it should be organised, and the multiple ways to approach a large quantity of information.

4.7 Summary

The methods described in this chapter build on existing participatory photography techniques, adapted through my own experience of working with participatory photography both in and outside prisons. There was more emphasis in this research

project than is conventional on shared editing and curation decisions, on discussion of ethical issues, and on a cyclical process of image generation and presentation. Over time, these starting points developed into a para-archival approach (see Chapter 5.5.4) that was more situationally specific. My methods are underpinned by an ethical framework which demands that understanding and equity be attempted while acknowledging the impossibility that either might be fully achieved. This leads to an emphasis on dialogue, on knowledge sharing, on reflexivity, and on recording and reflecting on process. Due to the iterative nature of this approach, the photographic methods used evolved or gained importance throughout the workshops. The most important aspects of this evolution are discussed in the following chapter.

5 Fieldwork

Figure 34: Classroom 2, the 'Art Room' at HMP Dumfries, set up for a workshop. (Myers, 2022)

5.1 Introduction

Fieldwork took place at HMP Dumfries between August 2022 and September 2023. Here I outline the spaces in which we worked before giving an account of co-creator engagement and decision-making processes. I then move on to relate the evolution of ideas and methods throughout the research project. Although I mostly selected initial methods (see Chapter 4), these choices were made in response to co-creators, and I was always open to them taking the work in unexpected directions. They often did so. This chapter demonstrates the evolution of methods and ideas through collective creative practice and conversation.

5.2 Locations

Most workshops took place in two classrooms within the prison Learning Centre. 'Education' as most staff and imprisoned people call it, is in one of the low 1960s buildings that surround the nineteenth century tower. After clearing security, I am escorted through seven locked doors to reach it. The space is a long corridor, with four classrooms on one side, and offices, storerooms, and toilets on the other. The corridor is lined with locked glass cases containing books, and noticeboards displaying inspirational quotes, artwork by imprisoned people and a map of the world, surrounded by wavy, colourful borders. It reminds me of my secondary school. There is a desk and computer in the corridor where the officer on duty sits. We began in the art room (Figure 34) but later we were moved to classroom 4, which is smaller and empty except for tables, chairs and a green screen which was used for filming the Christmas panto.

I had hoped to work in several locations across the prison, but this was not possible due to staff numbers. When it became apparent that staff were keen to have artwork displayed in the Visits Room and at a garden open day, I took the chance to access those spaces, impacting the overall direction of the research project. These locations allowed co-creators to use their lived experience of different spaces that are important to their daily lives. Access was also considered to be a privilege, beyond what was routinely allowed. Unfortunately, plans could change at the last minute, an

experience that could be disappointing for all of us. Co-creators also expressed frustration at not being able to work in other areas of the prison, which they felt should be documented (see Chapter 6.3.1.1)

We made two exhibitions for the Visits Room. This was a space that some co-creators would access regularly to see visitors, while some would not. The room is painted in magnolia and lavender, with rows of bright purple comfy chairs facing each other around low circular tables. At one end of the room there is a soft play area with toys. Under the windows are computers for virtual visits, opposite a hatch for serving tea and coffee. Black hemispherical security cameras protrude from the ceiling.

Initial workshops involved a visit to the garden, and this was so popular that I took every opportunity to work there. The second half of Phase Three was mostly spent in the gardens, preparing artwork for the July Open Days. Entrance is via a small door in a tall Victorian sandstone wall. Once through, the gardens open below you, with a football field, polytunnels, vegetable beds, apple trees and a new 'wellbeing garden'. Meeting outdoors gave us all a shift of perspective and renewed energy. Even the act of walking to and from the garden together lent a sense of normality and comparative ease.

5.3 Engagement and Groups

Co-creators were under various pressures that impacted their ability or willingness to attend workshops. They could also be whisked away by an unexpected medical appointment or legal visit. An 'Incident' in the prison could mean abrupt termination of the class. I made sure as many people as possible were on the list for a session, so they would have the option to attend, always making it clear that attendance was optional. Group size was limited to eight by prison regulations, so I initially ran two groups for the 'protected' population and one 'mainstream', amalgamating the two 'protected' groups as some dropped out. Numbers shifted over time, with some stepping away or leaving the prison, some attending sporadically and new people

joining. Seven attended regularly throughout. Five who stopped attending kept in touch via e-mail. In Phase Four, nine co-creators attended the main review session, seven of whom had been present from the beginning.

The division between 'mainstream' and 'protected' categories at HMP Dumfries had a huge impact on group work. The different groups may never be in the same space, but all facilities are shared between them. Each group feels the other has more access to resources and opportunities. Because the 'protected' group is more numerous, they do have more time allocated to them in the learning centre, gym and garden. Added to this is the sense of stigma hanging over the prison, due to the presence of the 'protected prisoners', with whom the 'mainstream prisoners' do not wish to be associated. When I had worked there previously the tension between the groups had not felt so palpable. I had worked with both groups (separately) to make a single piece of work, and I now hoped to do something similar.

There were three main obstacles to this plan. First, unlike previous work I had done in this setting, I hoped to share many of the editing and curatorial decisions with the group. This is difficult to manage when working with any two groups, but it would be unworkable when they cannot meet or communicate.

Second, many 'mainstream prisoners' were more reluctant this time to be associated with 'protected prisoners' in any way. My first session with the 'mainstream' group included an uncomfortable conversation about why I would prefer not to refer to 'protected prisoners' as 'monsters', as I recorded in my journal:

I made it clear that it's important that workshops are a space where everyone is considered to be a human being. One man said he wished he was as 'optimistic' as me. I wish I had said that this is not optimism at all… I suggested we use the term 'Long Term Prisoners'. One man said, 'but I'm a long term prisoner and I'm not one of them'.

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Separate projects with each group might have worked, but that would present the problem of whether to identify who did which work, underscoring the divisions and inviting the judgement and assumptions that come with the two categories.

Third, 'mainstream prisoners' in general have a different relationship with the learning centre from the 'protected prisoners'. They are not allocated much time there, and they often do not attend their scheduled sessions. Working on **the halls** might have allowed me to approach people directly, but this was not permitted. In Phase One, five people attended, but this then dropped to two, then none. As they did not respond to follow-up communication it is difficult to be sure why. In Phase Three I offered some sessions and attended art classes with optional activities for people to try should they wish to. This yielded mixed results, with occasional bursts of surprising enthusiasm and some empty sessions, but the same people never returned. I therefore adapted activities so that image creation, printing, edit and presentation could take place within a single session. This work was then incorporated (with permission) alongside other artwork made for the project.

This was not ideal, but it was the best way to give everyone the option to participate without underscoring or exacerbating the divisions. I had hoped to work creatively with the restrictions and limitations of the prison environment, but in the case of the tensions I have described, I did not feel that I had the tools, or the right, to do so.

5.4 Decision-Making

PhotoVoice's Statement of Ethical Practice acknowledges that it is not always possible for everyone to have equal input into decisions, but this can be addressed through space for 'reflection, amendment and recalibration' (2023, p.7). Transparency around decision-making is essential in any participatory process (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). Here I outline how my approach shifted, before giving more detail on roles in Chapter 6.2.

My approach to group decision-making became more structured as the research project progressed. At first, we were building a group dynamic and decisions (such as what to focus on in the next session) were mostly low-stakes. Sometimes decisions were made through informal consensus, or they were taken by me, based on feedback from the group. Individuals took decisions that related to work they had made. Later, we began to share the work publicly. The decisions we needed to make became more high stakes: how to title the artwork, what to call the group, what work to show and how. More structure around decision-making was needed. I therefore used a format of wide-ranging discussion, followed by identifying options and writing them on a flipchart. Co-creators could then vote using stickers. In future I would use this more formal approach from the start in the interest of transparency and developing group process. As co-creators were not always able to be present for artwork installation (see Chapter 6.3.2) I still took some decisions alone, informed by our conversations. Where possible I sought participant approval of any decisions I made alone.

5.5 Project Evolution

5.5.1 Archive - Museum - Collection

Project focus shifted from my initial interest in archives, to museums and then to collections. Preliminary conversations with imprisoned people had indicated that the word 'Archive' was not popular. I assumed this was because the term sounds stuffy and academic, and shifted the focus to museums, asking co-creators what objects they would donate to a museum and inviting them to design their own museum using a worksheet (Appendix 5). When we came to discuss titles for the artwork however, there were more important reasons why co-creators disliked the term 'archive'. When I asked, 'Is there anything on this flipchart that you would veto as a title?' SP replied 'Yes, the word archive. I'm not taking part if that word is in there'. As I wrote in my notes, co-creators commented that 'an archive is about records, a museum is 'on show'. 'We want people to see it, don't want it to be in an archive hiding'. A key part of what was appealing about taking part was that the work would be shared with an audience.

When the focus shifted to museums, I briefly imagined overlaying a museum directly on top of the prison, with different areas housing different 'departments'. This would have prompted interesting comparisons between the two institutions, as well as questions about how to make a museum of something in progress, but it entailed a traditional approach to ordering and categorising the materials we had made (arranged by location for example) that felt too restrictive. An echo of this idea was to recur later, when I asked participants how they would like the collection to be organised on the website, and their first response was to use the different locations within the prison, an approach that felt less constraining when applied retrospectively. But when, earlier in the process, RW suggested *The Jessiefield Collection* as a title for the artwork, this opened the way into something less rigidly categorised. In a later session the group voted to choose this as the title. Chatting with former participant KF in the gardens, I mentioned this decision. As I noted in my journal he commented, 'yes well Jessiefield is the old name of this place. And collection is a good word, it can mean lots of different things. It could mean us.'

The history of collecting, like the history of archives and museums, is bound up with imperial acts of domination, appropriation, and theft (Melzi, 2021, Azoulay 2020). Additionally, adopting a collector's perspective narrows the attention. It is difficult to collect without a pre-existing idea of what you want to find, potentially excluding the unexpected. That said, collecting can also be a deeply human act of care and curiosity. In her essay 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', Ursula le Guin (2019) develops archaeologist Elizabeth Fisher's suggestion that the container (not the weapon) is the definitive human technology. Le Guinn compares this to gathering ideas in fiction writing. A similar perspective is explored visually in Agnes Varda's 'The Gleaners and I' (2000), in which she documents the practice of gleaning food from fields, while reflecting on her use of the camera as a form of gleaning.

There is richness in collecting as a group, in placing objects together and making connections between them. Shifting the focus to collecting helped me to see this emergent process of exploring, gathering and assembling materials as ***para-***

archival (Slager, 2015). This is an artistic strategy of cataloguing and collecting while simultaneously questioning hierarchical processes of documentation and categorization, involving 'artistic probing, establishing connections, associating, creating rhizomatic mutations, producing assemblages, and bringing together; including that which cannot be joined' (Slager, 2015 p.82). This process does not just create an alternative archive, it questions what an archive is. Slager does not make this connection, but in this research project dialogical photography (Fairey and Orton, 2019), an embodied and expanded approach to the photograph, was integral to para-archival practice. In Slager's model, these actions are governed by 'frivolous will', but in this collaboration it was more an ***aesthetic logic***. This is a rationale based on contingency, poetic resonance, and unlikely connections. It opposes not just the logic of rigid hierarchies but also the *illogicality* of the prison. This is demonstrated by co-creators' comments on the sense of control they gained from arranging artworks, as contrasting with the unpredictability of prison life (see Chapters 6.2.4.3 and 6.2.3.6). When asked to select an image from a series of post cards that summed up a session, JP picked up an image of a bomb site and said 'we're building something in chaos'. Para-archiving became the umbrella for the other methods we developed.

5.5.2   Existing Archive Photographs

One para-archival strategy adopted by Melzi (2021), Azoulay (2019), and Poor (2021), is to reinterpret existing images (see Chapter 2.4). In this research project, archive photographs and participant responses to them were foundational, but they became less of a presence visually as we generated our own material. Where they did surface, they were surrounded with participant artwork that suggested new ways of viewing them (see Chapter 6.3.1).

Initial comments on the 1990s architectural images (eg. Figure 35) were surprising, giving an immediate sense of co-creators' experience of the space, as I noted in my journal:

The first comments…are that it looks much more oppressive in the images than it feels... 'I walk through this hall every day and it doesn't feel like that'. Others point out that that layout has been changed, with floors now dividing what used to be a three-storey open hall. 'Stick a pool table and a TV in there and that makes all the difference'…The shots of the halls are compared to the corridors in The Shining. This leads to the point that there are no people in the images and then, 'where are the seagulls? How did they manage that?!' Maybe there wasn't enough food for them back then? The absence of people is picked up… later by AK, who selects a view of the courtyard and says it gives him a 'sense of freedom'. We discuss how rarely prisoners are on their own, besides being locked in their cells. The [empty] image makes AK feel 'mindful and peaceful.

09/08/22

Figure 35: 'View of 'A' Hall from NW (second floor)'. © Crown Copyright: HES

AK's comments on peacefulness highlight how rare privacy is in this place. This rich discussion added new interpretations to the images, leading to a list of what is missing from them, the daily activity of the prison that the photographer has been so careful to exclude (Figure 36).
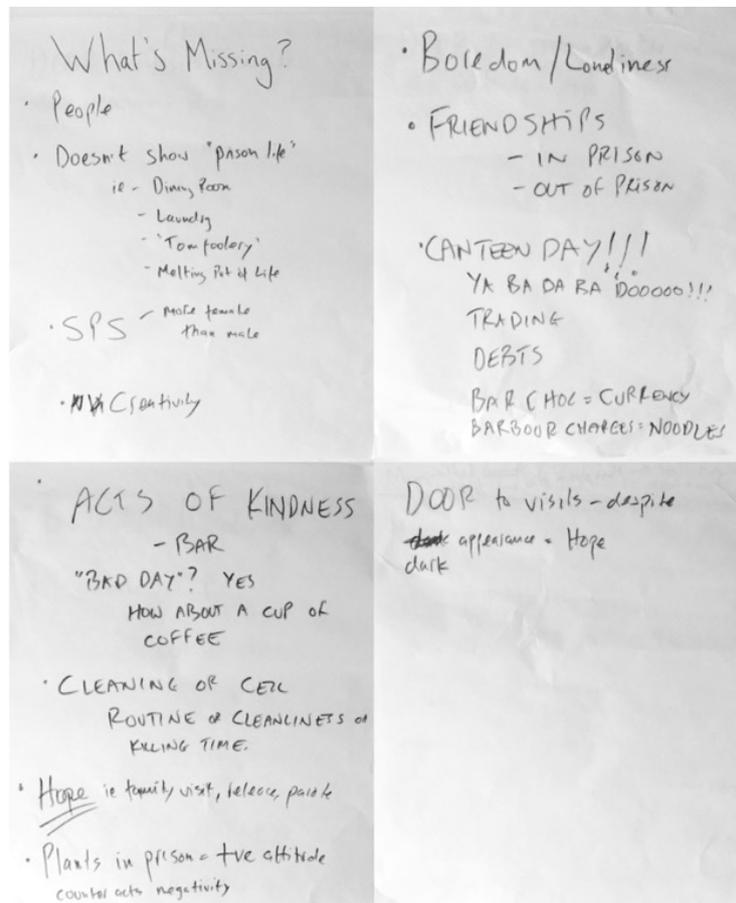
Figure 36: Flipchart notes on our discussion listing that which is missing from the archive images

Co-creators used cardboard cut-outs to reframe images (Figure 37), wrote on Post-its and flipcharts, and traced elements of the images that they felt were important (Portfolio p.5-8). Some of these tracings reconfigured elements of the original images to create abstract compositions (Portfolio p.7). We used these tracings to make cyanotypes in the prison gardens (Figure 38 & Figure 39), experimenting with another sort of trace as I discuss below. I was unaware of Birkin's work with cyanotypes at the time, which lends more sinister associations to the use of cyanotypes in this context (see Chapter 2.4.1).
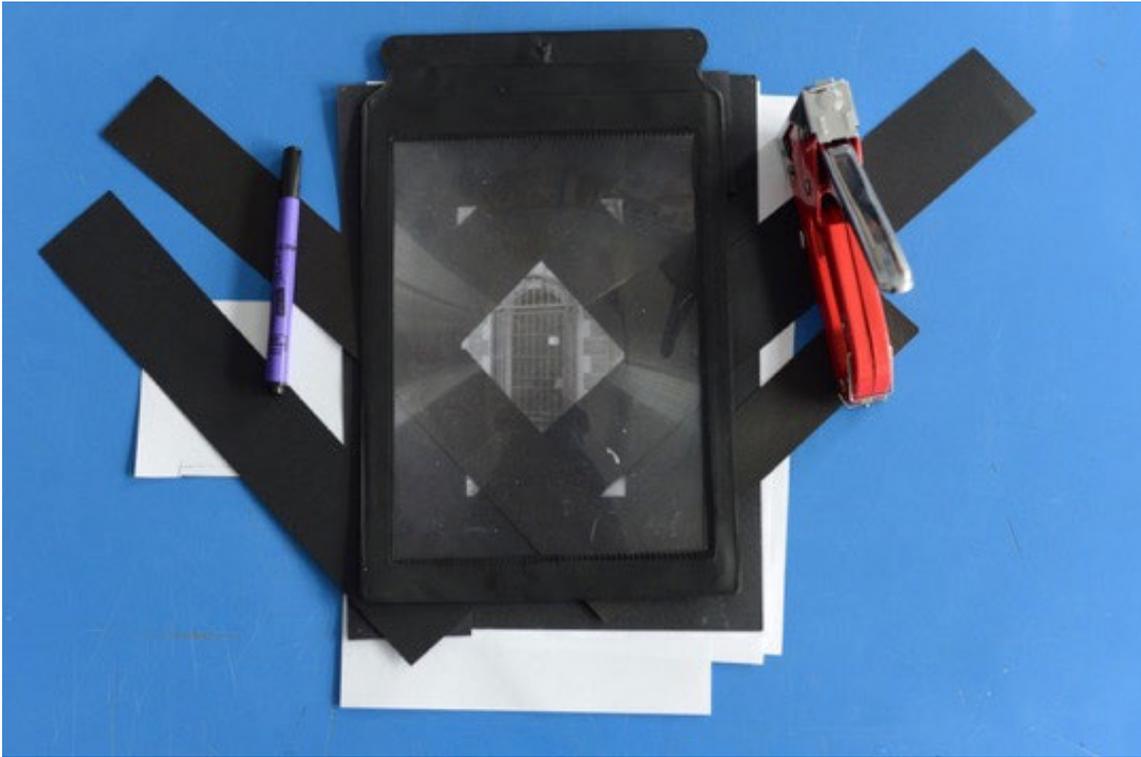
Figure 37: Reframing experiment by BMG
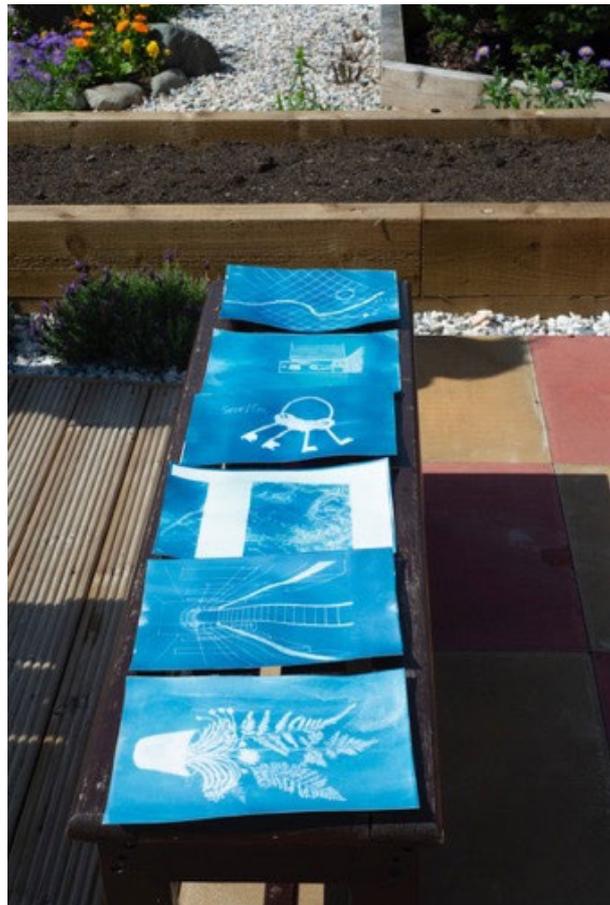
Figure 38: Cyanotypes drying in the prison garden
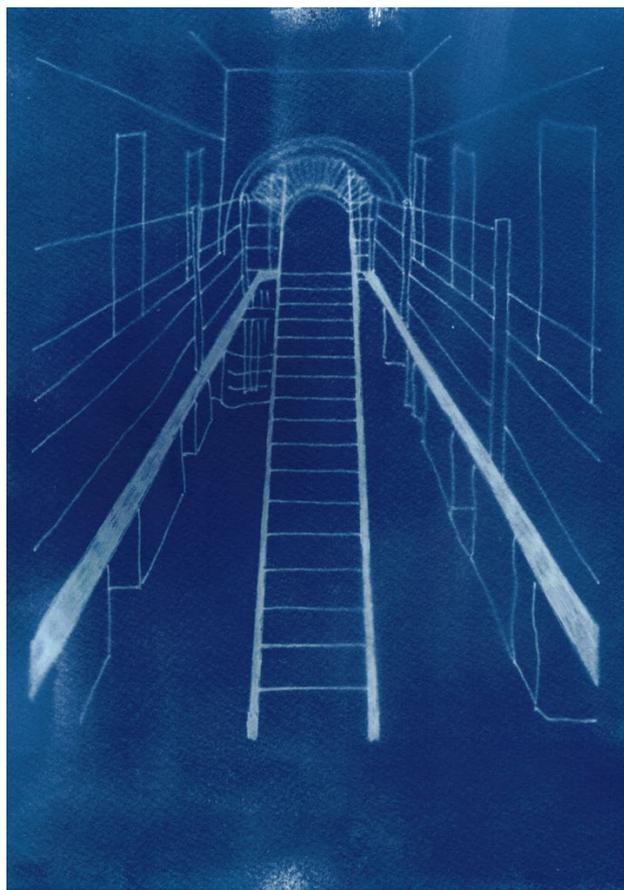
Figure 39: 'Open Galleries' by KF

In later workshops, we revisited the archive images and audio-recorded our conversation around them. In the Portfolio (p.5) and project publication I present a transcript of one of these conversations alongside the photograph we discussed. The text overlays the image with new meanings without the need for it to be directly superimposed.

The archive images became less central as we worked to visualise what was missing from them. I would have been happy to leave the original photographs behind at this stage, to be replaced by the tracings co-creators had made, but as I noted in my journal co-creators disagreed:

I asked whether they felt the archive images were still relevant. SW felt they were, because they were a starting point and therefore in the context for the other work. He

felt it would be difficult for people to understand where the project came from without them.

<div align="right">

02/12/22

</div>

SW's approach was consistent with a general feeling amongst co-creators of wanting to hold on to the history of the artwork we had made and make it accessible to an audience. Accordingly, when combining images, co-creators often chose the original photographs to place alongside the work they had made. Sometimes doing so allowed a re-assessment in the light of the new imagery (see Chapter 6.3.1). We also used the archive images when working in the garden, highlighting the contrast between the prison and the gardens (Figure 40), but their presence decreased as the work we were making took on its own identity.

Figure 40: 'Reminder' by JP, GD and Alice Myers. 'A reminder that no matter where in the jail you are, you always go back to the cell'

5.5.3 Trace/Gesture

Emphasis on the photograph as both trace and gesture emerged from discussions around archival photographs and guided subsequent experimentation. In Phase One, the act of tracing archive images and making cyanotypes from the drawings drew my attention to the photograph as a trace, as the direct contact necessary for both practices foregrounded indexicality. A comment from SW picked up the theme of traces:

Chipped paint on handrails in A-hall shows the many layers of old paint, like the rings on a tree, showing the colour scheme through the ages.

SW Index Card 2022

AK made the link between physical and emotional traces:

Sometimes, I feel worn-out, similar to the worn-out point underneath the door. All we have to repair the damage in our lives, similar to repairing the point on the door.

AK Post-it note 2023

In my journal I noted SW's comments, making a similar connection between physical and emotional wear:

He [SW] wanted all trace of his time here to fade. Like 'footprints on the sand'. Although the place has left an 'indelible' mark on him – like Jeff Wall's photograph 'The crooked path', which shows a pathway worn through the grass through use…YB felt he didn't want this experience to haunt him in the future, to have any impact on his children and children's children, if he has them.

27/09/22

In the same session I also noted:

The group also spoke about other prisoners who are artists and joiners who have left a 'positive mark' on the place. It was commented that everyone knows and

recognises their contribution. This reminded me of earlier conversations with
prisoners where the importance of contributing in a lasting way to the community
was emphasised – by making planters for a local park for example.

<div align="right">*27/09/22*</div>

For these co-creators, trace was associated with legacy, a potentially painful subject.
There was a tension between wanting to disappear and wanting to be remembered,
or at least being able to control how you are remembered. The group's concern with
leaving a 'positive mark' is consistent with their desire for the artwork to be seen
publicly. Considering these discussions, I thought rubbings might capture traces left
by people on the building over time. Co-creators were more interested in making
rubbings of objects. AK's account captures the variety of objects he chose, both
personal and institutional:

I have many things in my cell. Some of them e.g. cutlery, toothbrush and electric
dictionary, I use every day. But other items have a very special place in my heart
because they were given to me by the hands of my late beloved mother.

<div align="right">*AK written notes 2022*</div>

AK arranged his rubbings alongside his paintings, creating an even more personal
response that reflected on his painting practice (Portfolio p.19). I realised that prison
paper towels picked up textures effectively and co-creators asked to take materials
back to their cells at lunch time. This was a way around the fact that cameras are not
allowed in the cells and resulted in beautiful rubbings of institutional hardware
(Portfolio p.11-14). The chosen details - the keypad of the phone booth, the springs
of the top bunk bed seen from the bottom bunk - present a tactile, precise, and
moving picture of the place. PD made a multicoloured rubbing of the texture of the
Learning Centre window (Portfolio p.1). This opaque rendering of something that
should admit light is particularly resonant, due to the importance of windows in
prison. The textured glass is clearly institutional, but it is rendered using a joyfully
coloured pattern, that has clearly taken time and effort to complete.

David Campany (2011) discusses the dual status of the photograph as trace (direct imprint) and *picture* (constructed image). In this research project it feels more accurate to talk in terms of trace and *gesture*. The rubbings brought together the image as trace with the image as a gesture, as they incorporate the movement of the person who made them. In a rubbing, the time taken to make the image is clearly visible, especially where the paper has shifted mid-rubbing (Figure 41). In the light of these images it became clear that gesture had also been present in the tracings co-creators had made, and that both trace and gesture are present in any image to a certain extent, only often less visibly (see Chapter 6.3.1.2).
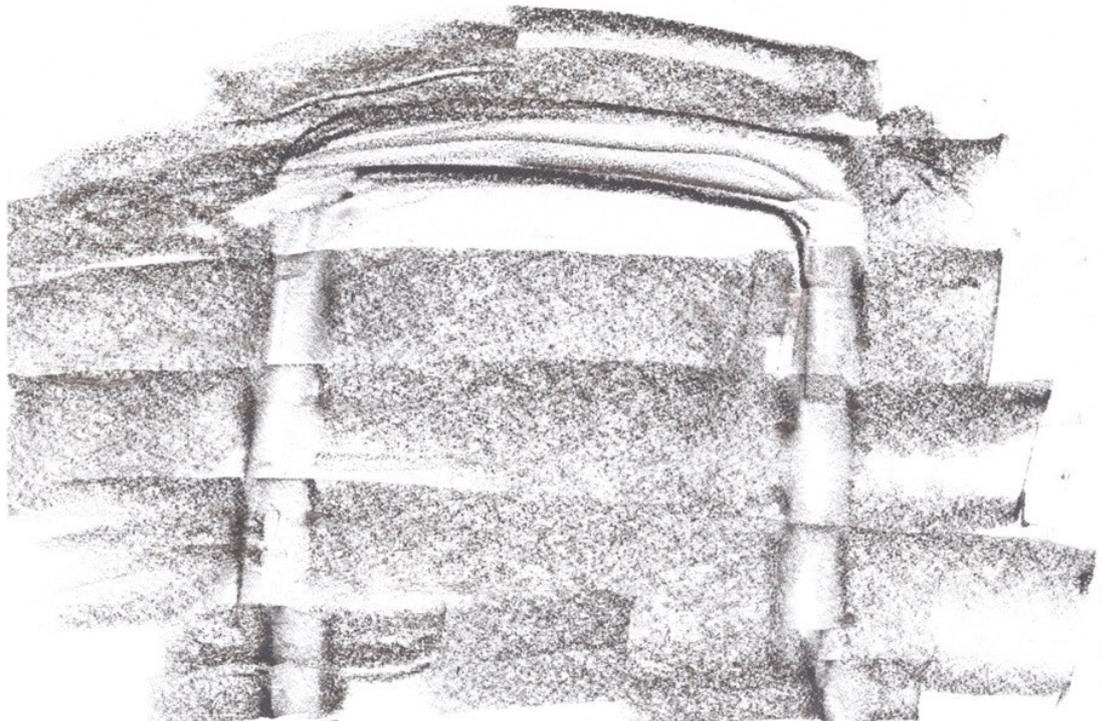
Figure 41: 'Learning Centre Chair' by PD

After making the rubbings, SW expressed frustration that we could not document more aspects of 'prison life', such as the laundry and joiners. In Phase Three we therefore worked to capture transient gestures of daily life, movements which would not ordinarily leave a trace, using slow and fast shutter speeds (Portfolio p.27-31). At first, we used the brick wall of the learning centre as a backdrop, but later I brought in black fabric, creating a studio environment, and co-creators responded to the

striking results this achieved. In these sessions, the whole group was involved, and multiple people are credited for each image. I thought co-creators would choose to record mundane activities such as cleaning, but their suggestions (as usual) were more playful and comic than I expected. The collaborative dynamics and atmosphere of these sessions are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.2.4.

The theme of trace and gesture emerged from conversations with co-creators and ran through the process, informing the photographic methods used. The significance of this theme for my understanding of photography in a prison context is discussed in see Chapter 6.3.1.

5.5.4 Assemblage and Installation

One key para-archival strategy that became increasingly important was the selection and assemblage of images into collages and installations responding to the institutional environment. In Phase One I made templates of the Learning Centre notice boards and co-creators used these to devise a layout for the cyanotypes they had made, so that they could determine editing and curatorial questions. They then transferred these to the boards (Figure 42, Figure 43 , Figure 44). Once the work was up, it was interesting to consider how it operated in that setting. Photographer Edmund Clark comments that images in prison can operate like 'windows to a different reality' (2024), often jarring with the institutional surroundings. On the noticeboards, co-creators' artworks did not provide the escape that Clark alludes to, as they featured the prison itself. They were windows that only return us to the prison. Photographed in-situ, the artworks draw attention to the visual qualities of their surroundings: magnolia painted bricks, prison signage, cracks in the walls, alarm buttons. These environmental elements become part of the image and their aesthetic properties become heightened, resonating visually with the artworks beside them (Portfolio p.18, 19, 22, 23).

Figure 42: Co-creators arrange their artworks for display on the noticeboard (Myers, 2022)

Figure 43: Artwork installed on the Learning Centre noticeboard. Artwork and display by AK, SW, PD, YB, Anon, WL and KF. (Myers, 2022)
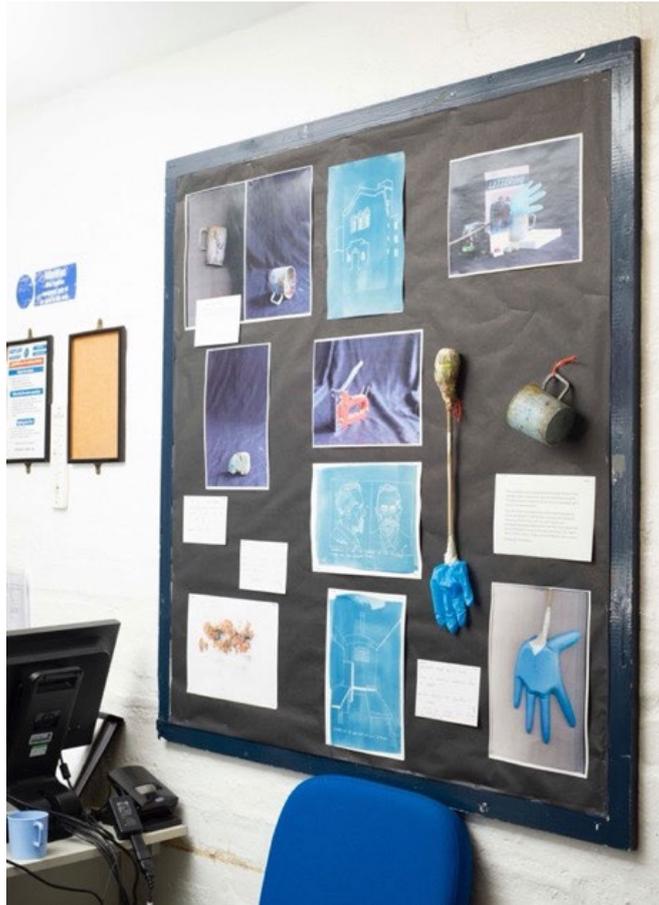
Figure 44: Artwork installed on Learning Centre noticeboard. Artwork and display by TA, Anon and DC. (Myers, 2022)

To explore the relationship between artwork and surroundings, I invited co-creators to install their photographs in different locations around the learning centre (Portfolio p.18-19). These installations became more elaborate as people worked both individually and collectively, responding to the environment in inventive ways. AK described the process (Figure 45):

Everybody brought their own rubbings then we assembled them and put on the walls in three different groups by making their relationship to each other.

AK written note 2023

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Figure 45: Group editing session with SW and AK. (Myers, 2022)

We built a collection of images that could be re-used in different contexts, although individuals always had the final say over how their work was shown. The 'event of photography' therefore expanded to encompass each new encounter with the images (Azoulay, 2011). Some encounters were documented photographically, and could then be used in future assemblages. Documentation also fixed a transient moment, allowing it to travel outside the prison in a form approved by co-creators. The significance of this process for co-creators and for the role of art in prisons is considered in Chapter 6.2.4.3.

We extended our temporary installations to the visits room and the garden, as preparation for exhibitions in those spaces. My field notes show the care co-creators put into these tasks (Figure 46):

YB points out the resonance between a photograph of a flower that he took and the drawing of the flower on the wall, the blue circle [on the sign] and the circles in the work we have been making.

Figure 46: Installation by YB in the Visits Room using photographs by YB, GD, NT, SW. (Myers, 2023)

These installations, like the exhibitions we made, allowed co-creators to draw on their lived experience of the place and to see it slightly differently (see Chapter 6.2.4.4). For example, SP and GD made a sound-themed backdrop for one of the virtual visit computers (Figure 47):

GD: And the idea behind that was that when people are getting virtual calls, which I don't do but anyway, their eye would be drawn to that, so you're not just sitting there looking at someone who you know anyway, that gives you something else to look at. You've got the sound bites.

Figure 47: Installation by GD and SP with images by SW, JP, BMB, AK, YB, NC. Including archive images © Crown Copyright: HES. Painting (on Left) by Unknown. Cyanotype (On right) by YB with Alice Myers. (Myers, 2023)

We also made more public exhibitions for the Visits Room and garden (see Chapter 6.3). Any installation invited reflection on the role of art in institutional space, but these exhibitions changed the dynamic and the spontaneous energy of the previous assemblages did not carry over, partly due to practical considerations. One exception was an assemblage we made over three tables, which I then transposed to a presentation at Glasgow School of Art (see Chapter 6.3.1). This was the first time the artwork left the prison. Due to the informal nature of the presentation and the act of direct transposition, the display maintained the immediacy of the workshops.

5.6 Summary

The focus of the research project evolved significantly over the course of the fieldwork, through dialogue with co-creators. Archival images proved a valuable starting point, but their importance decreased as we generated new work. They remained a constant presence but were layered with interpretations and incorporated

into collages. Emphasis shifted from archives to museums to collections. This shift contributed to my understanding of what we were doing as a form of para-archival practice that included 'elaborating' existing images, viewing the photograph as both trace and gesture, and gathering and assembling images and objects. Co-creators' involvement in editing and presenting the work within the institutional environment was a constant thread which gained importance over time. This practice was guided by an aesthetic logic, which contrasts with the illogicality of the prison. As these methods evolved, collaborative dynamics also varied. These are discussed in the following chapter, as are the deeper implications of the fieldwork for my research questions.

6 Critical Reflection

Figure 48: 'Floating in the Sea' by AK. Photograph by Alice Myers

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is in two parts. First, I consider collaborative dynamics within the workshops, the obstacles to participant agency presented by the prison, and the varied approaches to collaboration used. I then discuss how and whether these interactions surfaced in the artwork shared with the public, and how these artworks might open up new understandings of photography and prisons. I close with a discussion of what collaborative photography might *do,* in a performative sense, in this context (von Hantelmann, 2014).

6.2 Collaborative Dynamics

6.2.1 Accounting for Collaboration

It is rare to find detailed accounts of collaborative artmaking, including the interactions that took place, how decisions were managed, the roles of the various people involved, and the dynamics between them. This is partly because creative collaborations are difficult to pin down. There is a certain magic to those moments where afterwards it is difficult to remember who contributed what. It is not very magical to try to tease out exactly what happened. In addition, conveying the experience of any participatory artwork to a secondary audience is notoriously difficult (see Chapter 2.3.4). However, as this collaboration takes place across a stark power differential, it is essential to be clear and transparent. I therefore present the collaborative process in three ways, beyond its emergence in the artwork itself. First, my Ethics, Methods and Fieldwork chapters have given a flavour of the dynamics. Second, I will discuss the roles taken by myself and co-creators. Third, I will unpack key examples that demonstrate diversity of collaborative methods. Before continuing it is important to acknowledge the implications of the prison context for any collaborative project.

6.2.2 Impact of the Prison Environment

Prisons are not the only settings where institutional concerns constrain the terms of participatory projects (Rosler, 1999/2004, p.229). Still, the impact of the prison environment on co-creators' sense of agency and freedom to express opinions was immense. Bergold and Thomas write that 'the possibility of conducting participatory research can be regarded as a litmus test for a society's democratic self-concept' (2012, p.5).The outcome in this case is largely negative.

Control over most aspects of people's lives is a defining aspect of the prison (Goffman, 1968; Foucault, 1991), but participant comments brought home what that means for them. Reflecting on a collage we had made, SW commented:

One thing it doesn't quite portray is just how controlled our life is. We're told when we can eat. When we can exercise. When we can do anything. We don't have any freedom of choice.

18/04/23

This monotony does not lead to predictability as demonstrated by the many last-minute changes of plan that took place during the research project (see Chapter 5.2). After an unexpected change of workshop location, YB commented that it was this unpredictability that reduces his sense of agency. If so much is out of your hands, if logic appears absent, how do you maintain a sense that anything you do makes a difference?

I was aware of these factors in advance and much of my planning was aimed at supporting co-creators' agency through close attention to ethics procedures and group facilitation (see Chapters 3 & 4.4). However, subtler dynamics emerged. Co-creators were often reluctant to disagree with each other or myself. The fact that I was seen as a teacher was a factor. Workshops were seen as a privilege and any privilege can be revoked easily. Sometimes when I opened a topic for debate people would say they did not mind or would ask me to choose:

PD: …It's really difficult choosing a name isn't it because everyone has an opinion and nobody's wrong but it is very difficult…to be honest we sometimes want you to just be like look this is what we are going to have as the title, OK?

29/08/23

When disagreements did occur, they could occasionally escalate, and it was clear that tensions from outside the room were bubbling up. On all but one occasion (see Chapter 6.2.4.3) I was able to intervene and calm things down, but I realised how little I knew about co-creators' relationships outside the group, and how great the stakes of any disagreement were. This explained why people were sometimes reticent. Add to this fear of repercussions from prison authorities:

AK: That's the problem in prison. Sometimes we become yes men. Yeah it's just hard.

…

JP: You can't have your own personality you can't be yourself sometimes you have to be a yes man and just keep it down. You don't feel human.

GD: You've gotta be kinda downtrodden haven't you?

03/10/23

Another reason for reticence is the fear of being judged. Co-creators often commented on perceptions they felt the public held of them, but when I asked JP how it felt to be asked his opinion in workshops his response conveyed the impact on day-to-day interactions:

Judgement's always there. You can always tell when someone [in the] back of the head [might be judging] what you might say so you always have to watch what you say.

03/10/23

The fact that my presence was associated with an outside audience could therefore have a silencing effect. These dynamics made 'meaningful collaboration' (Fleetwood, 2020) very difficult and whilst I took steps to facilitate agency, much was beyond my control. At times, I despaired of doing anything meaningful in this context.

This bleak picture might give the impression that co-creators were passive or without hope. In fact, the opposite was true. People in prison often resist oppression through creativity, humour and organising (Fleetwood, 2020). In this context, the inventive, generous, hopeful responses in the workshops were striking. Participant feedback showed that many associated taking part with an increased sense of agency. Discussing a collaborative exhibition install PD commented:

This is part of the agency you gave us like when we were in the visiting centre, 'right guys where d'you think this is going to be'

29/08/23

There was also a sense that art provided a space where co-creators felt safer expressing themselves. After his comments about judgement, JP added:

Whereas art you can be as broad as you like you cannot really do judgement cause it's obviously subjective.

03/10/23

For AK, art was not just a less judgemental space but a more direct method of communication:

There are various things we're not allowed to say. Some of us suffer sometimes silently…Through the art we can explore our creativity, we can say what we want to say through art.

03/10/23

The subject matter of the workshops may have supported this sense of safety, as I deliberately avoided any discussion of co-creators' personal histories and they chose how much or little they contributed. Despite the circumstances I have described, this was a space where co-creators did feel comfortable stepping into multiple roles. The accounts they gave of these roles certainly do not suggest passive acceptance.

6.2.3 Roles

I will now discuss the roles taken at different times, as one way into collaborative dynamics. Suzanne Lacy's diagram of audience (Figure 49), alongside her spectrum of possible artists roles, provides a useful starting point (Lacy, 1995). These are flexible taxonomies, unlike other classic models of participation, such as Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (1969). Lacy writes, 'This model charges the construction of audience with activity rather than simply identity… movement between levels of engagement is designed into the system'. In relation to the artist's role she states: 'at any given time, an artist may operate at a different point on the spectrum or may move between them' (1995, p.173).

This fluidity, and the concentric circles that make up Lacy's diagram, provide a useful alternative to the photographer/subject/viewer triad that tends to dominate when discussing photography. Lacy's work addresses public performance art, not participatory photography, but her acknowledgement of the audience as contributors to a work's meaning resonates with Azoulay's suggestion that we actively 'watch' photographs (2008, p.16) and Rancière's insistence on the activity of the spectator (2009b). Lacy's diagram could also be seen as a visualisation of Azoulay's open-ended 'event of photography' that ripples through time, meeting different audiences along the way (Azoulay, 2011, p77).
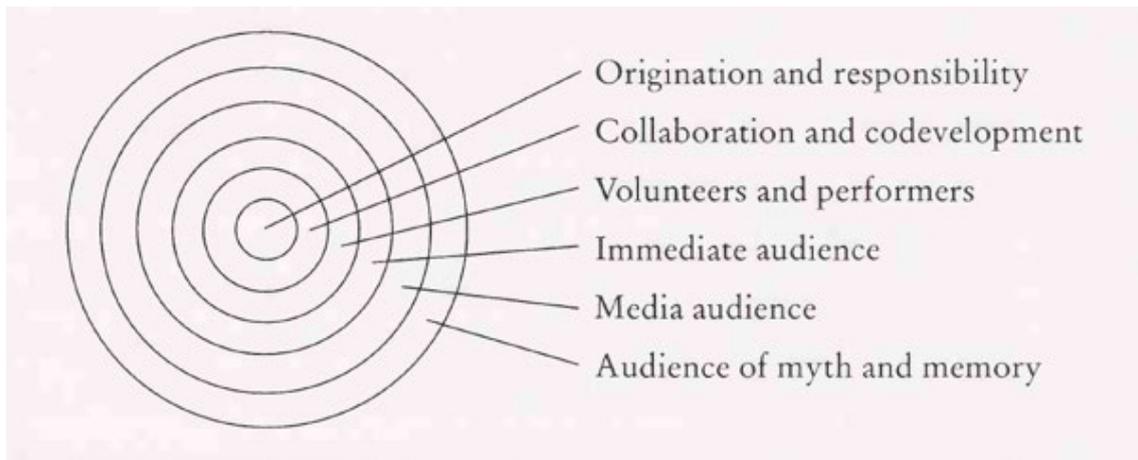
Figure 49: Diagram from Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art (Lacy, 1995 p.178)

Applying this diagram to my research project is a useful exercise for understanding dynamics. Initially I was at the centre as the instigator 'without whom the work would not exist' (Lacy, 1995, p.174). Some co-creators inhabited the 'Collaboration and co-development' position. They 'invested time, energy and identity in the work and…partake deeply in its ownership' (Lacy, 1995, p.179). Others were mostly in the 'Volunteers and performers' ring, taking an active part in the work but less invested in its direction and outcomes, though less activity does not always mean less investment. One co-creator attended sessions only occasionally but his input into presentation decisions showed a strong sense of ownership.

Co-creators, other imprisoned people, prison staff and visitors were the 'immediate audience'. Lacy's diagram goes straight from 'immediate audience' to 'Media audience'. In this research project there is a distinction between the audience inside the prison and viewers outside the prison: the 'secondary audience' (see Chapter 2.3.4).

As Lacy suggests, I aimed to encourage co-creators to move between roles, and they did to some extent. By sharing decisions around the direction and presentation of the project, I hoped to create opportunities for others to move into the 'origination and responsibility' role. The prison context outlined above creates many barriers to people moving towards the centre of this diagram, and many forces pushing them

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outwards. But there was certainly fluidity, as people moved in and out of more active roles.[8]

Discussing roles with the group was invaluable. I brought my reflections and co-creators wrote ideas on Post-its. We then moved the Post-its around to explore how roles unfolded in time (Figure 50 & Figure 51). There was some joking about my being a 'dictator', 'credit hog', 'multi role manager' and co-creators being 'test subjects', 'entertainers', 'topic bringer-uppers'. This use of humour (as usual) light heartedly acknowledged some of the tensions in the process. Co-creators also suggested several roles I had not considered. We realised that most could apply to everyone involved at some stage in the workshops, although they were clear that my role was distinct. The first three roles I discuss below - outsider, facilitator, and teacher - address this difference, although they were not unique to me. The subsequent three roles relate more closely to collaborative making. Most examples come from one particularly in-depth conversation as the roles we identified formed the basis of future discussions.

[8] Lacy also presents a taxonomy of 'artists roles' that similarly emphasises movement between them. However, the linear format she uses is less helpful than the concentric circles. Her 'artists roles' also separate out the figure of the artist, and place emphasis on art as activism, directly impacting public opinion through sharing, analysing and utilising information, an aim which I do not share. I have therefore chosen to focus on her diagram of audience here.

Figure 50: Arrangement of 'Roles' Post-its to show change over time (clockwise starting from top)
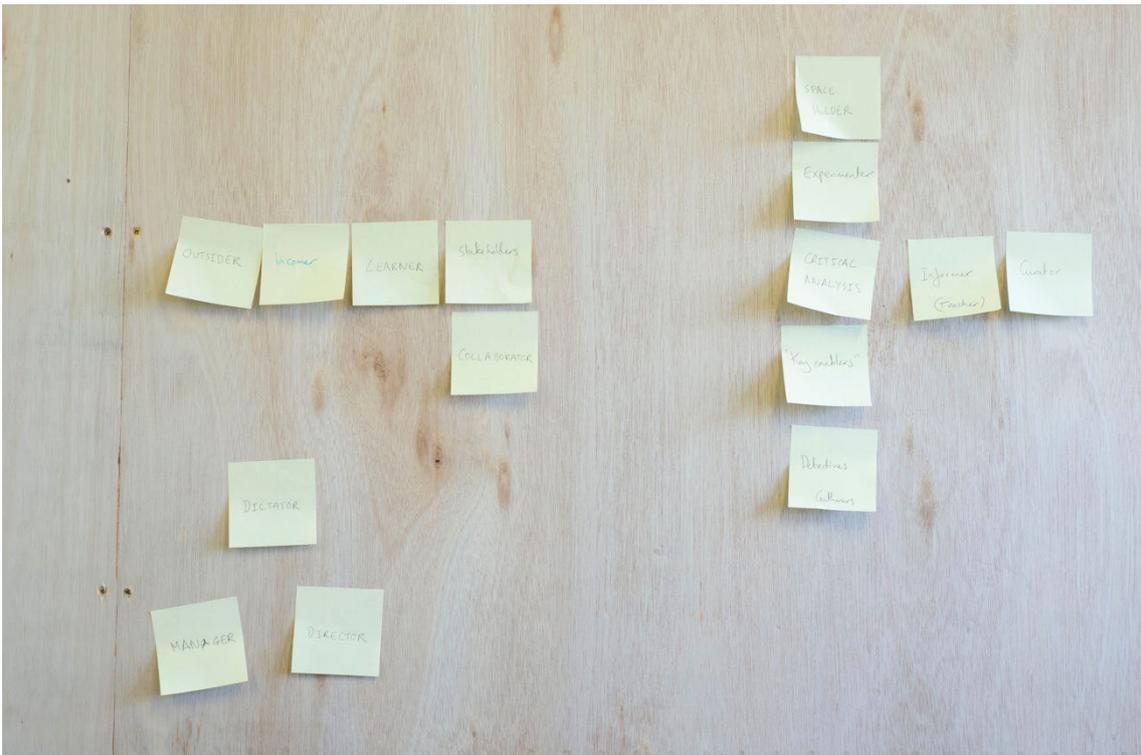
Figure 51: Arrangement of 'Roles' Post-its to show change over time (Left to Right)

6.2.3.1 Artist as Outsider/Insider

This role is determined by the wider social and political context, and it frames all the other roles. In a prison, the role of outsider is one of freedom and privilege (see Chapter 2.5). This status was immediately noted in my first conversations with the art class at HMP Dumfries, as I recorded in my journal:

A1 immediately said he wasn't interested because if they showed the prison in a positive light the press would be appalled and if they showed it in a negative light they would be in trouble with the authorities. 'We are stuck between a rock and a hard place'. Also, I would be able to leave while they would be stuck with the consequences.

28/06/22

This man saw me as a potential link to both the press and the prison authorities. As discussed above, I represented a future audience, in ways that are both appealing and threatening, underlining the power I held. Crucially, I could come and go. This requires an ethical assessment of what impact the research project might have on those who are not able to leave. But discussing this role with PD and GD, I was surprised that they saw themselves as outsiders too:

PD: For most of us we're all new, at some point we were sat outside thinking I don't know anything about this.
AM: New to the group?
PD: New to the group.
(…)
GD: I see myself more as an incomer than an outsider, you're coming into a group.
AM: I'm a, you're an incomer.
GD: Yes.

29/08/23

GD's term 'incomer' signifies activity rather than identity. His comments trouble the inflexible, loaded binary of insider/outsider. In an art context 'Outsider' is often

unhelpfully applied to self-taught artists. Conversely, the term is also used to refer to artists 'coming in' to a community. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau points out, this can obscure the nuances of interaction and reify or exoticize an 'insider' perspective (2017). Acknowledging one's outsider-ness highlights the fundamental exteriority of photography, the fact that it deals with the way things look and always presents an incomplete and unreliable account. This is one way to approach the understanding/misunderstanding question I posed in Chapter 3. Solomon-Godeau suggests that this may be a more honest approach than privileging 'insider' perspectives as somehow more 'true'.

There are many pitfalls resulting from the power of being an 'outsider' in this context, but there is also richness in the interactions which result from the friction of entering a situation - a friction that may prompt a questioning of the roles of all involved. People inside a situation may see their experience slightly differently in the presence of an outsider, and as many of the co-creator comments below show, sharing experience can be an important part of making meaning from it. The ignorance of being an outsider can also be useful. Krauss observes how her role shifts from 'expert artist' when in a gallery, to 'ignorant outsider' when working in a school (Krauss, 2015). This shift makes space for co-creators to come forward as experts. In this research project sharing different kinds of expertise is foundational to the collaboration, and is important in relation to many of the roles discussed.

6.2.3.2 Artist as Facilitator

Co-creators characterised my position in several ways: director, manager, photography expert, teacher, conductor. Although 'director' in a theatrical sense comes close, I saw myself more as a facilitator. As the instigator and designer of the research project I created a small space where things could happen, where art was made, where conversations took place, and ideas developed. I provided continuity, socially, organisationally, and conceptually, as the project was structured so that people could engage as much or as little as they wanted to. Sometimes, co-creators facilitated, when they set up a mini studio for the group, when more regular attendees kept newer or less frequent ones informed, when they planned or

organised the installation of artwork. NC identified 'topic bringer upper' as a role he held, noting his contribution to the direction of group discussion. But given the pressures I discussed above, it felt a lot to ask them to take on this role for longer. My privilege also made this role easier, as I was the one who could arrange access to equipment, spaces, exhibition opportunities etc. Co-creators pointed this out when I asked if they would like to continue meeting as a group beyond the end of the research project. They felt the access to different spaces and bringing everyone together was an important aspect of my role that they could not replicate.

A contradiction built into this research project is that it aims to question socially defined roles, but I did hold various roles that gave me more power within the group, including that of Facilitator. I knew from previous experience that beginning a series of workshops with a sense of structure and direction allowed participants to feel comfortable being creative. I thought I would gradually 'step back' over time as co-creators took more 'ownership' of the process. There were two main barriers to my doing so. First, the context of the prison discussed above made it very difficult for co-creators to 'step in' to more active roles, though they certainly did so. Second, I was there as an artist and researcher *as well as* a facilitator. There is not inevitably tension between these roles, but in this case I had a creative and practical stake that I sometimes felt I was trying to disown in the interest of facilitating well. To disown my stake felt disingenuous but to own it felt uncomfortable as I was already in a powerful position. I sometimes found myself hovering between stepping back and stepping in, aiming for balance in a situation with no perfect answers.

Sometimes I slipped into thinking the role of facilitator should be a passive one, to make space for others to step in. In attempting to step away creatively I occasionally did not provide enough structure for the group. When this happened, this created uncertainty around who was in charge, exacerbating tensions (see Chapter 6.2.4.3). When PD asked me to choose a title in the example above, this was not just reluctance to disagree, it was an appeal for me to step into a role that would allow everyone to relax, knowing who was in charge. I learned that facilitation involves actively holding structure that supports creativity, discussion, and disagreement.

Given more time with the same group there might be more space for others to take this role. Another problematic role that provided a familiar structure was that of a teacher.

6.2.3.3 Artist as Teacher

This research project shares many values and methods with the radical pedagogy of Freire (1970/2017) and hooks (1994) but it is not framed as pedagogical (see Chapter 4.2). I was clear that workshops were *not* classes, and I was *not* a teacher. Attending a 'class' would bring associations with previous experiences of education. There might be an expectation of learning specific skills or a fear of failure. The position of teacher would confer authority that I was trying to avoid. Nevertheless, the only place the workshops could take place was the Learning Centre, and co-creators tended to refer to workshops as 'classes' and to me as a 'teacher'. During a confrontation in a workshop (see Chapter 6.2.4.3) YB appealed to my authority:

YB: She is the teacher she decides what happens not you.
SW: Neither do you.

18/04/23

In the end I accepted that 'teacher' was a category everyone was familiar and comfortable with, and within that familiarity I hoped unexpected things could take place. Although the term was often used in casual conversation, during discussions of my role the word 'teacher' was hardly mentioned. Co-creators' role as learners was clear and as I was a PhD student it was assumed that I was also there to learn:

GD: Again I would start as your student. We all start off as students don't we? But we are all students while we're here [in the Learning Centre].
03/10/23

My 'expertise', and the skills I had shared were highlighted, but 'teacher' barely featured. PD also saw himself in a teaching role:

PD: …And gradually we're informing, we're beginning to teach because I've been talking to the guys in the hall who don't know anything about it.

<div align="right">*03/10/23*</div>

Although the teacher/class structure was something everyone was familiar with, it was understood that different dynamics were at play. Both Post-it timelines placed 'learner' near the beginning, moving on to creative and curatorial roles. I follow a similar trajectory in laying out three roles that were more often shared between co-creators and myself.

6.2.3.4 Artist as Listener

As a photographer, I often turn to listening as a more receptive, less powerful attitude than looking, though I'm aware that listening can be just as active, selective and guided by prejudice. Cahal McLaughlin sees his role as he listens to people's accounts of their experience as that of 'interlocutor' (2011), an active role. For Campt (2017), listening to images means paying attention to micro-details, just below the threshold of detectability, but it also has a haptic quality as she senses sub-audible frequencies. This closes the distance usually associated with sight. Bringing this respectful quality of attention to the people, places, and images I work with is important to my ethical framework (see Chapter 3).

Listening is a significant aspect of prison life as other sensory input is limited and sounds carry useful information (Herrity, 2020). Sound was frequently mentioned in workshops. One of the first comments on the archive images was how much noisier it would have been before the three storey halls were divided. SW listed the sounds of the halls as part of his donation to the museum (Figure 52 & Figure 53).
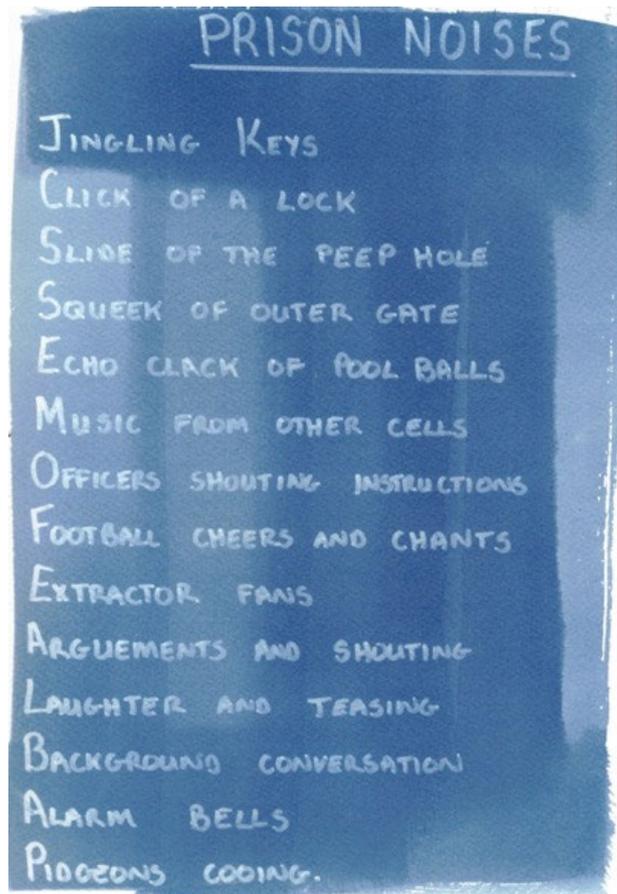
Figure 52: Prison Noises by SW

Figure 53: Index card written by SW to accompany his 'prison noises' cyanotype

'Listener' was certainly a role that participants identified with, associating it with both observing and experimentation:

AM: What feels most true to you about roles you've taken during the project?

…

JP: I'd say observer. Cause we're all looking at each other's work to see what their view of things are. What they take and what they've done.

…

AK: Listener

AM: Listener. Yeah…

AK: Listen and learn

…

GD: At times we've all had a wee shot at being a photographer.

AK: Listen, learn and experiment.

…

AM: Are there any roles that you felt you took on more, more often?

…

GD: I think I've become a better listener. Listen to other opinions and that.

03/10/23

During our first session in the garden, in response to SW's comments on sound, I suggested we sit in silence for three minutes and write down everything we could hear (Figure 54). For a moment we were all listeners together, present and attentive to our surroundings.
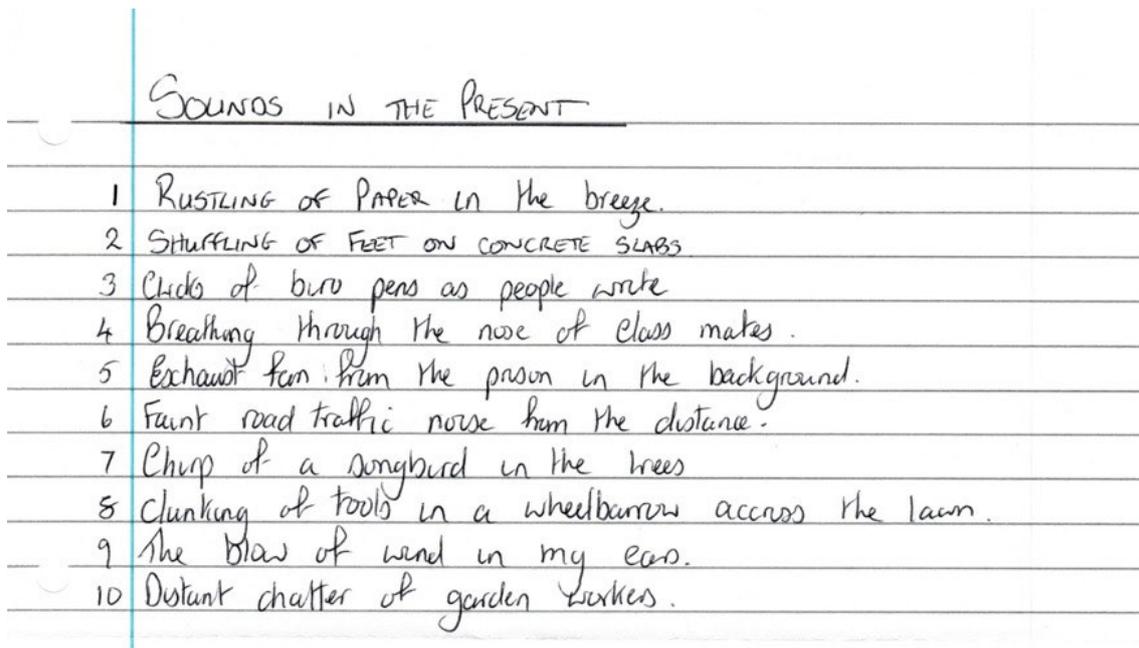
Figure 54: Notes taken by SW during group listening exercise

6.2.3.5 Artist as Collector

In Chapter 5.5.1 I discussed the nuances of collecting and its increasing importance in our process. Each of us took the role of collector at some point. For PD, this role was about 'detecting', implying looking behind appearances:

PD: We're kinda detectives aren't we?

GD: Gatherers we're gathering things all the time.

PD: We were detectives because, it was actually when I saw one of the posters [a drawing of a hand holding a letter bearing the words, Hope, Dread, Anticipation], it was NK that done it. It's like it's not a letter any more we're digging deep we're looking into that we're detecting what that really, it tells us one thing for one guy but when another guy gets a letter it might be bad news.

29/08/23

In a later e-mail PD explained just how important it was to reinterpret everyday objects, as a distraction from his circumstances, but also as a route to understanding them in new ways:

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…The creation and display of art in prison, proves, that despite the harsh environment, culture and creativity can thrive. It also allows an element of escapism for prisoners; they can temporarily set aside prison life and concentrate on creativity. For example, mundane objects, such as a simple door can be re-focused as a powerful symbol.

PD e-mail 25/09/23

Gathering objects and making connections between them in this way could also be seen as the activity of a researcher. More relevant to co-creators' focus on display and audience is the role of curator, which crosses over with that of collector.

6.2.3.6   Artist as Curator

Central to our para-archival process was the sharing of curatorial responsibilities. By selecting, arranging, and installing, co-creators shaped the artwork. Their feedback showed the significance of this activity for them (see Chapter 6.2.4.3). When asked what in the workshops had supported a sense of agency, YB mentioned the careful installations he had made (e.g. Portfolio p.33). For PD the role of curator was more about conservation and continuing tradition:

AM: And your relation to the artwork is it as curator, editor, designer, writer?
PD: For me it's very much the curator. The historical angle I like. Those cyanotypes were a historical document. Here I go again – bringing history to life.

29/08/23

For AK, arranging the artwork was associated with other active roles: 'Critical analysis' and 'Creator', the role he felt he took most often. These roles are placed together in the Post-it exercise (Figure 50).

AM: OK are those the main ones that speak to you?
AK: Maybe create we arrange as well.
AM: Arrange.
GD: Chief arranger. That's you. That's Alice!

By making this joke GD highlights my powerful position, but AK's comment shows that arranging was for him part of the creative process.

6.2.3.7 Summary

These conversations gave a clearer idea of how co-creators saw the process. Their comments underlined Lacy's point that roles can be a matter of activity rather than identity (1995). This selection includes roles that are most pertinent to collaborative dynamics, demonstrating the potential to shift between roles, and the nuances of each. This is not an exhaustive list and Figure 50 and Figure 51 contain some roles I have not covered as we did not discuss them in as much detail.

Co-creators' comments, along with my own reflections, helped me to understand much of the discomfort I had been feeling as I attempted to hold the roles of artist and facilitator simultaneously, a discomfort which sometimes led to my reluctance to provide the necessary structure for the group. I gained a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be an outsider in this context and the importance of dialogue and knowledge exchange. In future projects I would introduce this discussion earlier on, and return to it repeatedly. Just as roles were fluid, approaches to collaboration also varied throughout. I will now explore these different strategies through attention to specific examples.

6.2.4   Key moments

The experience of working as a group to create a photograph can be exhilarating, especially in a prison. This seemed to be something different from co-creators' daily experience and it felt important to make space for collaborative creativity in this way. As a result, I have sometimes wrongly seen this as the ideal collaborative moment. Although I have always used a variety of participatory strategies, it has taken time to appreciate their value.

I have chosen examples that demonstrate different collaborative modes: group studio work, parallel play, and arranging and installing images. Here I consider how these varied interactions become perceivable in the artwork and ask what new understandings of the interrelation of photography and prisons emerge as a result.

6.2.4.1 Collaborative Studio Photography

Studio photography (Portfolio p.27-31) was the activity that most frequently engaged the whole group in a single task. I recorded one such session in my journal:

Lots of moments where everyone was working together on a picture. Lots of instances of people taking charge of an idea. JP wanted to do flicking paint, so went … with AK to make a setup. They made a stand for the cloth backdrop, laid down paper, mixed the right consistency of paint, found a brush. Then the whole group came in and did the shoot. JP didn't want to get covered in paint, so I did the flicking the brush while BM held up a sheet of paper to catch the paint drips and SW took the shot (Figure 55). Lots of laughs with this one. Elated atmosphere… Previous to all this there was a flow of ideas: pouring water into a cup, then into hands, then throwing a ball of paper, then BMB said he loves to play darts but we wouldn't be able to have them in here. So SW suggested making paper aeroplanes instead…Different people modelling and photographing and directing. All very fluid.

11/04/23

Figure 55: Photo by BMB, JP, AK, YB, SW and Alice Myers

This account captures the flow of ideas and creative energy of these sessions, which is what makes it difficult (and unnecessary) to tease out individuals' contributions. This was also a working relationship based on trust as evident in PD's view of the session that produced *PD's Time and Motion Study* (Portfolio p.30):

PD: I know we joked about guinea pigs but for me, doing that time lapse was just 'let's just go with this'... And I just went fast and slow and experimentalist... I was doing something, I was experimenting…rare occasions that words fail me (…) By that stage it was your 6th or 7th visit. And you'd established quite a good, we all had established quite good relationships in terms of the project, we knew…
GD: There's very good support there.
PD: And you said, 'P just do what you need to do', and you didn't have to tell me to do anything, and that's as a result of a good working relationship but it allowed me to feel comfortable enough to just do that.

29/08/23

In these sessions our socially determined roles momentarily became less important. On the other hand, the fluidity of the process could mask power dynamics within the group which might allow some to feel more comfortable contributing than others. Careful facilitation is needed to attend to these nuances and make space for less dominant voices.

The use of the studio places these images within a history of photographic hierarchies that includes the mug shot (S. Edwards, 1990, see Chapter 2.2). Both Edwards and Campt (2017) detect dialogical possibilities in 'compulsory photographs' but in our images dialogue is the premise, not an undercurrent. In these sessions the camera opened a space where something unexpected could happen, something that no individual contributor could have predicted. These are photographic encounters expanded by collaboration. The playful energy can be felt in the images, although there are not many direct signs of the multiple people involved. In Figure 55, the presence of a hand holding the backdrop gives a hint. In others the clue is in the credit line, where everyone present is credited with each image taken in that session, regardless of who pressed the shutter.

The studio makes space for something unexpected, but it is important to note that this is a record of something that is *already happening*. People in prison *do not* need workshops or cameras to be creative, playful and humorous, to 'create possibility within the constraints of everyday life' (Campt, 2017, p.4). These qualities are a constant feature of, and precondition for, survival in the prison. Imprisoned people also do not need workshops to collaborate. They find multiple ways to care for and support each other (Fleetwood, 2020). This is not to idealise the resourcefulness of people in prison, this creative tendency is shared by those outside, but the restrictions of the prison make it more essential, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6.3.

The opportunities in prison for creative expression, for people to openly work together, are limited, as are opportunities to communicate these qualities to people

on the outside. In an environment that can be isolating and dehumanising, space for interaction and creativity are valuable. Co-creators expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to work in a group:

YB: You hear more about each other opinions…you have more connection than when you are in the hall, we don't talk about these things normally.

23/05/23

PD: Doing [photography] 'inside' represents much more [than photography outside] i.e. A temporary home, where friends are made, new skills are created and lots of time for reflection.

PD e-mail 03/11/23

I was struck by PD's use of the word 'home', with all the familiarity and comfort that implies. The most surprising feedback I received was from AK, who said of the project: 'It makes me feel normal.' There is so much in that statement about how AK feels he is perceived and the various assumptions that might be made about what 'normal' means in this context (see Chapter 1.3). But his comment shows that the workshops' power was in opening a small space for 'normality', for ordinary human creativity and collaboration within the chaos of the prison.

6.2.4.2 Parallel Play

In a context where individuality is stifled, facilitating personal expression can sometimes be more liberating than collaborative activity (Bishop, 2012). Because I was so interested in the dynamics of group work, it took me a while to realise the value of working independently alongside each other, what in child development is known as 'parallel play'[9] (Brigano, 2011). At HMP Dumfries, co-creators did not always feel like working in a group, sometimes due to mood, sometimes because they had specific ideas they wanted to experiment with. When making rubbings (see Chapter 5.5.3), and some installations (see Chapter 5.5.4), everyone worked

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[9] Thanks to Naomi Garriock for helping me make this connection.

individually, but the result of working in parallel went far beyond what could have been imagined beforehand. Unlike the classic definition of 'parallel play' where activities are entirely separate, in this context exchange of ideas was important. The process of using paper towels to make rubbings of details from cells, or of prison windows, began with a suggestion from me but developed through parallel experimentation. This felt like a slower conversation than the collaborative studio work. This exchange is mostly visible in the artworks through the parallels and differences between them, especially once they were placed together (e.g. Portfolio p.18 & 20, and Figure 56).

Figure 56: Rubbings by AK, SW, PD and YB on the classroom wall. (Myers, 2022)

6.2.4.3 Para-archival Assemblage

One activity that took place both collectively and individually was the para-archival selection, assemblage, and installation of images (see Chapter 5.5.4). Again, the opportunity for individuals to work alone was important, and people were often meticulous in their approach. This process created a small space where co-creators could be in control:

AM: One thing I've really noticed with these arrangements…you're much more ordered than I am … do you have any idea why that might be?

NC: Small amounts of control I'd say. Control of your life is not really in your own hands any more while you're here so all the tiny little bits, might be that you're not even realising that you're doing it but you're doing it, setting them all in a straight line, or curved in a specific way.

13/06/23

Arranging as a group could open new insights. For example, during a memorable session recorded in my journal:

Participants identified the theme of 'Circles' from the work they had done so far. This led to a very productive 10 minutes, with people finding circular objects and circles in pictures and contributing them to the collage. Everyone contributed, some more enthusiastically than others. The atmosphere was playful.

16/12/22

This short session identified the theme of circles that ran through our subsequent work. It was also the first time that the images we had made were treated as a collective resource to be drawn upon for further creative work.

Things were not always so harmonious. Encouraged by the success of sessions like this one, I asked the group to make a large-scale collage to be shared with students at Glasgow School of Art (Portfolio p.24-25). As we were always making work with an external audience in mind, I did not anticipate how an imminent and specific audience would raise the stakes. In addition, we had much more material to work with by that point and there were more people in the session than expected. Attempting to encourage creative freedom, I did not provide enough structure for the activity. This created uncertainty as to who was in charge and pre-existing tensions surfaced when YB tried to move an image that was already part of a collage made by SW:

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SW: {raised voice} No this was all, leave it! This was all part…

YB: {raised voice} You already done everything…

SW: This was all part that was stuck together since day one. It all kind of matches together.

YB: {raised voice} We need change now was different day.

SW: No it doesn't need changed at all!

<div align="right">

18/04/23

</div>

This disagreement hinged on a seemingly small point, but it touched on deeper questions around ownership of the images and showed their importance to co-creators. We eventually agreed to copy the image in question so both could use it and transitioned to some productive conversation by the end of the session. This incident was a turning point, teaching me to structure sessions more carefully. Although it was clear that others in the room were rattled by the outburst ('get me out of here' said NT, only half joking), to my surprise everybody came back to the following sessions. Nothing like this ever happened again so it could be that it cleared the air, or that co-creators were more wary of disagreement, or that more carefully structured sessions helped.

Listening to the recording I am struck by the rich discussion despite the tension. Topics included project themes and questions that the audience might have about the work. Placing the images together brought out their significance, as in this example which relates to photographs I had taken of the **property store** (Figure 57):

JP: I'd say it's quite a hard reality. That hurts when you sometimes see that and your life's in a bag. See when you get out and your life's in that plastic bag. That's hard…

SW: That's what you leave with.

AM: OK yeah, I hadn't really registered that.

NC: Don't get me wrong when you move house you never actually take everything out of the boxes. {laughs}

…

NT: Just like putting stuff in the cupboard, eh? Put it in a bag and put it in the back of the cupboard.

…

AM: Do you feel like this is something people should see or…?

Various: Yeah, Oh aye, definitely.

SW: It's definitely why it's on there.

JP: Would have liked to put in all three [shots of property] but woulda run out of room.

SW: We need a bigger table

AM: We just need a really long table.

18/04/23

Figure 57: 'Property Store' (Myers, 2023)

Making a collage as a group, with a specific audience in mind, brought out tensions *and* led to rich and nuanced discussion. As I discuss below (see Chapter 6.3.1), the

assemblage was transferred to a presentation at Glasgow School of Art, making a direct connection between the prison and the outside world (Portfolio p.25).

6.2.4.4 Visits Room Install – Sharing knowledge

Installing artwork in the visits room demonstrated how vital everyone's knowledge and lived experience was. I made prints in advance, having agreed an edit with co-creators. We met in the space and decided as a group how to install. I described the process in my notes:

The atmosphere is quietly excited. I lay out the pictures on the floor and mention the spaces I've identified where we could… hang work. This is where their understanding of the space and how different it is from mine really becomes apparent. The space that I thought would work well because it offered a large area of wall… is dismissed, because no one will see the work there. That's not a part of the room that people spend time in. The most highly prized spaces are beside the café, where people wait for cups of tea, the space by the door, where they wait to be let out, and the wall that the visitors face when they sit in the chairs opposite the person they are visiting (see Portfolio p.23).

21/02/23

Seeing the space through the lens of an exhibition offered a new way to understand it. Where do people look, where do people congregate, where do they spend time? It was impossible not to relate the images to the geometric window bars beside them in ways that changed both (Figure 58, and Portfolio p.22).

Figure 58: Installation of artwork in the Visits Room (Myers, 2023)

PD suggested we place images connected to life outside (a letter, a pet dog) near the computers and doors as these represent interfaces between the prison and the outside world, a reading of the artwork that only became possible in this context. Reflecting on the experience, SW linked changing the atmosphere of the room to a resulting sense of ownership of the space:

My first thoughts about how it makes me feel about the space is that it personalises the area. Rather than making the visit room feel like a sombre and sterile space that is very institutional it brings character and personality to the room that makes it feel like it belongs to 'us' and not 'them'.

SW Written note 2023

Co-creators' experience of the space shaped the install whilst hanging an exhibition gave them new ways to understand the space and the artwork in relation to each other. To my disappointment, later installations of artwork in the gardens and the visits room had to be carried out without co-creators present. This necessitated a

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different collaborative strategy where I carried out their instructions. Although the dialogue around these instructions was valuable, it was no substitute for the artists being there for the install, as I discuss in detail below (Chapter 6.3.2).

6.2.5 Multiple Approaches to Collaboration - Summary

These key collaborative moments show that more voices and more groupwork is not always 'better', or more ethical, and that it is important to move between approaches to collaboration to accommodate co-creators' needs and interests, to work with the unpredictability of the prison and to allow people to take up different roles at different times. They also show the impact of the *setting*, with co-creators able to use their expertise in the visits room, while my role as 'ignorant outsider' was heightened. While some tensions and power imbalances are not visible in the work, some aspects of the process are, and multiple perspectives sit alongside each other. The following section evaluates what happened when artwork was shared with an audience; whether and how the collaborative dynamics I have discussed surfaced and what impact the artwork had on the setting.

6.3 Sharing Work with an Audience

I will now discuss three moments when work was shared with an audience. These moments were chosen because they involve different audiences and contexts, requiring different collaborative and artistic strategies. The first was a display of work in progress made to share with students at Glasgow School of Art. The second involves the installation of a selection of this work at two Open Days in the prison garden. The third saw a narrower selection from the same series exhibited in the Visits Room. Some images feature in all three examples as they were used in different ways at different times. Each sharing involved moments when my aspirations for the project came up against the obstacles of the prison context, threatening the value of what we were doing. Using these cases, I assess the impact of making and installing artwork inside a prison, as well as the extent to which our collaborative dynamics become visible in the artwork.

6.3.1 Work in Progress: Display at Glasgow School of Art

Work in Progress was an assemblage that I transferred directly from the prison to a presentation at Glasgow School of Art (Portfolio p.24-5). This was an edit of all artwork made up to that point (mid-Phase Three) and making it prompted the conflict outlined above. The assemblage presents multiple photographic methods, including documentation of earlier collages. It therefore provides some sense of the evolution of ideas as the artwork developped. Collective authorship is indicated by the credit line, but it is also clear that the work presents many perspectives. The collage style is different at the two ends of the collage, giving a clue that they were made by different groups. But the social field also comes across in more subtle ways.

6.3.1.1 Gaps

While making the collage we kept saying 'we just need a bigger table', with NC going further: 'It would be good if you could just do a big panorama and then grab the sound stage over in Belfast that's got the big wraparound screens.' Co-creators were frustrated at leaving things out. I suggested that this could be a good thing, forcing the viewer to acknowledge all they cannot know, and to use their imagination to fill in the gaps. Their responses were unexpected:

NC: It's restricted to reflect where we are…We're restricted with how much we can actually put on the table. We're restricted with our movements with everything else in here anyways.
AM: OK so the restriction echoes the…
JP: If we want imagination we can't have so much to show. We want a reflection of reality but we can't show too much of it.

18/04/23

Co-creators could see how leaving gaps could be effective, but there was so much about their experience that they wanted to communicate. This comes across in the variety of images and subject matter they chose for the display.

At the time I saw this as a discussion of creative decision-making, frustration at not being able to show everything, and finding creative ways around the restrictions imposed by the prison. However, when I returned to present a summary of my thesis to co-creators, they brought home the fact that restrictions imposed on our art making are for them a synecdoche for the restrictions imposed on their lives. For them, not being able to photograph certain areas of the prison was bound up with other limits to their vision, including limits to the futures they are allowed to imagine for themselves. I discuss this painful aspect of the process in more detail below.

6.3.1.2 Trace/Gesture

The social surfaces in this collage (Portfolio p.24-5) through images - the rubbings and tracings in particular - that foreground the photograph as both trace *and* gesture (see Chapter 5.5.3), emphasising aspects of the social field that might be detected in any photograph.

In relation to traces, as Azoulay (2019; 2008) and S. Edwards (1990) show, to honour the trace is to decentre the author in favour of the poetry of contingency, that which speaks directly to the viewer almost regardless of the photographer's intentions. It is here that they detect traces of the social field in which the photograph was made. S. Edwards compares these traces to reported speech as theorised by Volosinov, another 'voice' that addresses the viewer from a perspective beyond that of the photographer, even if filtered by them. From this perspective an individual image may be polyvocal (see Chapter 2.4). In our studio images examples might be the cup used to pour water (a prison issue cup only used by imprisoned people) or the institutional gloss paint on the walls. This way of looking can then be extended to the archive image placed by co-creators in the centre of the collage. A detail such as the noticeboard, covered with remnants of past posters, communicates volumes in a photograph otherwise devoid of life.

In relation to gesture, the rubbings foreground the physical movements of those who made them. The next step is to imagine the movements of those who made the archive photographs; arranging the tripod to achieve symmetrical, Cartesian

perspective, waiting for people to leave the frame or hurrying them out of it. Beyond this, it becomes possible to imagine the archives that contain these images, and even the prison institution itself as something created, maintained and sometimes resisted by people.

As with the long exposure images we made (Portfolio p.30), and Clark's portraits (see Chapter 2.5) the rubbings contain the time it took to make them. As YB commented in relation to his photograph of his watch, 'time is everything in prison'. The gestural aspect of the images invites the viewer to imagine the time spent making them, and to reflect on how that time might hold different significance for the maker. The viewer is invited to imagine themselves into the perspective of the co-creators while acknowledging the impossibility of doing so, and to also consider the people who made the institutional images in a new light.

6.3.1.3 Everyday Objects

In *Work in Progress*, many 'everyday' objects are gathered: a cup, a canteen menu, a fire hose flange, bed springs, a mirror, a bag of personal property. The fire hose flange, which allows officers to douse a flaming cell in water without opening the door, demonstrates the violence a banal object can attest to. Like Georges Perec (1973/2010), we are using close attention to the everyday to understand that which is 'intolerable' but considered ordinary. This is the opposite of sensationalised, dramatic accounts of prison and imprisoned people.

Each object here has a status, a part to play in the economy of the prison. For example, the cheap plastic cup we photographed is of a type used only by imprisoned people. Staff use ceramic mugs. Bed springs represent by synecdoche the bunk bed which can mean a shared cell, but if you have the privilege of a cell to yourself you can use them to store belongings. The status of material objects is directly linked with power and privilege.

As well as both a trace and a gesture, a photograph is also an object, and as objects, the photographs we made entered the prison economy. The use of prison-

issue paper towels takes a low-status, readily available material as the substrate for the image. The Learning Centre printer, itself part of the institutional fabric, leaves its mark in the low-quality work prints. Co-creators were visibly impressed by the higher quality prints I was able to produce, even the use of heavier paper was remarked upon. Images to put on a cell wall or to send to loved ones were also in high demand. This highlights the material constraints on artists in prison, within which people are endlessly inventive. As Fleetwood (2020) points out, the economy of the prison brings a relational aspect to any art practice, as materials are traded, hoarded or smuggled. Gathered on the table, the varied materiality of the images speaks of the conditions under which the work was made, including my privilege of accessing higher-grade materials.

The objects speak of status, but they also bring the viewer closer to the embodied experience of co-creators: lying in bed looking up at bedsprings or anticipating the next meal. The group commented on a photograph of a mirror I had taken (Figure 59):

BMB: That's brilliant. That's brilliant.
SW: It's one of my favourite pictures in here.
JP: I'm surprised you were allowed to take pictures of that?
AM: Why are people drawn to that one then?
BMB: I stand there looking at it most days.
JP: It's the way you walk down to the dining hall and you see it pretty much…
SW: …twice a day
BMB: We have to wait at the door to be allowed in. When I check that my hair's OK.
18/04/23

Figure 59: 'Mirror' by Alice Myers

The photograph, already so claustrophobic, now holds a sense of waiting, of never opening a door by yourself. Co-creators wondered at seeing an everyday object transformed into an image. Collectively making meaning from the ordinary could be a powerful experience. Following Perec (2010), this process could be considered political, but it was also poetic: contingent on personal observation and unexpected connections, grounded deeply in a specific context while addressing the universal. It is this poetry, this aesthetic logic, that takes us into para-archival territory.

Co-creators' comments also highlight the fact that I was able to photograph areas that they could not. This is a reminder that control over who sees and who is seen is a key element in the development of the prison system (see Chapter 2.2). Taking photographs which co-creators could not in some ways plays into this system and in other ways questions it.

6.3.1.4 Linking Inside and Outside

Sharing the work externally brought into sharp focus the fact that the camera and I both represent an imagined future audience (see Chapter 2.3.4). This link between the prison and the outside felt especially direct due to the materiality of the prints and the process of direct transposition. The display was made to fit the dimensions of three Learning Centre tables. These dimensions became lost as soon as I arranged the work on art college tables of a different size. Including the outline of the original tables would have emphasised the necessary translation in moving an artwork from one setting to another. Even so, the assemblage existed outside the prison in nearly exactly the same form as it existed inside, giving some insight into our working processes in a way that participants could control.

There are many aspects of the collaboration which are invisible in this work, not least the confrontation that occurred while making it. It is not clear from looking at the artwork what my role was either. More information could be provided, in the form of a transcript of the conversation that accompanied making the collage, but at the time I felt this distracted from what co-creators were trying to communicate with their selection (I later developed this idea, see for example the blue pages of the Portfolio and the tracing paper inserts in the project publication). Photographs contain simultaneously too much and too little information, making them the ideal tool for attempting to understand while acknowledging the impossibility of fully understanding (see Chapter 3.2). Too much information, too many gaps filled in, can give the artificial impression of giving 'the full story'.

I have considered the photographs in this assemblage (Portfolio p.24-5) in terms of trace, gesture and object, each perspective providing a different insight into photography in the prison. As traces, images offer access to contingency that decentres the author. As gestures they draw attention to that author's physical movement and the time they took to make the image. As objects they play a part in the prison economy, highlighting privilege and the embodied experience of co-creators. As objects their significance also changes when brought out of the prison

and placed in a new context. They create a rare, direct link between inside and outside.

6.3.2 Exhibiting in the Prison Garden

A narrower selection of images was exhibited in the gardens during an Open Day and two Visitor Days. This time the selection process was more structured, with each co-creator selecting one first choice, plus a second and third choice that went with it. From this pool I made an edit that included work from everybody whilst fitting various practical requirements. Co-creators then approved my selection and paired up images to be displayed back-to-back.

The studio images discussed above involved many contributors and together formed a coherent series (Portfolio p.27-31). I will focus my discussion on them. Unlike *Work in Progress*, these images contain fewer obvious signs of collaboration, the only clue being the credit line. Still, the playfulness of the images, the sense of spontaneous performance, conveys the atmosphere of the sessions.

In the garden the prints were hung in polytunnels (Portfolio p.36 & 38). In this setting the circles resonate with the curved structures and natural forms around them, but they are also a reminder that the garden is still in a prison, something co-creators were keen to emphasise. After an early garden session I wrote in my notes:

Participants in the first group suggested the contrast between nature and the prison. The disconnect between the two. The escapism of being in the garden but also the fact that you are always aware you are in the prison.

09/05/23

Jetting Out of Here, which appears in *Work in Progress* as a series of three, was suspended in the centre of the largest polytunnel, animated by the rotation (Portfolio p.38). This movement brought with it a sense of duration, the different time scales of photographs and plants and prison sentences. The two images endlessly repeated, a cycle of freedom and loss. *Cup of Tea 4 You and Me* hung on the sandstone wall

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that formerly marked the boundary of the prison, before the garden was added (Portfolio p.36). In this setting it feels like an aperture in the wall, but the hands also become part of the scene: the top one watering the plants, the bottom one catching the water before it reaches the ground.

The Open Days were organised by the prison and I thought taking part would be a good way to show the work to an external audience, especially co-creators' families. The feedback we received was clearly encouraging. JP mentioned seeing the work with his family as a high point of the project and WL commented:

The feedback was great. It's good to see that other people see the talent and not just a bunch of people who have made mistakes.

WL e-mail 18/07/23

Unfortunately, many co-creators did not have family attending and at the last minute the event I had planned to celebrate with them was cancelled. BMB expressed his disappointment:

What's it say about the prison service when we couldn't even be facilitated to see our own displays? Very disappointing. So they're portraying an image – we're doing this and doing that – for the local businessmen and dignitaries and people who were lucky enough to have friends and family visit them on the open day, well personally I didn't… But they're putting a soft edge on things, it's a wee bit sugar coated for the public, and the local people. I think. You're bound to feel that too.

29/08/23

It's impossible to separate out this experience from the work itself. As BMB observes, a collective celebration was transformed into yet another situation of deep inequity. The artwork was co-opted into being decoration for an official event. This was an example of aiming for a situation of equity and failing due to the constraints of the prison. I shared images of the exhibition and feedback received with co-

creators via the Learning Centre noticeboard (Figure 60), but it was a poor substitute.

Figure 60: Documentation of exhibition and feedback cards on the Learning Centre notice board. (Myers, 2023)

This experience made me wonder if the workshops were just raising expectations which would inevitably be disappointed. Or, as BMB notes, just softening public perceptions of the place. The question of 'sugar-coating' had been in the back of my mind as we made the work, particularly as much of it was visually harmonious and thematically optimistic. We discussed this optimism in a review session:

AM: What about that 'softer' side of prison [mentioned by JP]? We've presented quite an optimistic view…
PD: I'm not interested in art but I'm knocked sideways by the work made in this place.
NC: You see a human element
JP: Yeah you can't take our creativeness away from us. It's still there.

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AM: So it feels really true to you?

SP: We're just showing what it's like in here.

<div align="right">*29/08/23*</div>

These responses made it clear that the creativity and hope that comes through in the work were an integral part of co-creators' experience, something that they wanted to communicate to an audience. At this stage the sense of audience was still quite general, including both family and 'members of the public' who had been invited to the open day. This became more specific when the same work was moved to the Visits Room.

6.3.3 Exhibiting in the Visits Room

Whilst installing our second exhibition in the Visits Room (Portfolio p.41-2), my concerns about decoration returned. This work had previously been installed in the garden (Portfolio p.36 & 38), but took on new meanings when transferred to the Visits Room. On the day, an 'incident' meant we could not access the room as scheduled. We therefore discussed together where to install the work and I carried out the plan later that day with the assistance of an officer. The detailed discussion this entailed lead to a carefully considered edit and although we were not in the space, co-creators' lived experience was still essential. This time, possibly due to the experience of the garden exhibition, they were more conscious that their audience was visiting families and there were several images they decided to show in other spaces for that reason. JP's insistence that the work should reassure family members and provide a talking point shows how painful visits can be:

You want never to have a back, negative, niggling question in their head or summat like that. But that sort of helps half answer it or half calm it down in a way. So if someone's struggling with conversation they'll point at that, know what I mean?

<div align="right">*04/10/23*</div>

For him, the artwork should soften the experience of being in the prison for the visitor, while reassuring them that the person they are visiting is engaged in

'purposeful activity'. It also provides something to talk about in a situation where conversation may be strained. While I would previously have thought that being a talking point was a minor, decorative role for an artwork, when chosen by co-creators for the purposes JP outlined, decorating the space takes on a different significance.

Even so, after I installed the work with the help of an officer, I felt that the work lost some of its impact. Some works were in the 'Link Centre' and visitor waiting room. Spread across several spaces the artwork seemed small and *polite*. I was short on time and felt I should stick to the group's instructions so I did not change it. Interestingly, when I arranged for them to see the install and make changes (in my absence, with the art teacher) they too were disappointed. They then changed the layout, indicating a level of ownership over both the space and the work. They moved prints so they were closer together on one wall, increasing their impact. A picture of a reaching hand was moved from the doorway, where it seemed too sad, though unfortunately I only have the art teacher's account of this decision. Now they were able to be there with the work, new insights emerged. NC commented on the fact that the hands in *Clash, Friendship, Blunt Scissors* (Portfolio p.42) were not touching, as he later explained in an e-mail:

My comment about the hands not touching stemmed from the location. At visits other than the initial physical contact at the beginning and end, people do not touch, I thought this was reflected in the photos.

03/11/23

This is a powerful observation, illuminating both the location and the images. Both the space that separates the photographed hands and the space between the chairs laid out in the room become loud with significance.

Although planning an install with co-creators lead to some interesting reflections, this was no substitute for them being present in the space. This experience has implications for future sharing of the work outside the prison where co-creators cannot attend. The fact that I also felt disappointment when I installed the artwork

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could indicate that, after working together for some time, we have a shared sense of the artwork to a certain extent, of what works and what doesn't. Still, I am wary of making assumptions in that regard, and it does not compensate for the insights and developments that will be missed through the absence of the artists.

The careful consideration co-creators gave to this work, and the meanings it had for them (and potentially their visitors, though feedback from them was minimal), took it beyond the decorative. This is a collective intervention that suggests new ways of thinking about both the space and the images. The circular format itself mirrors the black hemisphere of the security cameras mounted on the ceiling, whilst contrasting sharply with the lines and angles of the institution. This is an interstice, in a related but different sense from that meant by Milevska (2019, see Chapter 2.5): a small aperture into the creative, collaborative space that opened briefly in our workshops.

6.4 Summary: The practice of the interstice

I began this research project feeling that it was important for collaborative dynamics and ethical tensions to be accessible to the viewer. On reflection, information on process must be carefully chosen and presented so as not to confuse the messages intended by co-creators or remove the crucial space for the viewer to extend their imagination toward the artists. This chapter therefore begins by accounting for a collaborative process that may not always be visible in the artwork. This process was by no means straightforward, negotiating as it did the restrictions of prison life, stark power differentials and my own uncertainty around my role. That said, moments of meaningful collaboration did take place, based on exchange, keeping ethical questions live, allowing for shifting roles, and honouring the knowledge and expertise of all involved. Feedback from participants also underlines the fact that collaborative work can hold a variety of different meanings and significances for the people involved. Including workshop transcript excerpts in the portfolio (see all blue pages) and project publication (see tracing paper inserts) gives some sense of co-creators' perspectives on this process, without closing down the possible meanings of the work.

In section 6.3 I then discussed the subtle ways in which social dynamics do surface. These can be drawn out by applying the lenses of 'trace', 'gesture', 'object', and 'expanded moment' to the photograph. These perspectives draw attention to, while simultaneously de-centring, the photographic author, a figure who is already complicated in participatory practice. Doing so, in the spirit of the para-archive, creates momentary interstices of different kinds: space for alternative narratives within the photograph, for multiple voices within the artwork, for seeing oppression in 'everyday' surroundings. The finished artworks create a window into the creative space of the workshops, which is itself an interstice.

Bourriaud describes art as a 'Social Interstice': 'a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system' (Bourriaud, 2002). This emphasis on small-scale intervention, on existing 'harmoniously' within the system has earned him criticism (Bishop, 2004; Kester, 2004; Downey, 2007), but in the context of the prison, creating 'other trading possibilities' might make space to imagine alternatives.

For philosopher Simon Critchley, there can be no interstice, no 'outside' that is not immediately 'controlled or policed'. He writes, 'it's not that we can retreat to the interstices, because there are no interstices. The activity or the action is what creates a momentary interstice, a momentary gap.' (Critchley and Hernández-Navarro, 2013, p.38). Also focussing on the fleeting rather than the long-term, Rancière argues that the political potential of 'aesthetic experience' lies in its ability to create 'a rift (écart) with other forms of experience' because 'the loss of destination it presupposes disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations' (2009b, p.73). This disruption makes space for a claim to 'equality' that may 'change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible' (2009b, p.73). In this model, aesthetic experience itself creates the space for alternatives, rather than the explicitly social aspects of an artwork that Bourriaud prioritises (2002)

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What use is an interstice, especially a fleeting one? Not much if it is considered an end in itself, but as a *practice* an interstice may be a valuable beginning. The poet Thomas A Clark (n.d.) writes, 'Imaginative space is not the cul-de-sac of daydreams: it is not a temptation but a practice.' A practice is something ongoing, kept alive through repetition and attention. This could be one way to view the work of Azoulay (2019, 2023), Campt (2017) and S. Edwards (1990), as a commitment to the interstices in images that allow alternative possibilities in. For Campt, the 'quiet but resonant claims to personhood and subjectivity in the face of dispossession' (2017, p.65) that she detects in images are closely linked to the daily survival of black people. It is an urgent aspect of 'black futurity', 'to see possibility in the tiny, often miniscule chinks and crevices of what appears to be the inescapable web of capture' (2017, p.16). Seen in this way, the stakes could not be higher.

In the context of the prison, Baer (2005) describes imprisoned people decorating their cells as an example of de Certeau's 'tactics'. 'Tactics' are fleeting, employed by the powerless against the 'strategy' of the powerful. They 'vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers' (Certeau, 1988, p.37). This is another way to understand the practice I'm describing, 'as a way to manoeuvre within the space of the other' (Baer, 2005). This research project - while it creates and makes use of interstices - cannot be seen as an example of tactics because it requires collaboration with the prison to take place, but the daily ingenuity, creativity and hope practiced by the people I worked with could certainly be described in this way. Co-creators were already experts in the practice and tactics of the creative interstice. They taught me that this is not luxury, not fantasy, but an essential tool for survival. Here AK describes his painting practice:

When I do my painting, it takes me away out of the prison, like especially in 'Flower Tree' I can see the mountains, when I paint I feel like I'm walking in the mountains. All the birds you know, going away to their homes. And I feel like flying in the air. And I put some boats in my painting. And I feel like I am inside the boat on the river.

Painting gives me freedom. I feel like I'm not in the prison, I'm in the trees or the mountains or the water.

<div align="right">

18/04/23

</div>

For PD, the workshops had a similar relationship to imagination and creative control:

In prison, we are subject to many regulations and restrictions - there are limited opportunities to express or exercise freedom. Many prisoners go to the gym to 'escape' and if you forgive the expression 'take back control'. In the same way…I found the sessions on the old camera and time lapse photography utterly fascinating. I hope you can forgive the cliche, but it allowed my imagination to escape the physical boundaries of the jail.

<div align="right">

02/10/23

</div>

Unlike the 'ameliorative' socially engaged art critiqued by Bishop, this approach does not aim to 'rescue' or 'empower' through art. Instead, it engages what is already there. I began the process wondering what role art might play in the prison. This is one answer: given the right conditions, it can create opportunities for the *already occurring* practice of the interstice, and for sharing that practice with an audience. And so I return to the co-creators' expertise. Based on the comments above, acknowledgement of and space for their creativity was an important aspect of taking part.

This chapter has also highlighted many moments when interstices did not open, or quickly closed, due to prison restrictions, or just the daily unpredictability of the environment. One unexpected visual result is the lack of depth in most of the images we created. There is no perspective, no horizon, nowhere to go. Unintentionally, the restrictions are visualised through a restricted view. Co-creators had mixed feelings about this.

JP: Aye…we still were limited to what we could have done [photographed]. We couldn't go in the halls, know what I mean? We couldn't go in the dining hall… It's

not the full story… You couldn't really show, when someone gets in trouble, or what

that's like, know what I mean? Or what it would be like if you do.

…

WL: … the way I feel about it is like the way the prison system makes it out to us that

this is our life now, like in here the outside world doesn't exist …that's why they don't

want us taking pictures of anything outside. And it's like, what happens when they

want to eventually reintegrate us into society?

<div align="right">

01/05/24 (see Portfolio p.10)

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Co-creators wanted audiences to understand the restrictions to their lives, but at the same time, the limitations to what they could picture were a painful reminder of other ways their vision and imagination are constrained. The images we produced may not convey much detail around our interactions, but they do record both prison controls on vision and imagination, and co-creators' practice of the interstice, moments where alternatives become visible.

7 Contributions and Conclusions

Figure 61: 'Kite' (Myers, 2023)

7.1 Contributions

The primary contribution of this research project is to explore methods for turning towards and articulating the challenges of collaborative practice in the prison. *Turning towards* involved placing ethical tensions and awareness of power dynamics at the centre of project planning, dialogue with co-creators and creative decision-making. *Articulating* involved using multiple methods to document and reflect on the collaboration and its challenges. This includes my ethics chapter, along with reflection on roles, key collaborative modes, and how the social surfaces in the aesthetic. Combined, these elements honour the complex nature of the situation. Crucially, each element formed the basis of dialogue with co-creators and their comments fundamentally contributed to my understanding of the collaboration, especially the nuances of what might constitute 'meaningful collaboration' from their perspective. Although not every participatory photography project should be accompanied by a PhD thesis, aspects of this approach will be useful to other artists attempting to account for successes and failures in collaborative practice. In particular, the practice of installing work in-situ, reflecting on roles with co-creators, and the 'ethical framework' I developed - listing questions that remained live throughout the research project - are useful tools for any research and art practice taking place in situations of stark inequity.

The second contribution is an original argument for the potential of collaborations between incarcerated and non-incarcerated artists. Fleetwood (2020), Kelly (2022) and Davis (2016) all articulate the value of aesthetics in prisons as a necessary tool of resistance, not a matter of escapism or decoration. At first, I was unsure if this would apply in a research project instigated by a non-incarcerated artist, due to the challenges and inequalities I discuss in this thesis. In conversation with co-creators, I realised that under the right conditions the workshops opened interstices, temporary spaces where creativity and collaboration can take place, where socially given roles can be questioned and equity can be claimed within an institution that restricts creative expression. Crucially, however, the value of projects like this is in making space for, and making visible, something that imprisoned people are *already* experts in: that is, the daily practice of creativity, hope and aesthetics that is essential for

survival in prison. This is the practice of the interstice. Viewing the process in this way also provides an opportunity to consider what factors support or suppress creative collaboration.

The third contribution is a new way to understand the significance of participatory photography, moving beyond the tendency either to judge the practice according to social and political criteria at the expense of aesthetics, or to overlook the complexities of process when the work is presented to a gallery audience (see Chapter 2.3.1). This research project prioritises the relational, social and institutional aspects of photography, an understanding which has its roots in 1970s community initiatives such as *Half Moon*, becoming more prominent in the last ten years. However, it does not attempt to argue a political point, as in much of the 'community photography' of the time, and it avoids the emphasis on the ameliorative that is still common in participatory practice today, shifting the focus instead to the aesthetic richness of the social dynamics involved. Following Rancière's description of 'politics' (2009a), the political potential of this aesthetic space is in the destabilising of the socially given roles of all involved, not in a project's social benefits, or in its ability to counter media representations with something more 'true'.

Photographic practice in this environment also led to new understandings of visibility and power, as I discuss below. Many of these understandings emerge through aesthetic practice that is both embedded in social conditions and *not reducible to* those conditions (Bishop, 2012, p.12). The view of the prison presented in *The Jessiefield Collection* is nuanced and grounded in everyday experience - and the human actions that determine that experience - unlike the sensationalised, simplistic portrayals of mainstream media that present the prison as a shocking but fixed fact of life. This is an experiment in what Mirzoeff calls '***Counter-visuality***', where 'one tries to make sense of the unreality created by visuality's authority while at the same time proposing a real alternative' (2011, p.485). The result is a polyvocal contribution to the visualisation of prisons and imprisoned people.

7.2 Conclusions

Due to the historical symbiosis of photography and prisons, and the deep inequity between those who are and are not imprisoned (see Chapters 2.2 & 3.1), a specific approach to participatory photography is required. This research project asked: **What new ways of working with photography emerge from the collaborative creation of a photographic archive with imprisoned people?** I knew from my previous experience and from the practices discussed in Chapter 2.5 that participatory photography might have much to offer. But I was also aware of the potential pitfalls and ethical dilemmas that these strategies give rise to.

To address my research questions, I took existing archive images, along with the question of what a prison museum might look like as the starting point for workshops with imprisoned people at HMP Dumfries. I found that both the opportunities and challenges of participatory photography in this context were much greater than I had anticipated. My strategy was to first *turn towards* the challenges in my planning and delivery, and second to test methods for *articulating* those challenges, both through the artwork itself and through multi-layered reflection in my thesis. Campt's argument that photography contains both oppressive and liberatory potential (2017, p.59) formed the foundation of this approach.

My first sub-question helped me to place ethics and power dynamics at the centre of the process: **How does the social and ethical context in which collaborative photography takes place become visible? And what is the aesthetic significance of this visibility?**

I found that the impact of the prison environment on collaborative practice and co-creators' sense of agency was much deeper and more multi-faceted than I had imagined. The impact is obvious, but it is also subtle, permeating all our interactions in ways that are difficult to track. Each method we used, and much of our subject matter, was a response to the practical restrictions of working in prison. In this way the collaboration was also with the institution, and our use of photography did register traces of the wider social space (Azoulay, 2008, see Chapter 2.3.4).

Many social dynamics, especially relating to my role, did not become visible in the artwork in the ways I had imagined. When I was working in Calais (see Chapter 1.2), people demonstrated their refusal of the camera's gaze and articulated their critiques of the project, but at HMP Dumfries, although people remained anonymous, they welcomed the camera as a witness to their lives. Those who did not welcome the project simply did not attend workshops, so refusal did not become visible. I also hoped that transcriptions of conversations around ethical issues would feed into our creative process, but this was not a particular interest for co-creators, or it is possible they did not want to dwell on yet more restrictions, and it seemed that in some cases giving audiences too much information on our interactions would narrow the scope of the work or hijack co-creators' intentions for it.

This is not to say that co-creators did not present critical perspectives, and, as I have discussed, our interpretations of the process often differed in interesting ways. The inclusion of transcript excerpts from workshops in the Portfolio (see blue pages) and project publication (see tracing paper inserts) brings some of these perspectives into conversation with the images in ways that open further possible readings of the work. It is unusual for participatory practice to highlight the nuances of collaboration in this way, and doing so adds to the aesthetic richness of the artwork we made.

Some artworks, such as the studio photographs (Portfolio, p.27-31), are more a distillation than a diagram of collaborative activity. One method that did directly visualise some aspects of process was creating and documenting installations of artworks inside the prison. These assemblages bring together multiple perspectives and juxtapose them with the institutional environment, which becomes part of the work. Arranging work in progress in this way gave co-creators crucial input into the articulation of process, a potential of participatory photography that is under-explored (see Chapter 2.3.4). Polyvocality in this research project sometimes exists in a single image, but more often emerges through combinations of images and text in context.

This brings me to my second sub-question: **What new understandings of photography, power and prisons grow out of this process?** I began with an understanding that power operates in part through controlling what may be seen and who does the seeing (see Chapter 2.2), but that 'undercurrent photographic data' (Azoulay, 2019, p.xvi) may be detected even in situations where the photographer holds most power (S. Edwards, 1990; Campt, 2017; Azoulay, 2019). What emerged was the understanding that *any* use of photography in the prison, even in a participatory project, will unavoidably visualise the surrounding restrictions. In the artwork we made this influence extended beyond *what* was pictured into *how* it was pictured, as the depth of images and angle of view were themselves restricted. The use of only initials to credit the artists is yet another way in which control surfaces. This visualisation of control is one reason to use photography in these environments.

The artwork we made does not only reflect restrictions, but it also opens an 'interstice' within them for other ways of being and seeing. It does so in two main ways. Firstly, the images draw attention to the photograph as both a trace - emanating directly from a referent and therefore containing elements not completely within the control of the photographer - and a gesture, performed by a human being. This focus on trace/gesture may then be extended to the HES archive images we started with. Paying attention to traces, we see the noticeboard marked by years of use, the daily menu on a whiteboard, an iron left out in one corner, all clues to a human presence that the photographer has excluded. Imagining the gestures of the photographer, the time it took to make the work, the movement of their body as they did so, brings their own human presence into the work. Seeing institutional images in this way might, by extension, allow us to see the institution itself as inhabited, maintained, and potentially changeable by human beings. Through photographic methods, a different approach to images of the prison emerges, which yields new perspectives on the institution.

Second, our para-archival process of collecting, generating, and arranging images, proposes an *aesthetic logic* as opposed to the illogicality of the prison. As writer and activist adrienne maree brown states, 'often, when there's no logic, then that's when

you know you're in someone's dream' (maree brown and Tippett, 2022). This recognition allows for the dreaming of alternatives, in this case making use of aesthetics to suggest that there may be knowledge and possibilities beyond the dominant narratives with which we are presented (Davis, 2016, 2003). Rancière also makes the link to aesthetics: 'the ethical ordering of social occupations ultimately occurs in the mode of an as if. The aesthetic rupture breaks this order by constructing another as if' (Rancière, 2009a). Our process, and the artwork we created, could be seen as suggesting multiple 'as ifs'. This is one way of describing what art might *do*, in a performative sense, in this context. This is also a key reason to explore the aesthetic significance of social dynamics as they unfold within a participatory project.

The opportunity to install artwork in the prison, either temporarily or semi-permanently, was entirely determined by the prison authorities and the parameters were set by them in ways that sometimes undermined the value of the research project (see Chapter 6.3). These moments brought the restrictions the prison places on creativity and collaboration sharply into focus, while simultaneously highlighting the role of the workshops, and of our artwork, as creating an interstice for creative activity. This contradiction is detectable in documentation images (Portfolio p.18-9, 22-3, 37-9, 41-2), as the artwork, most of which draws attention to human gesture and agency, contrasts with the setting.

I wrote that projects like this can create interstices 'under the right conditions'. So what are the 'right conditions'? This research project finds that an atmosphere of trust, based on transparent dialogue and detailed attention to both procedural ethics and ethics in practice, helps. This rests on an approach to ethics that is highly situated and assumes mis-understanding in advance. It's also essential to honour what co-creators are already doing, to activate everyone's knowledge, lived experience and creative input, in the spirit of engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994). Installing artwork in-situ was an important part of doing so. Dialogical photography is particularly useful here as it can register traces of the interactions that take place within an interstice, and gives co-creators an opportunity to reflect on how the

practice should be shared with a wider audience. The fact of being in a prison fundamentally restricts all these conditions, which is why the interstice created is only ever momentary, but therefore even more important.

This thesis has focused on the process of making work within the prison, where co-creators were (usually) able to gather in a space. Being together was an important element of the workshops, as this brought out our different experiences and understandings of the place (see Chapter 6.3.3). As discussed, any possibility of an interstice collapsed when this gathering was not possible (see Chapter 6.3.2). Still, the process had always been framed in terms of sharing artwork beyond the prison, in spaces where I could go but co-creators could not. The idea of the work travelling beyond the prison was of great importance to them (see Chapter 5.5.1). In the next stage of the project - not the subject of analysis here - the work will be shown at Cample Line Gallery in Thornhill, a 10-minute drive from the prison (see Appendix 6). A website will be created (for co-creators this is probably the least accessible format of all), the project publication distributed, and, at the suggestion of co-creators, I will negotiate with the prison to place a QR code by the entrance, linking to the work we have made. As NC commented, the work will be 'hidden in plain sight', like the prison itself.

The question of how process surfaces in the artwork when presented in these new contexts, which co-creators are unable to access even if they expressed their preferences beforehand, merits further investigation. Also worth attention is the legacy of a research project like this both for co-creators and the institution. In addition, I am curious to find out what results *beginning* a creative project with deliberate attention to co-creators' existing practice of the interstice would yield.

Documenting and sharing our process gives some afterlife to the fleeting interstices we created. As the prison is a synecdoche for wider society, the work is also a reminder of the importance of creative collaboration beyond the prison, sharing a possibility that T.A. Clark (n.d.) summarises:

'The issue is not transcendence or escape but to realise that we do not confront an objective and final reality, that the means are available, that in any situation there may be intelligence, movement, sufficient light.'

It might seem both too obvious and too romantic to say that everyone is creative, that we need to repeatedly make space for aesthetic practice, for imagining alternatives, to survive. But in the context of the prison, and of the society that sustains prisons, we must make a practice of saying this over and again.

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New project in August
Prisons : Then and Now
How are prisons remembered? Or forgotten?

You are invited to take part in a special project with artist and PhD student Alice Myers.

We will be looking at historic images of HMP Dumfries, then making our own photographs, artworks and writing. There are lots of different ways to take part depending on what you are interested in. You can choose to experiment with old-fashioned photographic techniques or you can focus on writing, history, drawing, collage or digital photography. All materials will be provided.
Everyone is welcome! Sign up via the Learning Centre.

Workshops will run for **two full days** (please attend both days):

Tuesdays 9th and 16th August (LTP)
Tuesdays 23rd and 30th August (STP)

Appendix 2: Project Information Sheet

Note: A large print copy of this information sheet is available on request.

Hello!

My name is Alice, I'm an artist and PhD researcher at Glasgow School of Art. I invite you to take part in a new art-based research project about photography, museums and prisons. The project will involve taking photographs, looking at photographs, lots of talking about ideas, and making new artworks. There are lots of ways to take part, and you can choose how to get involved. This sheet tells you a bit more about the project. Thank you for taking the time to read this!

What is this for?

The aim of the project is to create new artworks in response to historic images related to HMP Dumfries.

I'd like to work with you to create images that challenge stereotypes and present a more complicated picture of prisons and prisoners.

I hope that by documenting and reflecting on the process I can learn better ways to work with photography in prisons, and share that learning with others.

Why have I been invited to take part?

Your perspective, opinions, creativity and knowledge matters. I believe that to challenge stereotypes it's important to give people control over how they are represented.

Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part is entirely voluntary.

You can change your mind and modify or withdraw your consent at any time. Just contact the learning centre or e-mail a.myers1@student.gsa.ac.uk. **Note:** at a certain point in the publication/exhibition processes, it may not be possible to withdraw consent (once a publication has gone to press for example). Despite this, every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate participants' desires to withdraw and to remove or anonymise their contributions to the project where possible.

What will happen if I choose to take part?
You are welcome to take part in whichever way you feel most comfortable. Participation is entirely voluntary. In the workshops, you can choose any, all or none of the following:

Looking at and talking about images, taking, directing or appearing in photographs, collage, experimenting with old fashioned photographic techniques, choosing images for exhibition, creative writing, contributing ideas and helping to shape the project.

With your permission we might choose to audio or video record parts of the workshops, but you will always be notified and given the option to opt out.

What will workshops involve?

Number of Participants: up to 8.

Timings: You are asked to commit to two full-day workshops in August. There will be more workshops happening over the next year and you can choose to sign up for them if you want to.

Activities: You may choose which activities you take part in. These may include looking at photographs, discussing photographs, taking photographs, making artwork, writing.

Materials: All materials will be provided.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

You can choose to be credited with your initials or to remain anonymous.

How is the project being funded?

The project is funded by a Carnegie Trust PhD Scholarship.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The aim is for the work we make to be shown publicly both inside and outside the prison. The work may be publicised on the internet, printed in magazines and newspapers, included in my thesis and shared at conferences. Your choice to be credited with your initials or to remain anonymous will be maintained at all times. The showing of the work will be discussed with you and I will make every effort to keep you informed about this. Not everything we make will be shown publicly, and materials will only be shown with your consent, so if you make something you'd rather not share with anyone else beyond our workshops that's fine. SPS has the final say on whether any visual material may be shown publicly.

In my PhD thesis I will reflect on the workshops, the artwork, and the feedback I receive from you. With your consent I may include images of the artwork we make, and notes, audio and video taken during workshops (with your permission). No identifiable images of you will be included. If you give permission on the consent form, I may use extracts of recordings that include your voice or quotations of things

you have said on recordings. The thesis will be publicly available and I will make every effort to make a copy available to you.

Some of the research data will be confidentially and securely stored by GSA for up to 10 years in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Risks/benefits of participating
It is not anticipated that participating in this study will cause you any disadvantages or discomfort. Should you have any questions please speak to the researcher, Alice Myers.

As this research is being proposed face-to-face there is a risk of Covid-19 transmission. In planning for this research, I have completed a risk assessment that includes Covid-19 however a risk will still remain.

Please let me know at any time if there is anything I could do to make you feel safer or if you ever want to reschedule or withdraw your participation.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details or via the learning centre staff. Questions are very welcome!

██████████████████

Alice Myers
School of Fine Art
Glasgow School of Art, 167 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G3 6RQ

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact GSA using the details below for further advice and information:

Dr. Nicky Bird
School of Fine Art
Glasgow School of Art, 167 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G3 6RQ

████████████

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research. Please keep this sheet for future reference.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

(please note large print copies are available on request)

		Initials
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered.	
2.	I agree to being **photographed** anonymously as part of the research. These photographs will be publicly available in publications, presentations, exhibitions, websites, social media, reports or dissertations. I understand I will not be identifiable in these photographs.	
3.	I agree to being **filmed** anonymously as part of the research. This footage will be publicly available in publications, presentations, exhibitions, websites, social media, reports or dissertations. I understand I will not be identifiable in these videos.	
4.	I agree to being **audio recorded** as part of the research. These recordings or transcripts will be publicly available in publications, presentations, exhibitions, websites, social media, reports or dissertations. This could include recordings where my voice is heard. Any identifying details will be removed.	
5.	I agree that **artwork and writing** made by me as part of this project may be exhibited publicly, published in journals, newspapers or any other media, including websites and social media, reports or dissertations. As the creator of these artworks I hold the copyright in them. Where artworks are created collaboratively copyright may be held jointly. Later in the project I will be invited to sign a license permitting Alice Myers to use the artwork I have made for specific purposes.	
6.	Where I have given consent for questions 2-5 I agree to these materials being used for *future* research or teaching purposes.	
7.	I agree to take part in the above study. My participation is entirely **voluntary** and I understand that I can **withdraw or modify** consent at any time.	
9.	I am happy to be **contacted** about this project and agree that my personal contact details can be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.	
10.	List any further conditions you would like to make here (continue on back):	

My full name is on this form but it will not be used publicly. I will be credited with my initials or can choose to remain anonymous.

Please credit me as follows:……………………………

_____   _____   _____
Name of participant   Date   Signature

Alice Myers
_____   _____   _____
Researcher   Date   Signature

Contact details:

Alice Myers, School of Fine Art, Glasgow
School of Art, 167 Renfrew Street, G3
6RQ

████████████████████████

Please list any modifications to this consent form:

Date	Describe what you would like to change:	Initial

Appendix 4: Licence Agreement

I have been participating in the project **Prisons, Then & Now**, devised and facilitated by Alice Myers as part of her PhD research.

I have created artworks, which could include drawings, photographs, collage, video or audio. This artwork is listed on the List of Works. **I own these artworks and keep the copyright to them**. In some cases, I own these artworks **jointly** with the people I made them with. Details of joint ownership are noted on the List of Works.

How my artwork will be used

By signing this form, I give permission (I hereby grant license) to Alice Myers to use my original artworks and images of my artworks for the following purposes connected with the project:

Public exhibitions - both inside and outside the prison.
Websites and social media which may be accessed by anyone.
Presentations of research at publications and conferences.
Entry into competitions and festivals.
Promotional materials connected to the project, both printed and digital.
Publication in magazines, newspapers and books.

This license is given free of charge and does not have a time limit. It can be passed on to someone else, such as a magazine or book publisher (the license is fee-free, royalty free and includes the right to grant sub-licenses). **I understand that I can change my mind and revoke this license at any time by contacting Alice.**

It will not always be possible to withdraw materials that are already in the public domain, but work will not be shared further if I have withdrawn my permission.

I have noted on the List of Works attached to this license agreement what titles and/or captions I would like to accompany my works. This information will always be accessible when the images are shown publicly.

I have read and approved the notes **on the back of this form.**

How I will be credited

Although my full name is on this form, I will only be credited with my initials or can choose to remain anonymous. My full name will not be shared publicly.

Please credit me as follows:…………………………..

I understand that this form will be kept securely by Alice Myers and the Glasgow School of Art in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Alice Myers
Researcher   Date   Signature

School of Fine Art
Glasgow School of Art, 167   ████████████████
Renfrew Street, G3 6RQ

Considerations

I have made a note on the List of Works attached to this license agreement of any artworks I do not wish to include, and I have shared my decisions with Alice Myers. I understand that not all my artworks will be shown publicly as part of this project.

Once the work has been made public, I understand that Alice Myers and the Glasgow School of Art will not be able to control who sees it.

Where possible, Alice Myers will follow my directions, or the decisions made by the group about the presentation of artworks. It may be necessary for some changes to be made (for example when adapting the work to show online or in print). It will not always be possible to notify me of any changes but every attempt will be made to do so. The work will never be changed with the intention of altering its meaning.

Alice will make every effort to inform me of how and where the work is being used. However I do understand it may not always be possible to do so.

As the owner of the work, I am free to use it however I wish. In cases where copyright is shared, I will need to seek permission from the other copyright holders. I understand that I retain the 'moral rights' to the work (the right to be identified as the author and to object to specific uses not detailed in this license).

After discussion as a group, we have decided that in the unlikely event that this project results in any monetary gain, the funds should be donated to:

Design a Museum....

Imagine you have unlimited money and resources to create a prison museum. Answer the following questions about it:

1) What is the name of your museum?:

THE PANOPTICON
" PUTTING YOU AT THE CENTRE OF LEARNING!

2) What are the top three priorities of your museum?

(choose three from the words below or add your own)

1) RAISING AWARENESS

2) ENTERTAINMENT

3) EDUCATION

Storytelling?

Art creation?

Documentation?

Education?

Awareness raising?

Preservation?

Commemoration?

Research?

Entertainment?

What does your museum contain?

(choose from the list or add your own)

Photographs? ✓
Objects? ✓
Sounds? ✓
Smells? ✓
Documents? ✓
Maps? ✓
Anything else?

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
FILMS
DEBATING CHAMBER

Who is invited to visit your museum? Why?

Answer:

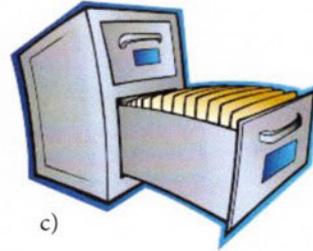EVERYONE - ALL INCLUSIVE

What form does your museum take and why?
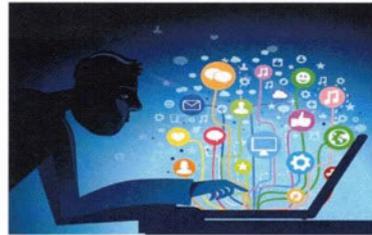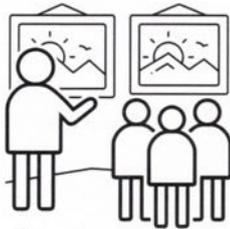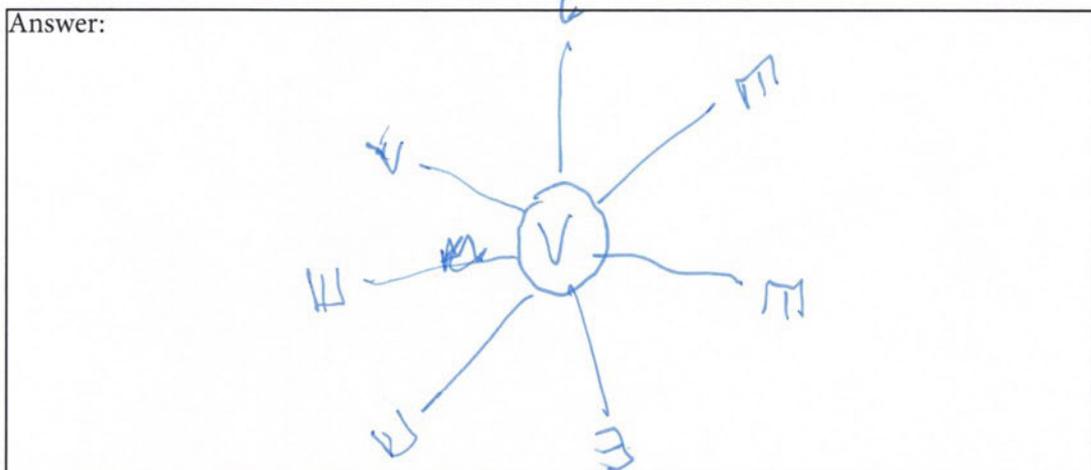(choose one or more from the options below or add your own ideas)
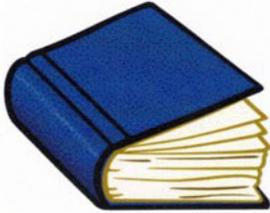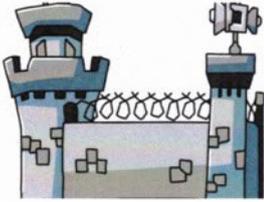
a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

g)

h)

Answer:

Where is your museum and why?
(choose from the options below or add your own ideas)

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

Cafe

g)

Answer:

Cafe is the best place because everyone likes eating. It is a place, where enjoy eachother's company and have fun.

Appendix 6: Project Timeline

September 2021- August 2022	Contextual Research Archival Research Exhibition of *Commonplace* at Stove Café Preliminary visit to HMP Dumfries Art Class Ethics Approvals Research permissions from SPS Project Planning
August 2022	**Phase One** Workshops - **Initial Conversations**
September 2023- February 2023	**Phase Two** Workshops - **Exploring**
February 2023	Exhibition in Visits Room
March 2023	Share Work in Progress at Glasgow School of Art
March 2023- July 2023	**Phase Three** Workshops - **Resolving** (Preparing for exhibition in Prison Gardens)
July 2023	Exhibition in Prison Gardens
August 2023- September 2023	**Phase Four** Workshops - **Reflecting**
September 2023	Relocation of exhibition work to Visits Room
September 2023- June 2024	**Phase Four** (Continued) Ongoing contact via mail and e-mail Planning external exhibition opportunities Two sessions in May 2024 to get feedback on exhibition plans, publication design, website design and thesis conclusions Planning exhibition at Cample Line
July - September 2024	**Phase Five:** **Further dissemination & future directions** Exhibition opens at Cample Line Launch Website Share publication, website and exhibition documentation with participants.