

goldsmiths:
anthropology dept.

dave lewis



GARP, Goldsmiths Anthropology Research Papers, seeks to broaden the frontiers of the discipline and to engage critically and creatively with the traditions of anthropology in the contemporary world. This project was made possible through a Visiting Research Fellowship in the Anthropology Department of Goldsmiths College. I would like to thank all the undergraduates as well as the now long gone post-graduates and of course the lecturers (most of whom still currently teach in the department) for their help and understanding with this project.

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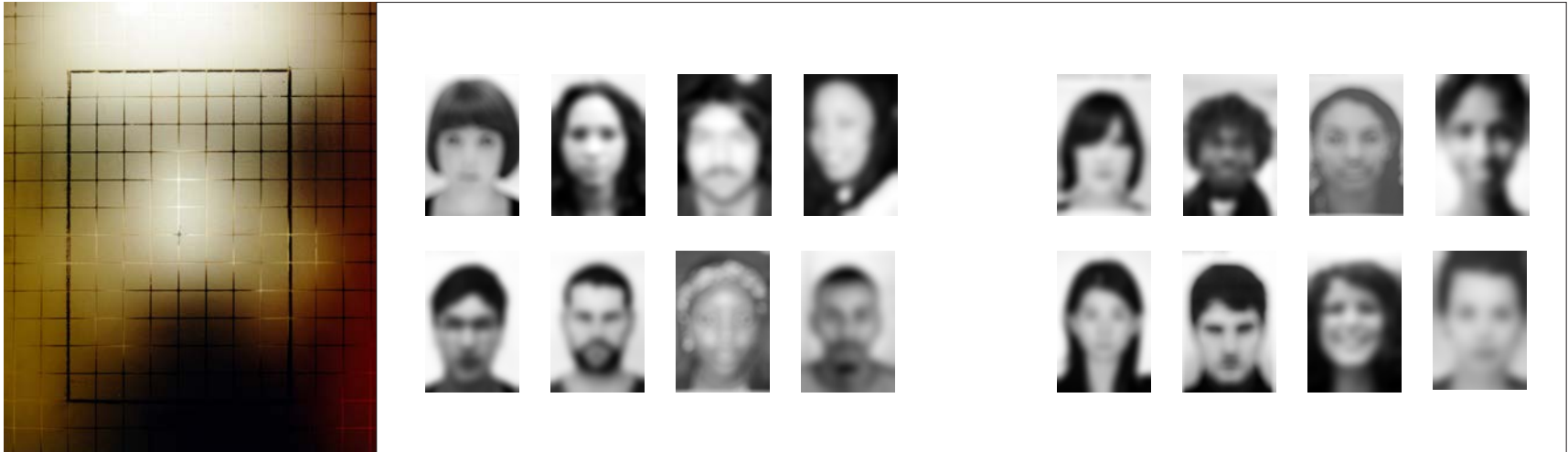
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introduction



Left: Pitt Rivers Museum, School of Museum Anthropology and Ethnography, University of Oxford, 1995. Dave Lewis

Right: Undergraduate students, anthropology department, Goldsmiths College. 2008. Dave Lewis

The photographs in this publication represent my ongoing investigations into visual practices within anthropology. My approach to the working context has been to take an interdisciplinary approach, which incorporates research around art, film, cartoons, figurines and vernacular artifacts for example, collectible gollies - negrobilia - with a view to developing my own discursive practices using photography. Because my background is as an artist - photographer rather than an anthropologist, my approach to the visual in anthropology is tangential and experimental. This essay seeks to unpick my practices and gain new insights that can hopefully facilitate new and explorative projects in the future.

My research in the 19th century photographic archives of Oxford and Cambridge University, and Imperial College, London, provided an initial collection of images to begin the process of critical reflection about how archival images can be re-contextualised and re-animated – brought to life – in order to comment on the continuing links between race, representation and the post-colonial subject.¹ An example of this re-contextualisation is the

photograph Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (1995) (see next page). In this image I montaged a portrait of a Southern African warrior and the wooden filing cabinets that house archived images of people and landscapes from around the world in previous centuries. A ‘constructed’ image approach provided an opportunity to consider the possibilities for reanimating the contents of the archive in order to dis-assemble/re-assemble representations of the black body. I believe that this act defies the archive’s notions of wonderment and the casual, non-critical gaze of the observer. It was important that I made a visual statement – an argument – about the observer’s casual gaze because it stands in opposition to the overpowering rational and absolutist scientific position that historically subsumes all other potential readings and importantly, from my perspective, enables ways in which to consider the archive and its contents *as if looking back at myself displaced*, and not solely as a depository of classified historic images.

In my experience access to, and photographing within, the archive has sometimes been difficult. The archive has its guardians and its own disciplinary and specialised language revealed by the systematised descriptions and codified meanings. Platt (2012) states: “...an archive, strictly speaking, is the set of remaindered files and documents which have been selected as worth preserving...”. These documents are housed in buildings that immediately present to the visitor a sense of hallowed space as one steps softly and quietly within the shelved landscape. This space becomes the first territory of appropriation, and the first battle – not with the aim of destruction but rather a re-ordering. The most radical position of which is the post-colonial subjects’ authority (mine) to re-define an archive collection and make manifest the charged significance of this act of re-ordering in relation to the black contemporary subject (me again). The visualization of the black body and its presence within the archive – its socio-historical, political and geographic contexts – engaged my research and practice with ways in which I could ‘confront’ accepted interpretations and meanings of the black body in this academic space. This position forces a doubling of approaches: firstly, as a practitioner/researcher analyzing the archived black subject; secondly, as the contemporary re-embodied black subject looking-back-on-himself. There is therefore a constant (re)framing of the photographed subject, and observation of the subject *at the same time*. This is a kind of doubling effect – developing multiple and complex narratives that co-exist and run parallel to each other. This ‘at the same time’ approach – a conscious practice – is an essential part of my methodology that provides a premise, rationale and objective in which I can reflect upon different positions simultaneously. However Haraway (1988) arguably contests my own position:

“A commitment to mobile positioning and to passionate detachment is dependent on the impossibility of entertaining innocent “identity” politics and epistemologies as strategies for seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated in order to see well. One cannot “be” either a cell or molecule – or a woman, colonized person, labor, and so on – if one intends to see and see from these positions critically. “Being” is much more problematic and contingent. Also, one cannot relocate in any possible vantage point without being accountable for that movement. Vision is always a question of the power to see-and perhaps of the violence



Haddon Photographic Collection, Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1995. Dave Lewis.

implicit in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted?”

This would seem to indicate a looking towards and taking account of the variability and weakness of ‘self-defined’ positions within the framing of identity politics.² However, in my practice I consciously adopt many positions, using this as a way to renegotiate what Haraway calls the ‘God trick’. This I feel is one of the challenges to visual anthropology, to the ‘subjugated’ i.e. to split open the disciplinary body’s language(s), text(s) and vision(s), to look back at the Empire’s empirical gaze and confront it from many different positions. To go against this seems to me to refute the possibilities of multiplicity and polyphony and return to essentialist identity politics.

“...positioning is, therefore, the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision, and much Western scientific and philosophic discourse is organized in this way. Positioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices”
(Haraway, 1988)

The question that remains, however, at least for myself, is how this re-positioning can influence my own lens-based practice? Aïm Düelle Lüski has offered a possible resolution to this question. His photographic project concerns ‘horizontal photography’ and is premised on constructing cameras that offer multiple and alternative viewpoints eschewing the classic tradition of a single viewpoint ‘perspective’. Lüski explores the scopic regimes of modernity and their power to shape identities and civil rights. His project is a reminder that power is at its most powerful when it is invisible. By exploring the unexplored possibilities of the photographic apparatus he shows that the perspectival arrangement of space in an ordinary photograph is a form of ideology that reinforces the status-quo of social relations. Another practitioner, Whitlock (2014) deconstructs the taken for granted perspectival system premised in painting, photography, architecture and ‘reality’. He also analyses the power that this system affords those who invest - and are invested in - to maintain the ‘natural order’ of things. He demonstrates what alternative, non-perspectival images can look like and how (for the purposes relevant to my own project within visual anthropology) this approach can be used to question the work of pictorial representation.

Applying the approaches of practitioners such as Lüski and Whitlock within the field of visual anthropology can be seen as experimental. Can we use these approaches to draw out knowledge from such aesthetic practices? I would argue that these approaches to eliciting information from new works in photography and/or film can provide us with a resonance and expressivity that would otherwise be lost with a straightforward documentary approach.

In 1998 Wright suggested in ‘The Third Subject’ that: “...anthropological content is often defined as precisely that which takes precedence over, and is the polar opposite of aesthetics.” Whether this is still true two decades later and still applies to work that has been produced under the umbrella of visual anthropology would be interesting to explore. In terms of my own practice it

was exactly the point to raise the value of aesthetic/experimental practices as a vital contribution to, not a negation of, anthropological or ethnographic readings. An acceptance of multiple positions, to stand and listen to different voices from different places, affords a variety of perspectives on an equal basis albeit with contrasting notions of self, group or place. Diane Lewis (1973) claims that:

‘The notion of a single valid, objective knowledge must be replaced with that of a “perspectivistic knowledge”, a knowledge which is partial and which views reality from the particular existential position occupied by the observer. This partial view of reality is not nonobjective; it only becomes so when it is accepted as the total reality”.

My way of producing lens-based projects seeks to explore research methods in visual practice(s), but is now also underwritten by an *ethnographic turn* – one in which my practice is engaged in a different way. The premise of my work around race and representation is concerned with anthropological conceptions of data, information, and knowledge. It is a process that treats my photographs – especially in terms of the **goldsmiths: anthropology dept.** project – as an experiment in how images can be read under the umbrella of visual anthropology. This process also questions the importance of *intention* within the discipline. That is, the deliberate and conscious decision to produce photographs or film within the suggested parameters of the discipline – as opposed to *conveying* photographs or film originally made for and within other genres into the visual anthropology, for example vernacular photography.

background



Jayne Ifekwunigwe teaching in an anthropology class, University of East London, 2006. Dave Lewis

In my earlier project, **University of East London**, the focus of inquiry was the *site of learning*, the university, where students were taught and learned to be anthropologists. In fact it was the questioning of what happened in these brick buildings that inspired the photographic project as an attempt to depict students who studied anthropology, alongside the teachers of the discipline. At the time the question at the forefront of my mind was: why did students want to study a discipline which (in my view) had contributed significantly to racist representations, especially of the black body? I was given the opportunity to address this question – at least in terms of photography – through access to classrooms, corridors and the wider university setting. The photographs weave together students, academics, the university and *place* through a literal and metaphoric stepping ‘back and away’. The university is seen as a site of production in which discipline specialists do their work removed from the everyday realities of the local population; perhaps not unlike archivists. In a wide-ranging dissection of the purpose of universities, Collini (2012) writes about the ideals of the university and competing perceptions of its use and value within society and states that:

‘audiences’: “...are rather susceptible to the romance of ideas and the power of beauty; they want to learn about far-off times and far-away worlds; they expect to hear language used more inventively, more exactly, more provocatively [...] they want to know that, somewhere, human understanding is being pressed to its limits, unconstrained by immediate practical outcomes. These audiences are not all of one mind, needless to say, and not all sections of society are equally well represented among these audiences.”

The significance of the earlier **University of East London** photography project for **anthropology dept.** centres around the reflexive moment; a questioning of the validity of my practice-research being *situated* within a nexus of race, practice, university and urban environment, in the ‘here and now’.³ This reflexivity allows me to speak – I believe anthropologically – about a range of sometimes subtle, at other times blatant, affects on the (black) body. Stewart (2007) has called these impacts after the title of her book,

'*Ordinary Affects*': the agency of the human to affect and be affected by their environment. Its interpretation in my work has meant reflection on how the urban environment enforces *white bodies* (both human and institutional) as *the key reference point* in which the black experience is and has been read and understood. This can manifest itself in Euro-American academic canons with the 'dead white males' references and reading lists as well as having 'affects' outside the university, for example, being six times more likely to being stopped and searched if black.

I found myself asking if visual anthropology can use its site, that is the site of production, to make a comment about itself? I'd like to think that, while the importance of this question laid the foundations for my later investigations, it was only after I began to make images for **University of East London** that I could begin to unpack and visualize what I eventually wanted to 'say' in the



University of East London. The University of East London (old site) is located behind trees in the background. Dave Lewis

goldsmiths: anthropology dept. photographs. I would also add that there is, perhaps unavoidably, a Eurocentric understanding of what knowledge(s) and culture(s) actually is, and comprises.

Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) states:

"...belief in the idea that benefitting mankind is indeed a primary outcome of scientific research is as much a reflection of ideology as it is of academic training [...] many researchers simply assume that they as individuals embody this ideal and are natural representatives of it when they work with other communities".

Concerns about the authority of visual anthropology (and in turn my own practice) to interpret, describe and produce *representations of some thing* are vitally important if we are to consider the ramifications of a visual anthropology from the 'others' perspective; a perspective that counter-acts, in terms of what is important in the *here and now*.

But what and whose truth is important here – the visual anthropologists or the subject's? Reflecting on *my own practice* I now understood the subject(s) in front of me as already enframed within many representations: the colonial subject, the archive, the black student, the researcher, the post-modern , amongst many other positions. My response suggests a body of photographs that are stripped of meaning to provide a perceptual challenge through withholding different types of data at different points (facial recognition, contexts, place names) and thereby side-stepping any easy anthropological interpretation or enframing of the subject. The project would seem to become more complex especially as I was deliberately working against some of the pleasures of looking at photographs, and trying to emphasise the labour of eliciting data. Diane Lewis (1973) writes:

"As Rozak (1969: 217-22) has noted, the process of objectively studying others involves the treatment of those studied as things, as objects toward which there can be no (scientifically) justified sense of involvement. Since objectification of the other requires alienation from him, it requires the observer to separate his inner self from the outer world of the observed".



anthropology dept. Heston House, Tanners Road, London SE6. Dave Lewis

In terms of where *I'm coming from and going to*, Lewis' quote mirrors the double-consciousness of the 'The American Negro' defined by Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). For this project the idea of separating oneself from oneself in order to be 'objective' is never straightforward or without complication. The subject is always making some kind of response to the photographer and vice-versa - this is never neutral.⁴ In each section of **goldsmiths: anthropology dept.** I see my own self: as an undergraduate and postgraduate student; a lecturer; a local resident; and also reflexively, as the photographer and visual anthropologist. Hall (2007) states that:

"But this experience of, as it were, experiencing oneself as both subject and object, of encountering oneself from the outside, as another – an other – sort of person next door, is uncanny. [...] And I want just to draw from that experience a first thought about thought. I think theory – thinking, theorising – is rather like that, in the sense that one confronts the absolute unknowingness, the opacity, the density, of reality, of the subject one is trying to understand. It presents itself, first, as both too multifarious and too complicated, with its patterns too hidden; its interconnections un-revealed. One needs the act of distancing oneself – as Lacan would say – from the place of the other'.

The future will see if I am classified as a visual practitioner/anthropologist who happens to be black or a black visual anthropologist. In terms of endeavour the former description should work without contention. However, until I become 'accredited' (this usually by PhD), proving my 'credentials' through the demands of field work, writing up, eliciting an endorsed methodology... I suppose what I am really saying is it's equally important how anthropology understands me.

Sperber (1985) argues that: "Ethnographers maintain a fiction according to which all the representations synthesized in their interpretations are genuine and truthful descriptions kindly provided by the people whom they call, off-handedly and rather naively, 'informants'".

Again, attention needs to be given to the basis on which representations are put forward as authoritative. This is not the straightforwardness of a photographic representation, but rather a representation of 'some thing' based on where the visual anthropologist is coming from rather than where she is at, or, indeed, where she is going.

The pictures in this GARP publication have a clear intention to respond to the purposeful representations that anthropology declares.⁵ Concepts of



projects. The degree of this collaboration is however, arguable and speculative. Clifford (1986) notes that:

“There is [...] the mutual, dialogical production of a discourse, of a story of sorts. We better understand the ethnographic context as one of the cooperative story making that, in one of its ideal forms, would result in a polyphonic text, none of whose participants would have the final word in the form of a framing story of encompassing synthesis—a discourse on the discourse”. (my emphasis)

Hiraku Toda, MA postgraduate student, Goldsmiths College, 2008. Dave Lewis.

multiplicity and reflexivity figure here. I am a student at the same time as being a teacher at the same time as being a researcher at the same time as being an informant at the same time as looking back at myself as an artist as I make these photographs critiquing my practice. And whilst anthropologists might accept the written documentation of multiplicity or polyvocality, it seems the subject-discipline is less happy with *multiple* perspectives of meaning in visual works.

My experiences under the umbrella of visual anthropology had initially led me to believe that it is the photographer who has the final authorial voice. Photographs and the contexts in which they are taken are ascribed to me in the first instance: not to any kind of collaborative effort. However, I would say that there is a necessary collaborative premise to all visual anthropology

the photographs

“We recognize that art and anthropology have both been active in criticizing and extending their own boundaries, but they still involve broadly defined ways of working, regular spaces of exhibition, and sets of expectations. In some cases differences between the two have more to do with the exhibition sites and strategies – with finished products, rather than intentions or practices. Certainly, these dramatically influence the kinds of dialogues and audiences that are possible”. (Schneider and Wright, 2005)

The first section of photographs in this publication are the re-photographed identification cards of undergraduates who have enrolled on the anthropology course in previous years. With these photographs I wanted to communicate both a quantitative feel for the numbers of students and also make a comment about photographs as evidence of presence using the departments own student enrollment files as an archive. This type of documentation is a cornerstone in both histories of photography and of anthropology since the earliest days of photographic reproduction. Whilst I was copying these photo-identification cards, I recalled the banks of colonial photographs in the archives I visited at various academic institutions and also, classic photographs such as ‘Penny picture displays’ (1936) by Walker Evans and the systematic documentation of executed individuals during Cambodia’s Pol Pot regime as written about by Linfield (2010).

I was interested in how photographs can be classified in a number of different ways for different purposes. I wanted to disable the use of these images as identification *evidence* by blurring faces, making it unclear who the individual actually was/is and ultimately, to question how much we can really know, cite as knowledge based on visual data and information about these individuals. The blurring of the image is to test this notion; it is also to question the ‘knowing’ of our methods of visual data elicitation that come into play when

we accept what we see as truthful information that can be made into knowledge. Without putting waste to a history of valued and valuable research, what I hope becomes clear is that identification images – and by extension imagery as a whole – in any context are not as neutral as we may want to believe. Seen together these student images play with the idea of looking at someone who *may* be a specific person – but one is not absolutely certain – and this idea of ‘looks like..’ or ‘could be..’ makes readings uncertain and potentially false.⁶ To my mind this has clear ramifications for how and who decides what these images are and the context in which they should be read. As a simple experiment it would be clear that if these photographs were to have a series of numbers underneath our interpretation of them would be read differently – and in different ways.⁷

Extending this approach of disrupting the meanings of the image, the portraits of the post-graduates represent individuals with whom: I went to lectures and seminars with; had disagreements; got to know their countries of birth; where they lived, what they planned to do next; and how they earned a living. None of this is shown or alluded to in the photographs with either symbols or artifacts. The point was to *strip* them of any reference or allusion to an identity - making their faces ‘unknown’ in a different way from the undergraduates photographs. The students are of course different in terms of facial features and skin tones – even though the images are shot in black and white – which adds another sense of unknowing. This sense of unknowing can disturb the viewer who naturally seeks to elicit as much information as they can. Whether a person is light skinned or dark, has straight or curly hair, a broad or straight nose, all have deep historic meanings in the minds-eye of the viewer whether they are observing in a professional capacity or not. A recently copied photograph of my own grandfather was challenged by my brother, “...he wasn’t that dark, his skin was much lighter.” This ‘lightness’, although ‘hued’, is highly significant amongst the Caribbean population. It designates difference and has been popularly construed as a signifier of



A recent copied photograph of my grandfather was challenged by my brother: "... he wasn't that dark, his skin was much lighter."

wealth, lineage and having better life-chances: often all together. Although I'd doubt the absolute truth of this (I have light-skinned relations who are far from wealthy), the resonance of being 'light and damn near white' remains a powerful one.

None of these photographic portraits – like all the portraits in this publication – are labelled with names (but are listed alphabetically at the end of this publication). This is deliberate. I do not want the reader to know, for the purposes of this research project, who these students are. Not being allowed

an immediate form of identification allows the reader to reflect on how accompanying information and labels can be authoritative and misleading – depending on who is looking and their purposes – at the same time. I have made these students wear white tops. Using clothes that were mid-grey or even a range of colours would have implicated an unintended *meaning*.

The premise of having the students wear all white is because my research through archive collections somehow testified to *whiteness*, as a colonial colour; an exaggerated and symbolic sign of supremacy which works in plain and obvious opposition to photographs of black peoples who have, 'naturally', no names. This type of imagery is embodied by the self-posed photographs of Malinowski in his white garb in his Trobriand Islands photographs that Taussig (2009) speaks of in 'What colour is the sacred?' This whiteness is of course a visual metaphor for the colonial rule of defined geographies and historical periods. When these images of the post-graduates are seen together on an exhibition wall what surfaces (within the context of anthropological readings) is that whiteness is as much an important element in the photographs as their unknown faces.

The portraits are shot with the same medium format camera and lens, in the same room on a plain background, counteracting the strict body positioning in service of the measuring devices that served anthropology's 'scientific endeavour', the anthropometric photographs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than make this metaphor obvious, say by including any kind of tool that is designed to measure, I wanted to show a more subtle, and contemporary approach. Anthropometry is underscored by ideas of collecting, research and interpretation: who is doing it, why and for what purpose? Smith (1999) writing about research of the Maori culture in New Zealand speaks of the dubious benefits of research by those who see themselves as 'natural representatives' of scientific research – too well academically trained to serve another's ideological interests:

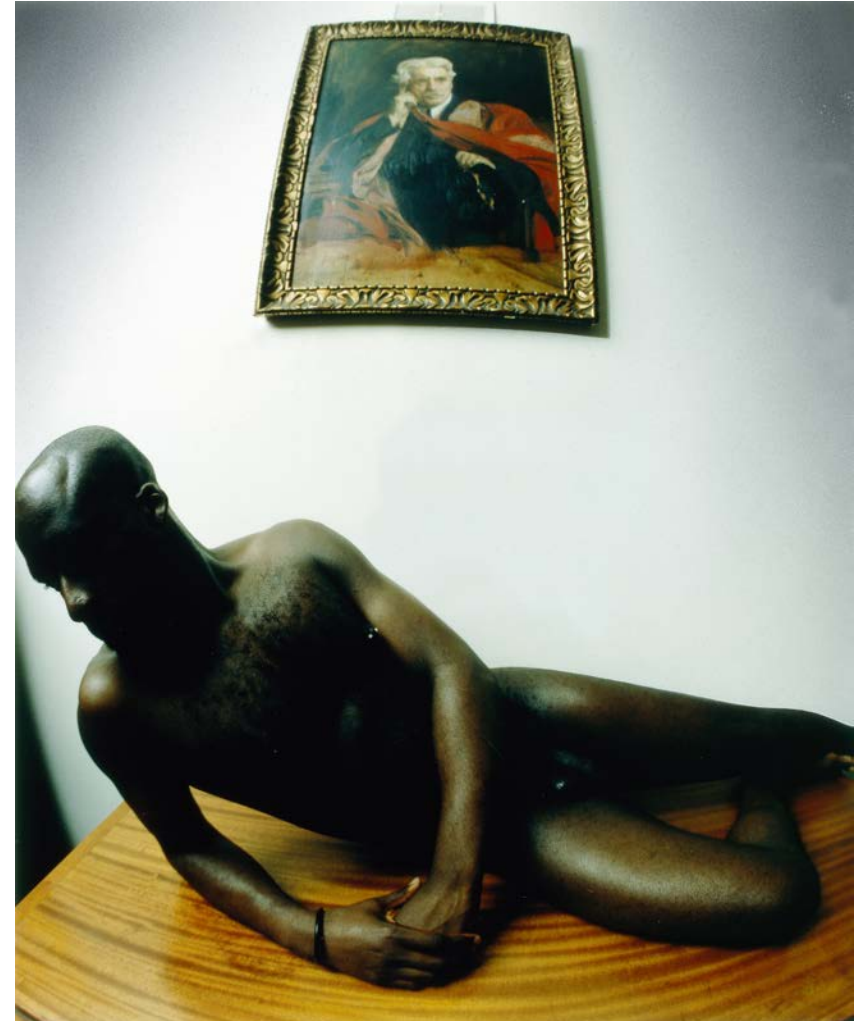
"The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity. Just knowing that someone measured our 'faculties' by filling the skulls of our

ancestors with millet seeds and compared the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who and what we are. It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that it is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us”.

My *intent* was to encourage the reader to reflect on the nature and connotations of ‘whiteness’ as a powerful symbol and at the same time disrupt this within a contemporary visual discourse. As a photographer I understand the composite nature of the colour white that all other colours feed into - as theory. But I also understand white from a position of being black, as coded-colour in human form, as a potential threat even in its tanned or bronzed versions. When making these images it became apparent that I was playing out and reversing the scenario in which I photographed both under-graduates and post-graduates, as if I was turning (the ethnographic turn) the camera lens back onto the professional field-worker which led to photographing the lecturers of the discipline.

The third section looks at the teachers of anthropology. It wasn’t only important that I reversed the focus of intention but also to think about reflexivity again.⁸ There is also an attempt to play with ideas of ‘confrontation’ with the anthropologist. Consequently, none of the lecturers are looking directly into the camera and therefore they avoid direct confrontation with the gaze of the viewer. This was not meant as a test to see whether these professional anthropologists would be compliant as the subject of the anthropological gaze⁹ (although it did cross my mind...) but rather as the *act of looking back at the classifying gaze*. I would suggest that it is the ‘*manufacturing*’ of the subject or site that is being contemplated. This looking around ties in with the images of the outside of the university in the final section. We are also thinking about looking around (in our mind’s eye) because we too are questioning what it is that these lecturers are looking at and what constructions of knowledge will be brought to bear through *their focus*.

I think these images are interesting because looking at the gaze without the gaze looking back at you is the most powerful of positions. It allows us to question whether the subjects of field-work research ever really get a fair say



Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1995. Dave Lewis

in the final telling, whether that be writing, film, photographs or sound. Lévi-Strauss (1966) suggests that the subject look at the anthropologist so that “each in turn will get the upper hand. And since there will be no permanent privilege, nobody will have ground to feel inferior to anybody else.” Perhaps in the end no anthropological text or image can claim to present a complete unabridged version. And what would be the complete picture anyway? Can anthropologists or ethnographers be said to deliver full disclosure and is this even possible? Do we, like Malinowski, have two accounts: an ethnographic one and a personal diary? From the disciplines point of view, what was said in relation to what was meant and then recorded is the stuff of deep anthropological inquiry into itself. In terms of a visual practice a lot can be open to interpretation. The reading of images in my opinion is fraught with difficulties because of what’s missing from the picture (there needs to be a bordered frame at some point); or what is alluded to (is this ever correct and how does one know?); never mind the explicit or implicit intentions of the photographer. I would argue that it is the institutional and academic weight that these lecturers bring to working with images within visual anthropology that is key here. Taussig (2009) writes in *What Color is the Sacred?*: “It would take decades of anticolonial struggle and of postmodern reformation of anthropology for *reversal of the gaze* to become a strategy, albeit short lived, of cultural self-awareness and self-analysis...”

The last section of paired photographs taken within the university confines seeks to portray the discursive nature of anthropology: lectures, seminars, tutorials and note taking. It is visualised as *presence within absence*: the picturing of lecturers empty rooms where, in effect, these learning and teaching processes occur. With this obvious absence there is a focus on *things*. There are leather chairs and chairs with patterned cloth; books and recording equipment, personal objects not associated with teaching but just with lecturers being in this purposed space. In some rooms there is very little around because anthropology lecturers are (perhaps by definition) transient beings: they are on sabbatical; doing field work; writing up their notes. In effect these pictures represent the institution as incorporating the business of anthropology. These photographs can then be understood as places where lecturers teach their ‘younger selves’ in the ways of anthropology inquiry and discipline, the way to do this discipline, investigating conventional and experimental ways of practice. Interestingly Schneider/Wright state that:

“The role of experiment is still largely relegated to a historical pantheon of established ‘maverick’ anthropologists (such as Michel Leiris, Gregory Bateson, and Jean Rouch), rather than an actively encouraged and valued facet of anthropological training.”

Whether my own experience at this particular site of learning supports this point of view is arguable. I felt that only when text-mongers took aim at visual anthropology – usually after the word ‘data’ was mentioned – that the experimental and unconventional in the visual became problematic when evaluated against classic concepts such as Geertz’s (1973) ‘thick descriptions’ for example. However, the ‘experimental’ enables a more expressive, author centered approach to visual anthropology and can be seen in works such as Lucien Castaing-Taylor’s and Véréna Paravel’s film *Leviathan* (2012). Visual strategies, experimental or conventional, pay attention to objects, artifacts and environments that in turn contribute to an understanding of what is deemed to be the locus of attention.

This locus of attention, *the gaze* of the lecturers, is focussed away from the camera in an attempt to lead the viewer, metaphorically, to consider *place*, that is the environment where the university stands. From my perspective, making photographs solely within the university would fall short if the wider context was not taken into account. It is, as I see it, important to understand where the university sits in relation not just to academic institutions but to the urban environment that surrounds it. The panoramas explore the relationship between Goldsmiths and its ‘outside’, both in terms of the relevance of the institution for local people, and for how the institution reflects what lies outside it; students sit on the college lawn, and the streets of New Cross are literally reflected in the library windows. Considering the university site from the outside changes the nature of the photographs i.e. the inhabitants can be seen as distant, as having very little to do with what’s going on inside the academia’s walls. This is what surrounds *this* university of higher education: markets, schools, playing fields, alleyways, second-hand shops, building sites, allotments. This is where people in a rapidly changing community live out their lives. Les Back (2016) describes the gentrification of the New Cross and Deptford area (where Goldsmiths college is situated) where ancillary staff can no longer afford to live nearby: “New migrants from West Africa have settled in this part of London along with others from Latin America,

transforming its sounds, tastes and smells.” Photographically capturing this relationship within the vastness of an urban space, the usual proportions of the 35mm or medium format dimensions did not feel right. I shot around the university using the panoramic ratio: stretching the possibility of what can be seen and intuited in one glance. Even with a panoramic view, not everything can be held within the frame and even if this was a possibility, the issue of temporality plays havoc with the idea of the split-second capture of time. I have purposely altered my place of observation, *my position*, by shooting from the center of the local market. This view can now place representatives of the community who pass by in a more direct relation to myself. In some ways, metonymically, I am the university.

What is not within the frame is filled in by the viewers’ imaginations or by what the viewer’s experience of ‘inner-cities’ has told them to expect in these spaces. The point is that the landscape, the wider environment, its communities, has a staccato or ‘sometimes’ relationship to the university: through social interaction with ‘others’; through one-off events aimed at bringing the local population into the university; through students living in the area.¹⁰ This is not gloss. I too struggle to see the university as a place of diversity both in terms of its students and lecturers. The images of faces in this publication testify to this in a small way. It would be untenable for me, as a photographer who is black, to neglect the link between *me and mine* and *our* place of higher education. As Les Back (ibid) states “campus life is still haunted by racism.”

Compare this with, for example, students studying anthropology at Cambridge University and re-consider the meaning of place again. The act of looking through the lens and choosing what defines anthropological observation regarding the ‘affects’ on the body, and in turn how we interact with urban space, meant pointing my lens at views which tell of an urban narrative, one that I would suggest privileges a formerly peripheral vision. It keeps us in no doubt that we are actors in a social space where urban rules apply: for example, avoiding eye contact. This is reinforced by ‘visitor’ comments: “Is it safe there?”; “On the way to meet you I was propositioned twice”; “...no, meet me here and we’ll go together.” Stewart (2007) comments that:

“The politics of ordinary affect can be anything from the split second when police decide to shoot someone because he’s black and standing in a dark doorway and has something in his hand, to a moment when someone falls in love with someone else who’s just come into view. Obviously, the differences matter.”

We are more likely to imagine a shooting by police in Deptford/New Cross and love at first sight in the genteel environment of Cambridge for no apparent reason than the *affects* of the environment are broadcast (largely by media), internalized and reacted to by us as a conditioned response based on what we have been consistently fed through imagery. In *Senses of Place* (1996), Stewart writes about West Virginia (USA) and talks about ‘translating’ for an academic context: “...my account finds itself sharply divided between evocation and theoretical exegesis”, and that “it is only in holding open the gaps and tensions in cultural representation itself that we can glimpse an ‘other’ mode of cultural critique that speaks from a ‘place’ of contingency, vulnerability, and felt impact.”

This blurring of distinction of my many selves is important because conversations during this project spoke of the difficulty of being objective; the photographic resonance of printing in black and white or colour; showing the reality and hardness of life that surrounds the college for a number of its residents (in the face of gentrification). But even then, a more troubling thought – that I had aestheticized my images that will have added a slew of questions about my own subjectivities, both in terms of visual expression and objective/subjective approach.

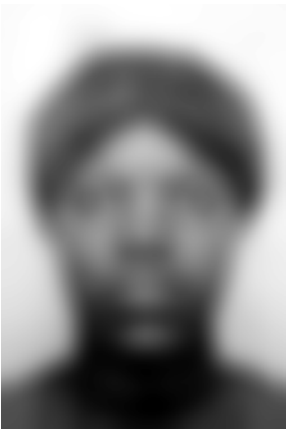
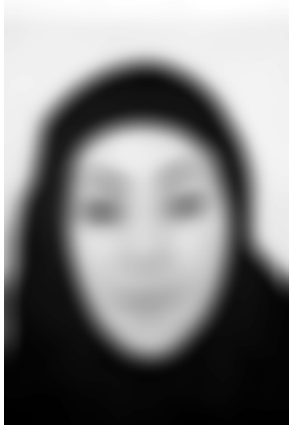
It is the aesthetic, of the hybrid term of *photographic-aesthetic*, superimposed onto the anthropological (and vice-versa) that hopefully sustains interest in these photographs. I am attempting to articulate both a deliberate conjoining and a dissonance between photography and anthropology. The meandering between photography with an anthropological intent, and anthropology with a photographic (artistic) practice betrays a narrative that is not held to the narrative linearity of beginning, middle and end. The images did not have to be grouped in the way they are. A student’s image could be next to a picture of a lecturer’s room, next to the local market. This non-linearity would be read in a *different* way with its meaning influenced

not only in terms of the 'filmic' effect of one image suggesting a link with another (as in filmic montage), but also as other possible meanings and then interpretations. The work here seeks to establish an area of practice in which the problematics of theorizing and practicing photography lies parallel to the theorizing actions of anthropology.

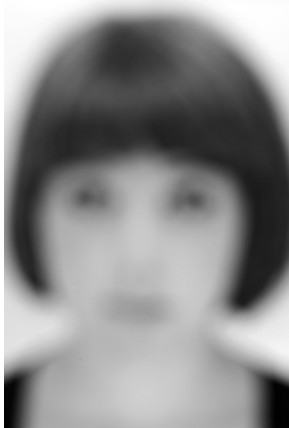
Visual anthropology's acceptance of a plurality of approaches: the desire to attribute polyphonic voices and 'native' readings about photographs by and from their own cultures, can lead visual practices into a happy collusion with textual accounts. I suspect that there are those who would see this as an appropriate objective for the visual in anthropology. However, even with the illusion of damning the text, the pictures here work (inevitably) with the written word – as this text makes clear. Of course, reading in an anthropological context will possibly have a range of interpretations and meanings that are at odds to reading in a photography/art based context. Schneider and Wright state:

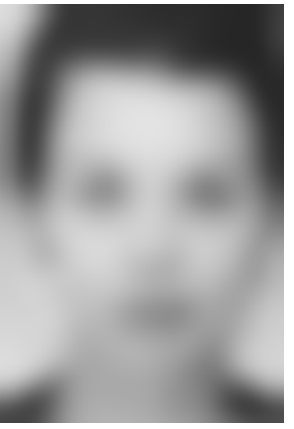
“The image bears an impossible burden in visual anthropology; simultaneously a transparent medium of the real (only certain minimal kinds of manipulation are permissible), and yet incapable of producing explanation or understanding in its own right (something that requires diverse forms of manipulation).”

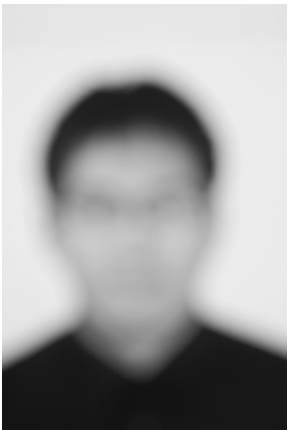
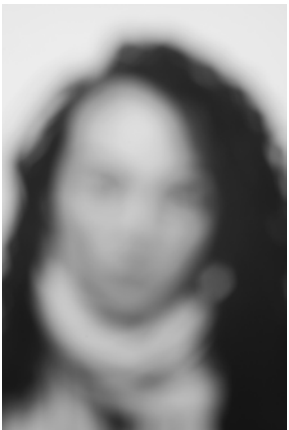
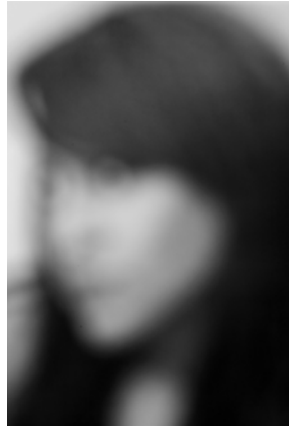
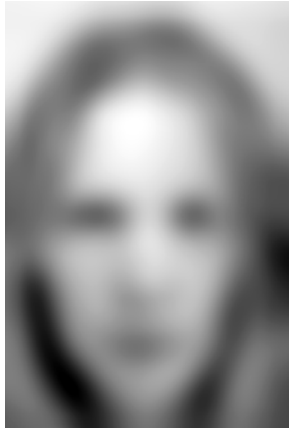
undergraduate students

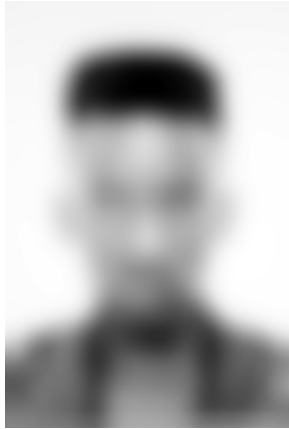


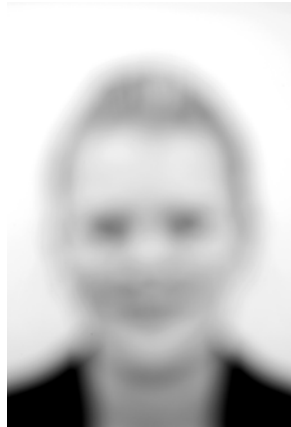


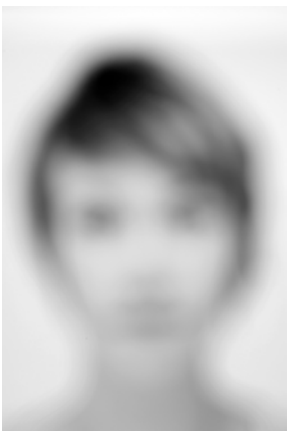
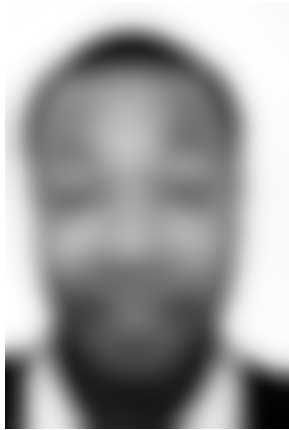


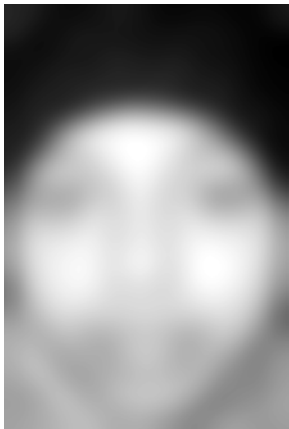
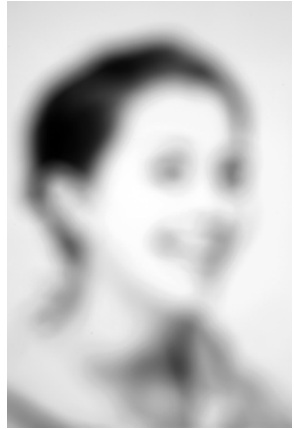
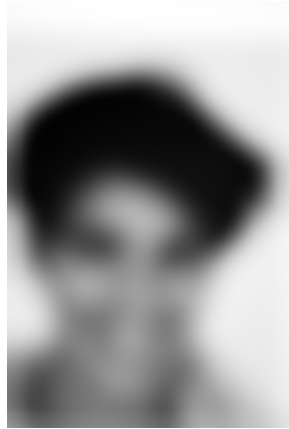






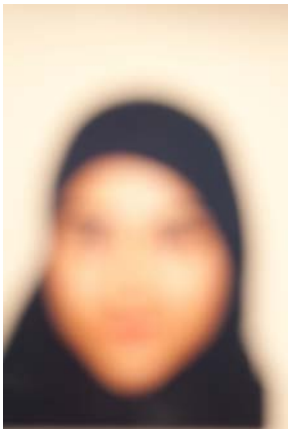


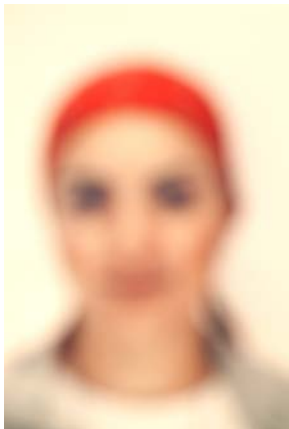
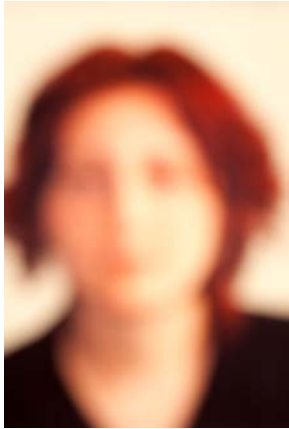














postgraduate students



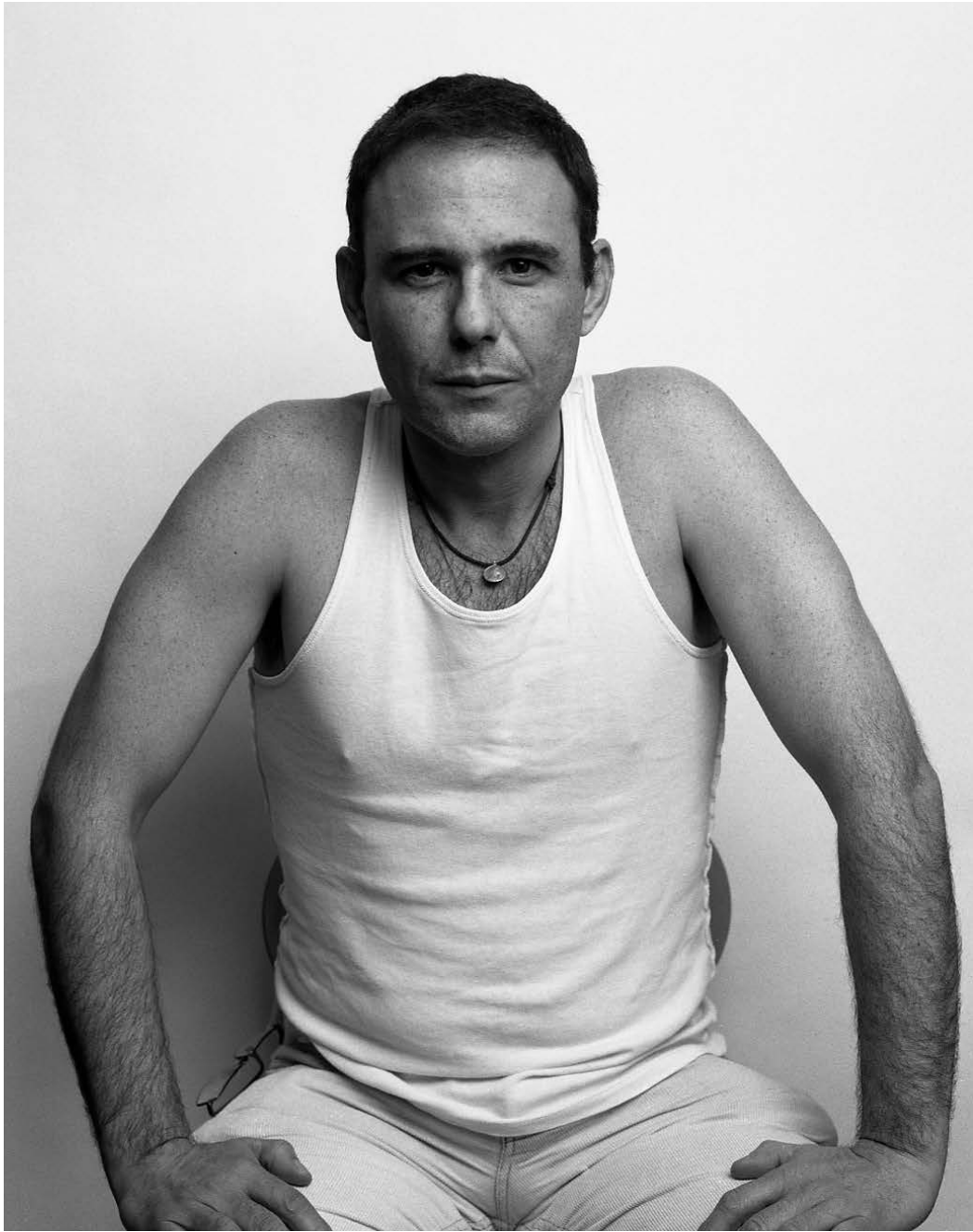






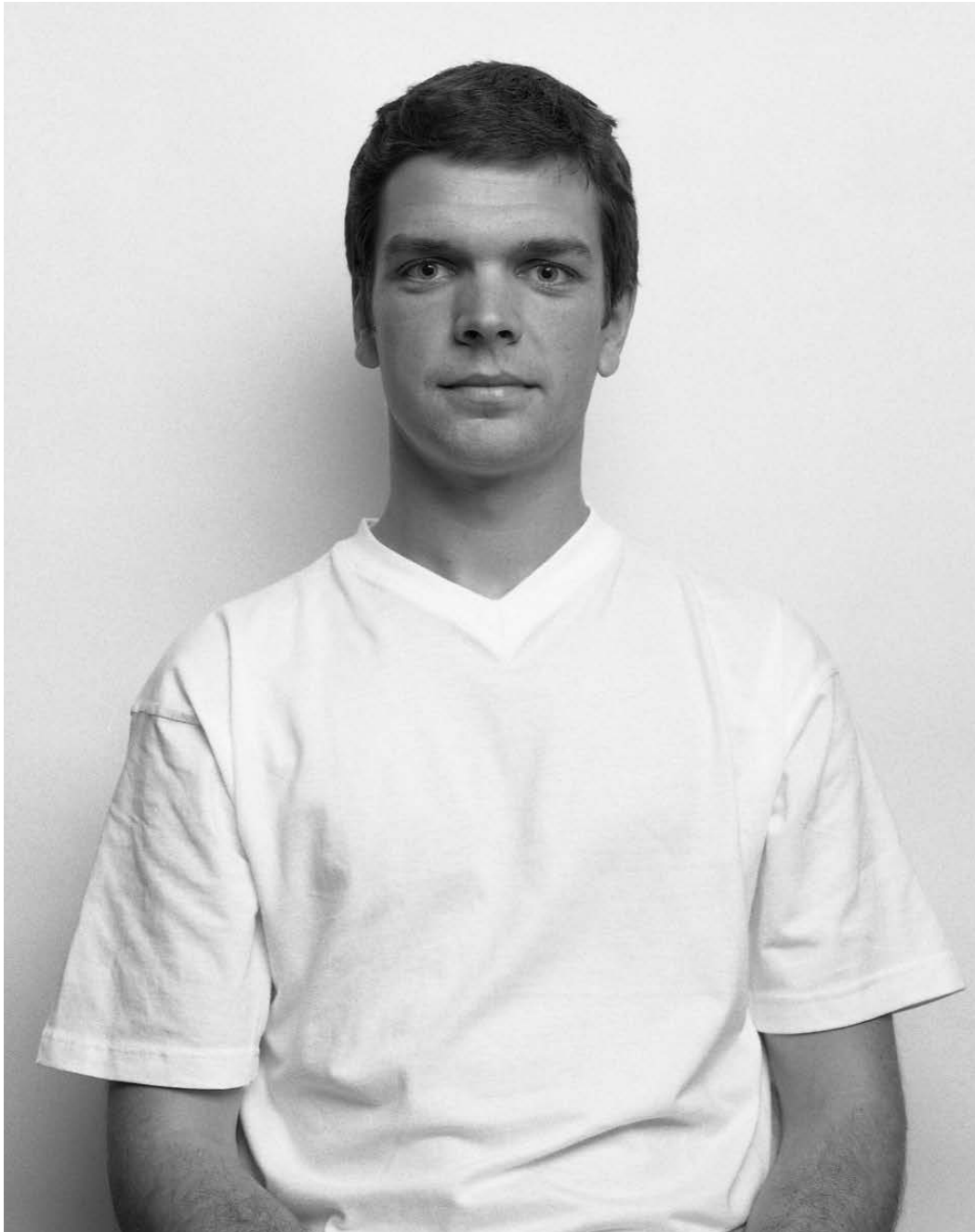
















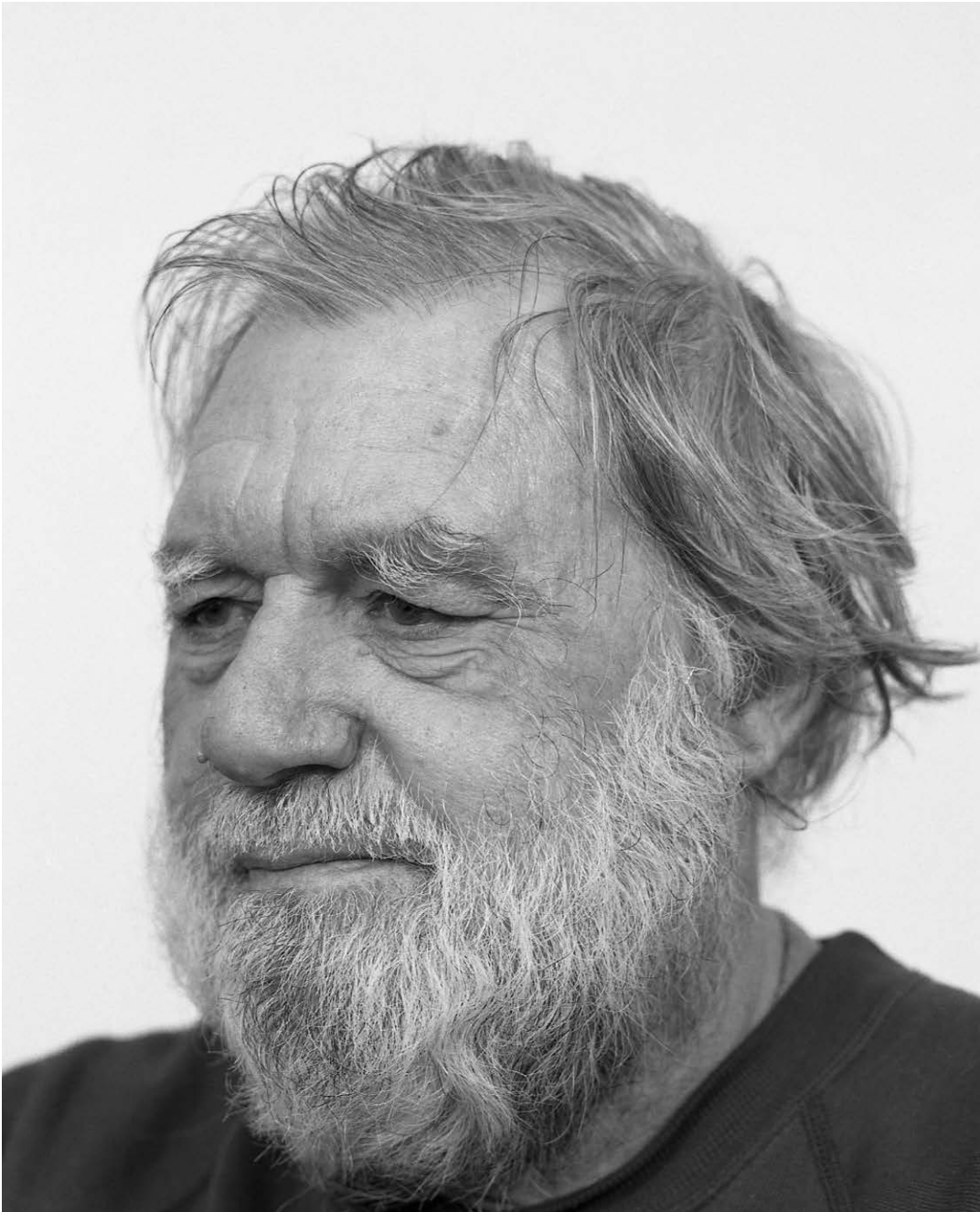








teaching staff

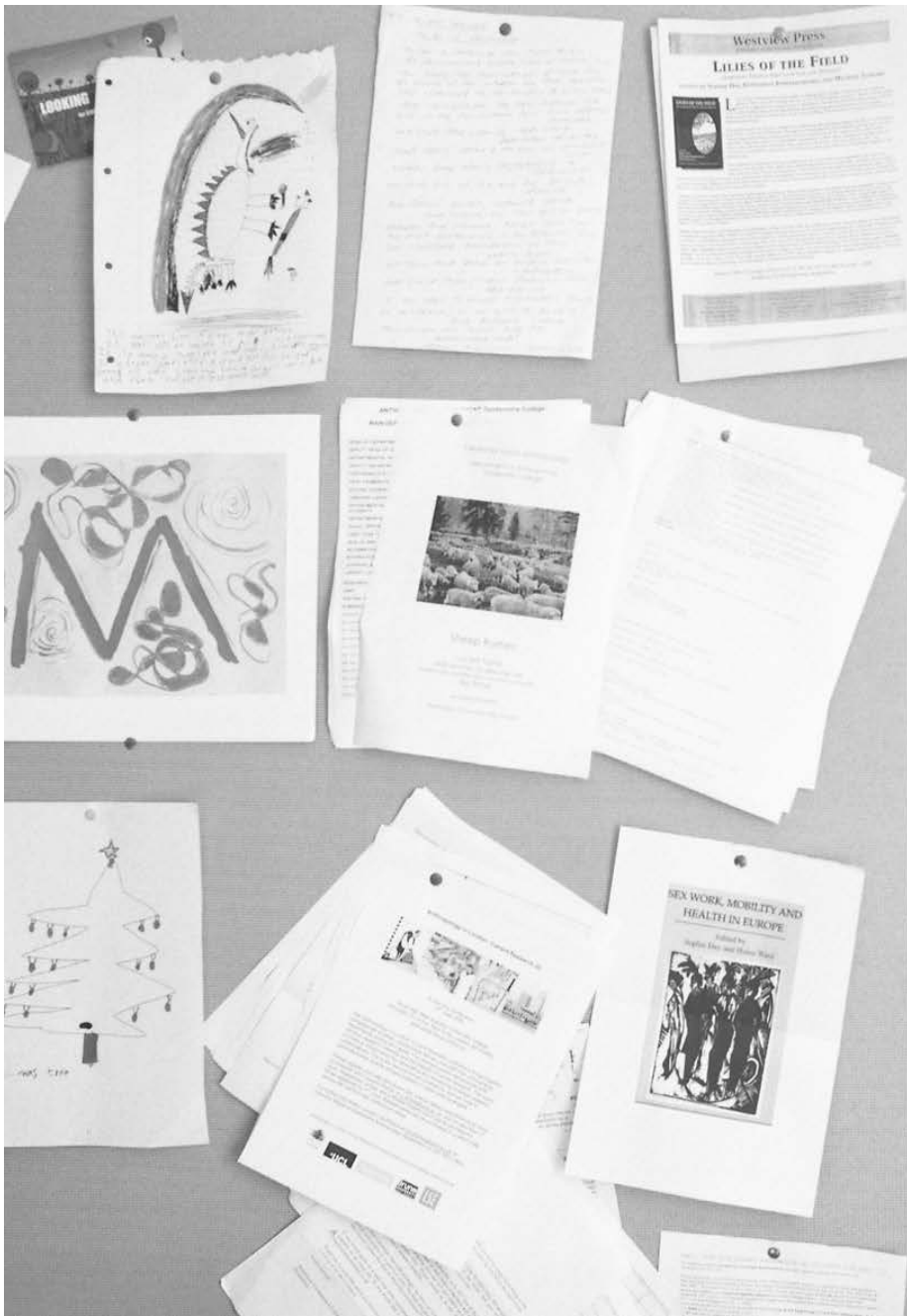




























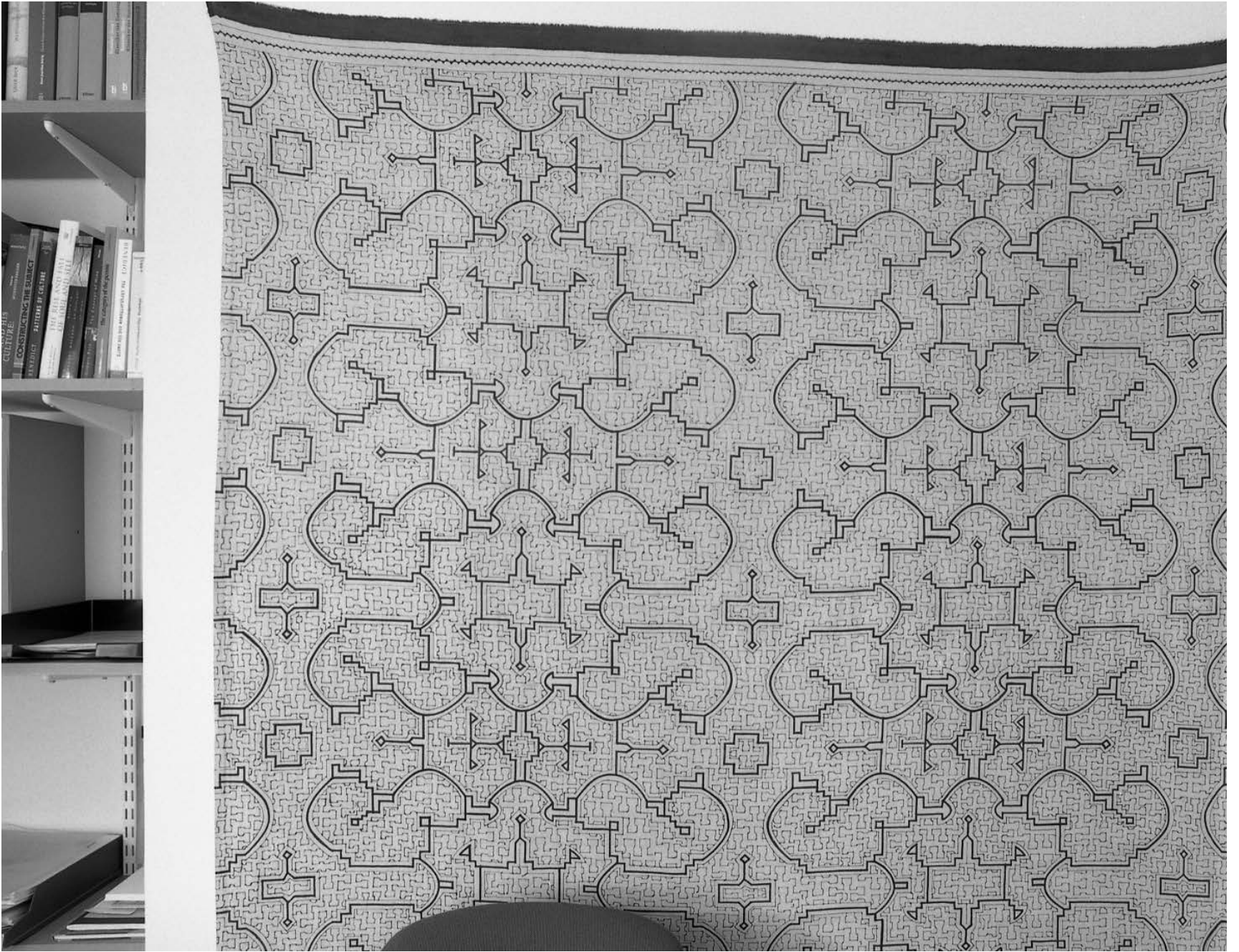
























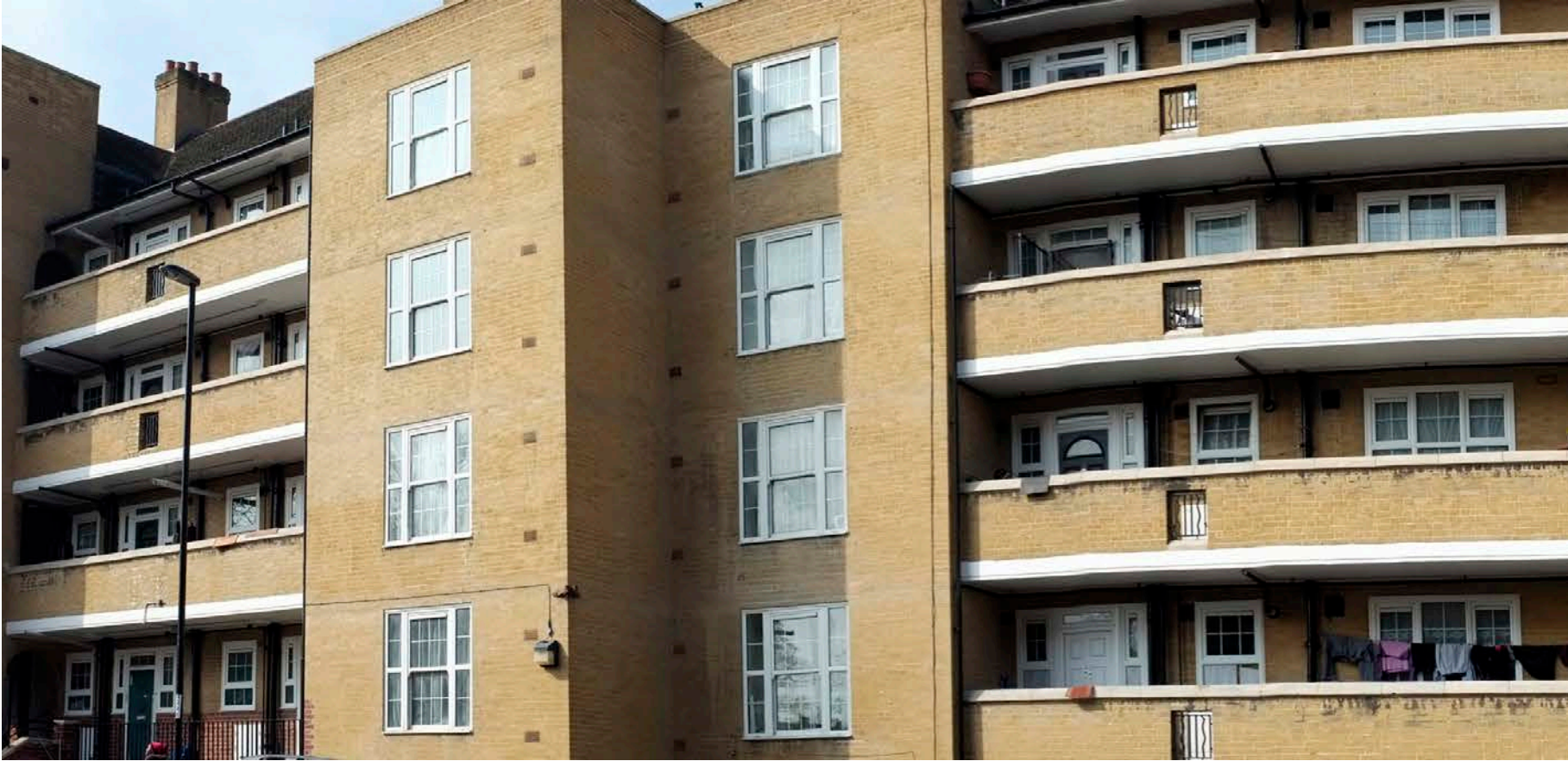


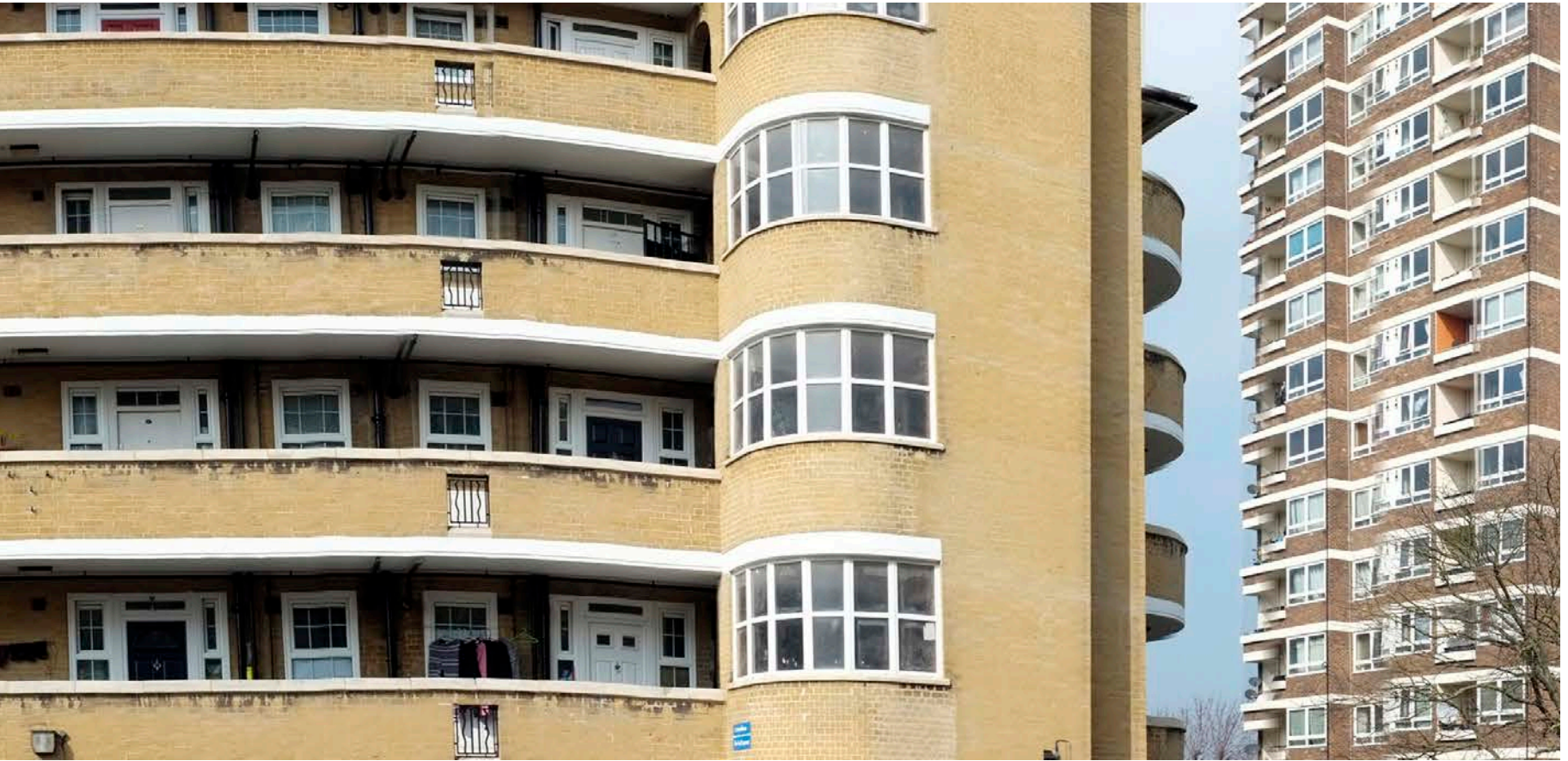


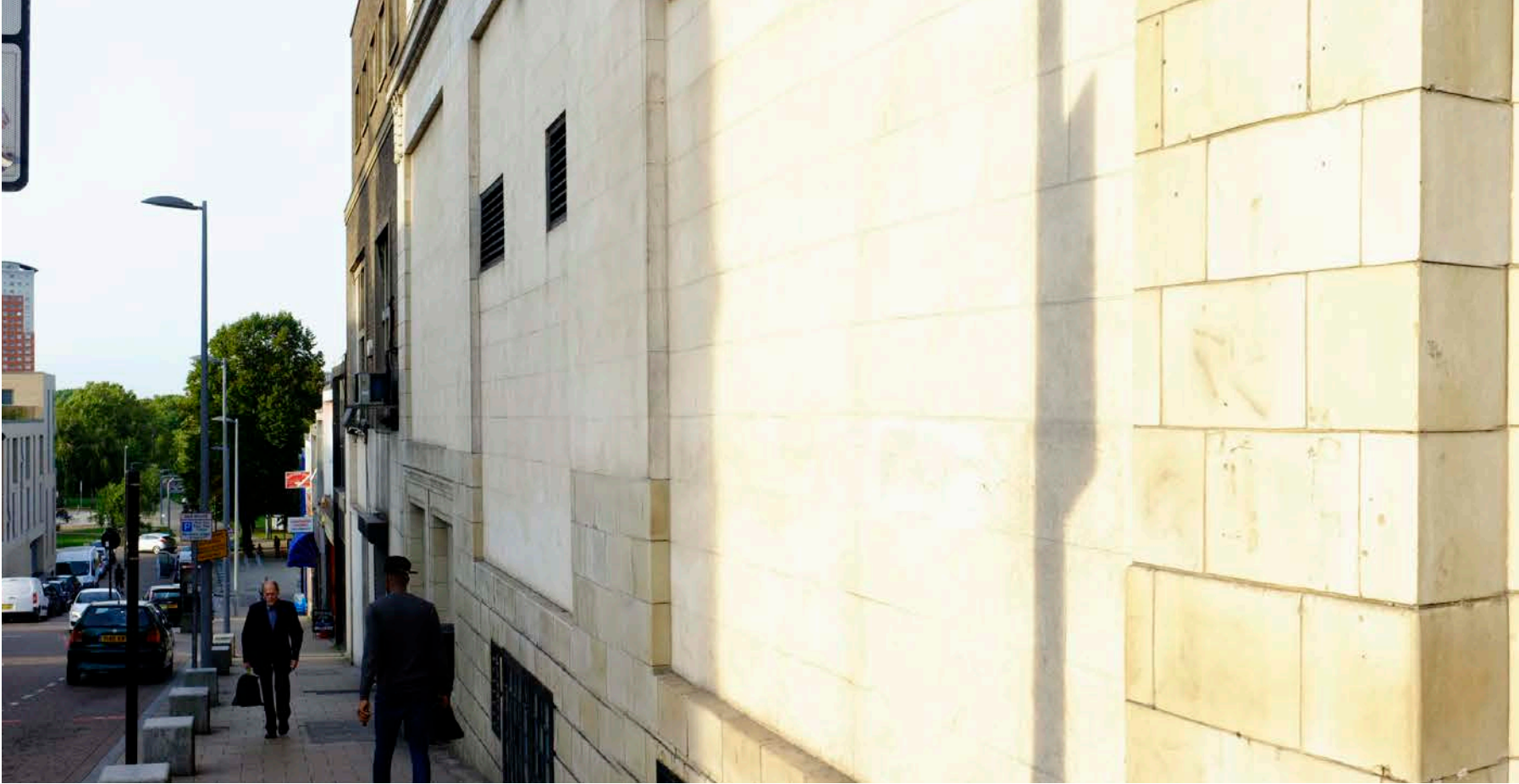
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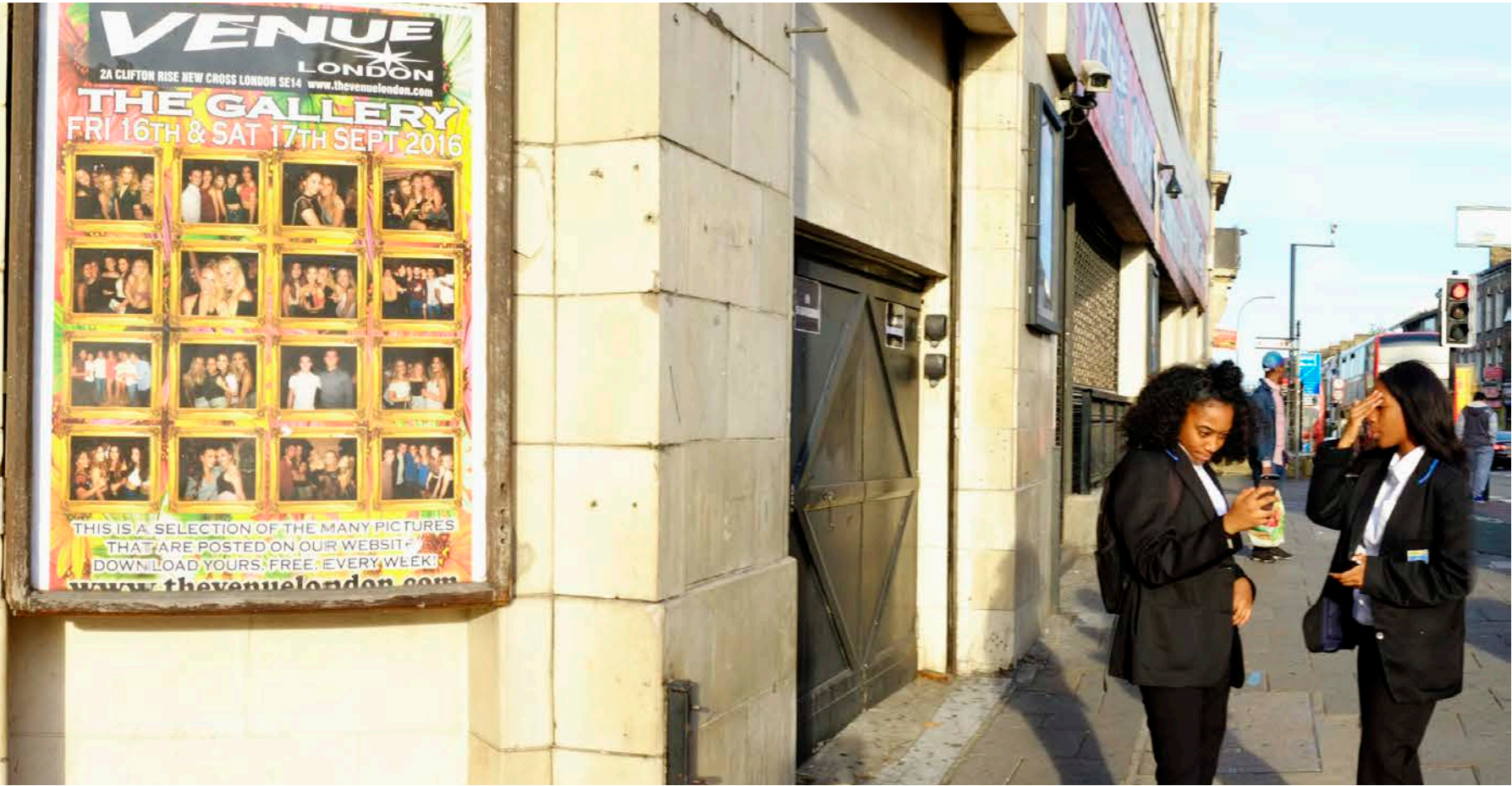






























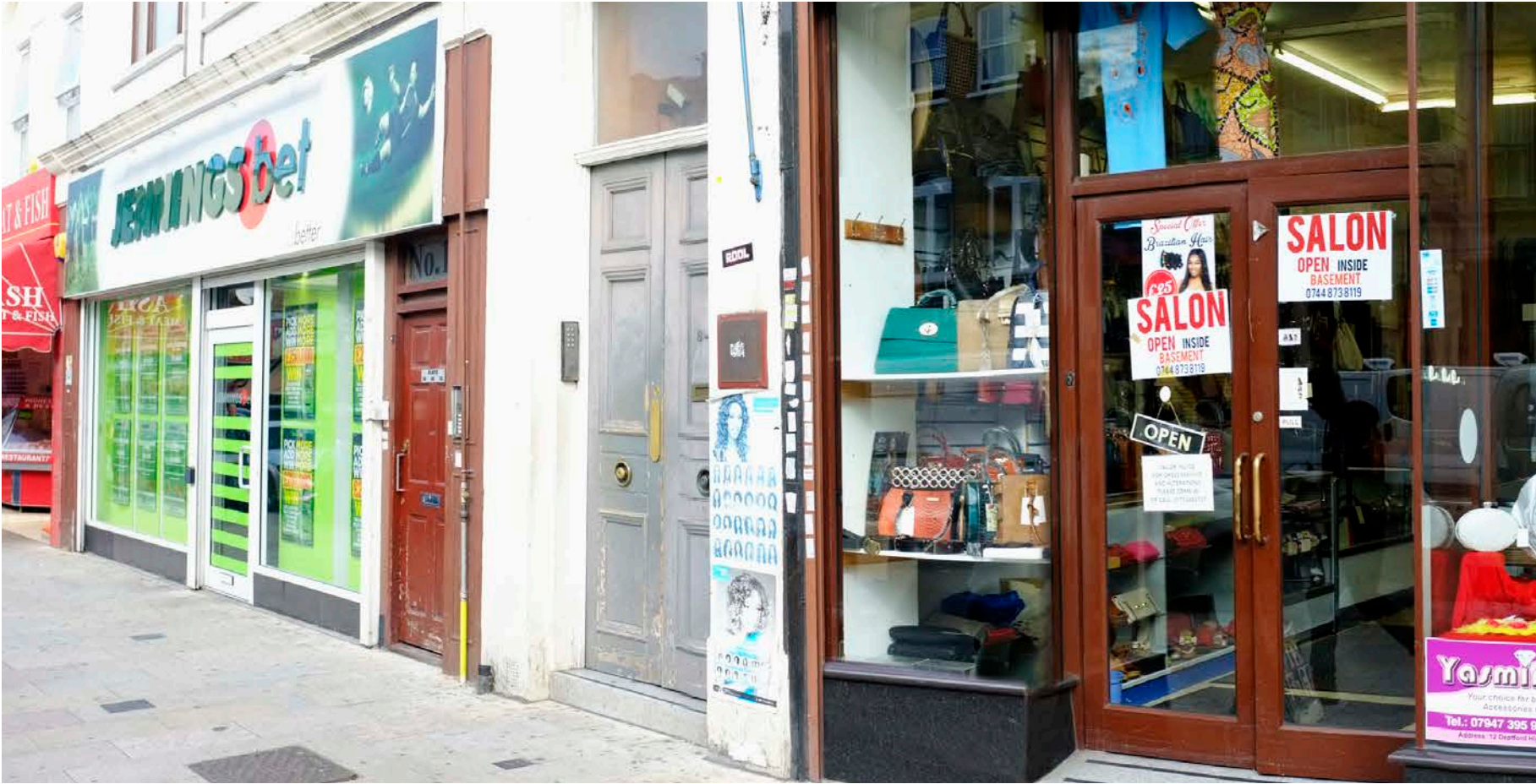
















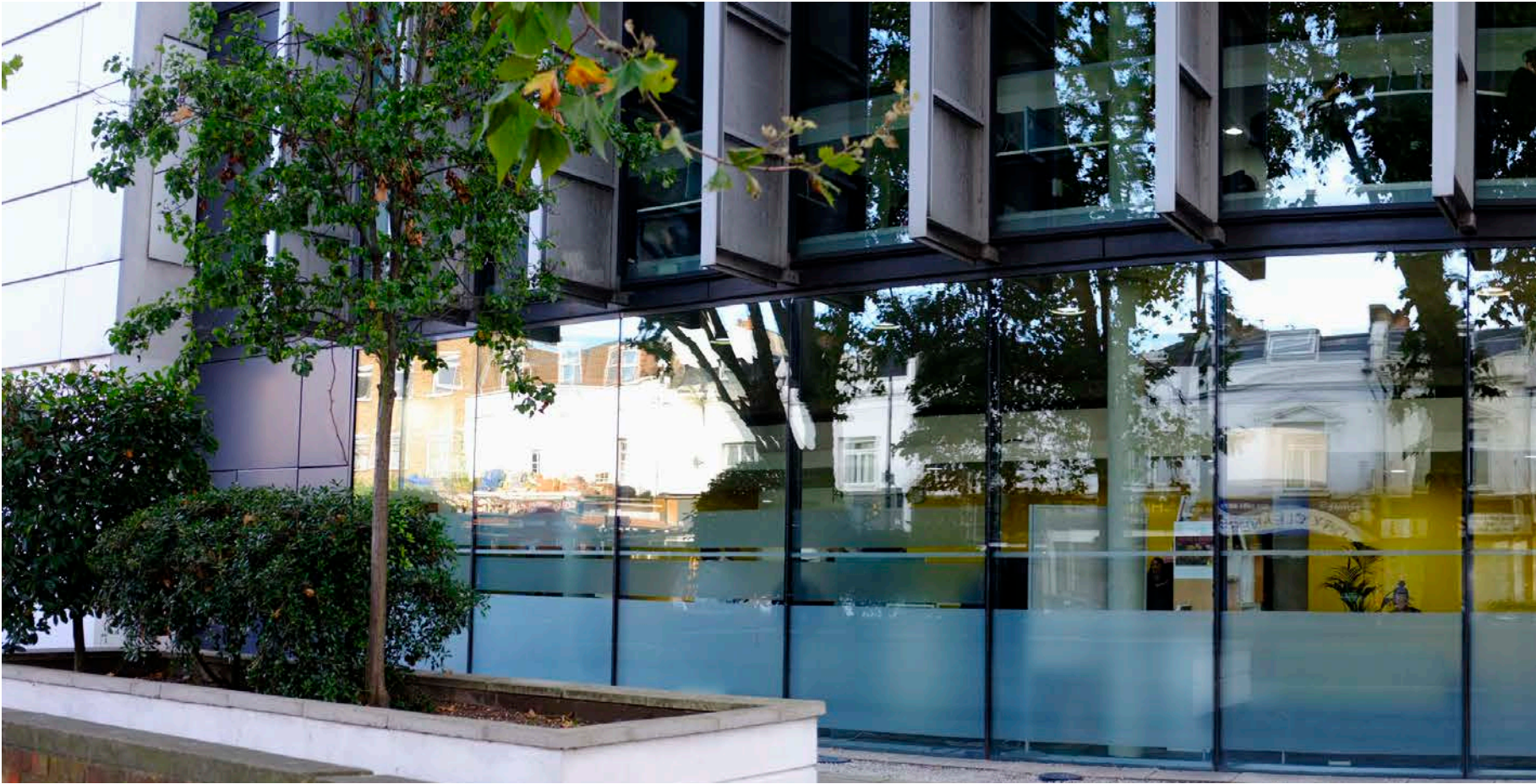


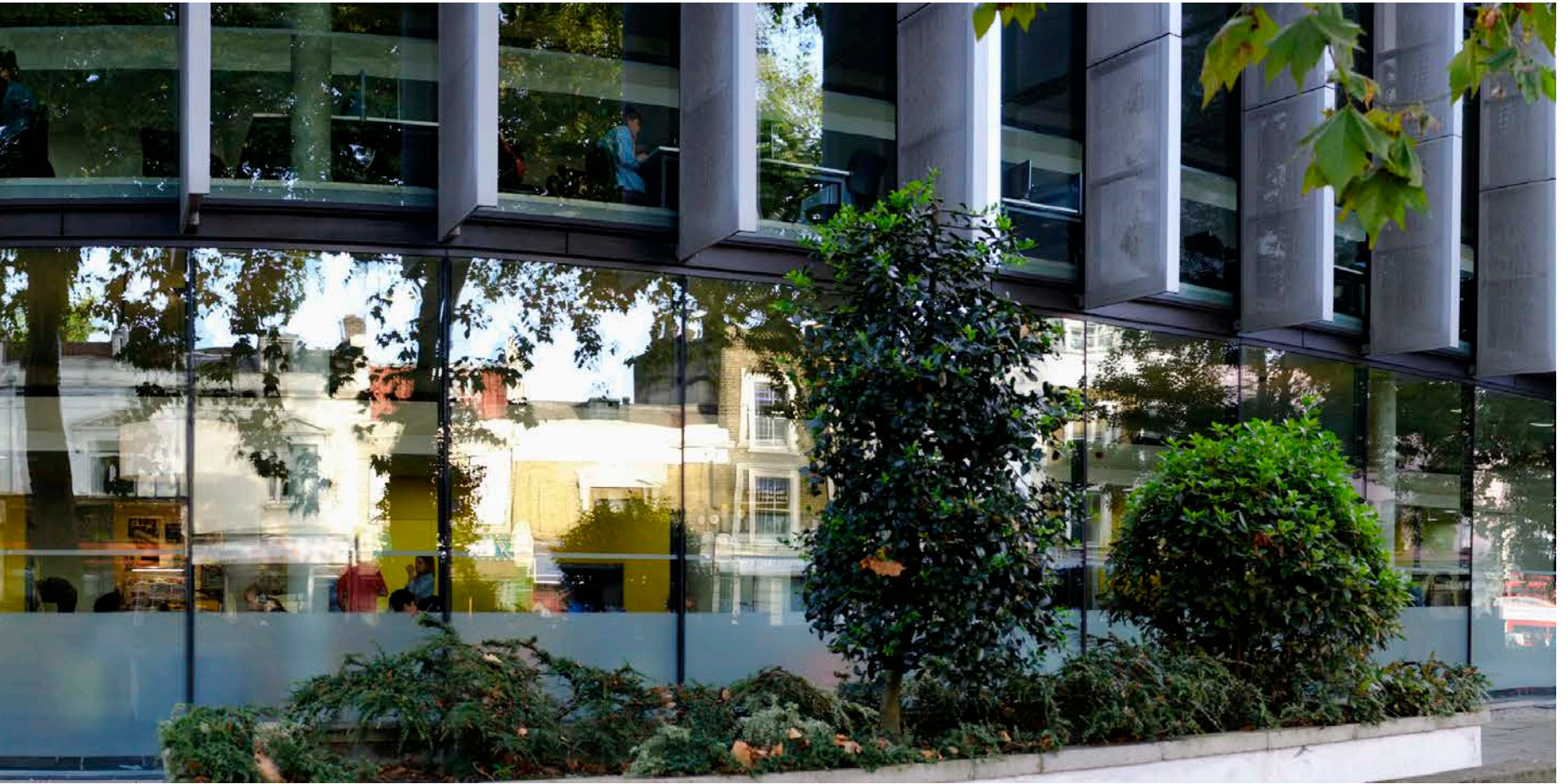
















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notes

- 1 This could arguably now be migration, image representation and globalisation.
- 2 Identity politics, especially during the 1980's was the title in which a lot of work from black practitioners was subsumed and textualised.
- 3 The objective of these images to combine a photographic/aesthetic vision with *anthropological intent* relates to other images not just obviously in this publication but also in viewers memories from their own 'library' of images and their associations. Minds too have remained images for specific reasons. This is made clear when we think of the oft said phrase 'I totally forgot about this picture!' We forget, the circumstances, the people, the landscape, the photographer (who sometimes have equal difficulty in placing) etc.
- 4 The portraits of the post-grads were shot in an bare and empty room using one light.
- 5 Strictly speaking, projects in visual anthropology have an imperative to generate 'data'. I have always found this deeply problematic in visual anthropology in that almost every photograph can be *conveyed* into visual anthropology; this can also include film outside of the concept of 'moving image' artworks.
- 6 It would be interesting to compare one person's different faces for different ID cards.
- 7 For me these type of images resonate with the residue of 'scientific' research of the past and in contemporary times concerns about over representation of black youths DNA held on databases. On a personal note, there has never been a time when my own picture 3.5cm x 4.5cm photo has not been presented to an authority without a slight sense of nervousness.
- 8 The lecturers – not all of whom are visual anthropologists - were aware of the project and the aim of the portraits so in some ways there is a false conceit on my part as I too have constructed the images, getting these lecturers to play at being classifying anthropologists for my own purposes.
- 9 This was clearer with those lecturers who absolutely refused to take part in the project.
- 10 Not that the above negates tension between local residents and the University at large. In every university I have worked or studied, I have been asked to prove my identity by security guards – black like me – who did not feel the need to ask my white teaching companions at the same points of entry or exit.

participants and list of locations

Undergraduates

2002-2007

Postgraduates

Beatriz Belorin
Jason Brooks
Mathurapat Butwaiyawutti
Kostas Chondros
Veronica Cordeiro
Tommaso Dolcetta
Naor Elimelech
Chelsea Fitzgerald
Silvia Gigliodoro
Ricardo Green
Martin Hampton
Eva Katona
Ricardo Leizaola
Dave Lewis
Hikaru Toda
Katian Witchger

Teaching staff

Catherine Alexander
Rebecca Cassidy
Sophie Day
Victoria Goddard
Keith Hart
Casey High
Thomas Kirsch
Massimiliano Mollona
Brian Morris
Nici Nelson
Stephen Nugent
Frances Pine
Roger Sansi-Roca
Chris Wright

List of locations

Clifton Rise
Deptford Creek
Deptford High Street
Deptford Market
Goldsmiths
New Cross Road
Tanners Hill

