

**A THEORETICAL EVALUATION  
OF ELEMENTS FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHIC  
PRACTICE OF CHRIS BELCHER**

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to provide both a focus and an application for the theoretical work undertaken during the first period of the MA course up to the present date. It does not make any attempt to explore or debate theory, or issues as yet forthcoming within that course programme. It seeks to select and apply, those critical theories arising and considered appropriate from within the two first terms work, onto what are felt to be the most significant aspects from an existing body of the writer's work. The work selected spans a period from the late 1970s up until one completed this year (1990). There is no attempt to engage in, for reasons elaborated later, with either my current work in progress, i.e. that conceived and undertaken during since the start of the MA course, nor any attempt to engage with matters arising from my most recent work 'Zero Meridian'. The paper is seen therefore as a welcome opportunity to apply a range of both theory I was already aware of, and theory I have been made aware whilst undertaking this course, to an existing body of work, hopefully providing a useful underpinning and subsequent strengthening of that work, whilst more importantly, providing a more informed and enabling current practice,

Three series of black and white photographs, 'Ideal Homes' (1978), 'A Crown Building' (1983), and 'Puig Mayor-Observations in Passing' (1990) have been selected for discussion. My photographic work 'Zero Meridian' has been omitted firstly on the grounds of the plurality and diversity of the issues it addresses, and secondly because in its current and unresolved form it could not provide a sufficiently stable vehicle for such an exercise of theory. The option of using this written piece as a means of helping to resolve 'Zero Meridian' has been considered and rejected as currently being too complex to usefully and successfully complete both tasks. However there is a recognition that this text may provide the means and insights for such a resolution. Current work in progress (working reference title 'Brawdy'\*) has been excluded for reasons of what can be best described as the personal need for an informed but 'unfettered consciousness' to complete this piece. That is not to suggest in any way that there is any such desire for a purely intuitive approach to this work, on the contrary, the conception, planning and structure of this work mitigates against such a suggestion, but rather that the approach to that piece of work, at this stage, should be sufficiently open to be neither contained by nor limited by, a specific desire to express or incorporate theory.

\*later to become entitled 'Sound-Base-Site'

## ANALYSIS

Ideal Homes, A Crown Building, and Puig Major all provide within each body of work the creative potential of a text created with and by the reader. This reading of the work is inevitably open to a number of potential texts and it is therefore an open text rather than the closed text of for example the mass media. However, in this particular case the usual tripartite relationship between author, work/text and reader is significantly altered. Eco's theory of aberrant decoding, whilst acknowledged, will not be an issue in my reading of the work, because of my position of being both author and reader. The open text of this work whilst providing the usual potential for aberrant decoding will, because of this unification of this author/reader status, ensure that at a conscious level at least, a preferred reading (mine) of the work, is inevitable.

The photographs of 'Ideal Homes', 'A Crown Building', and 'Puig Mayor-Observations in Passing', all share what might be loosely described as a 'style', incorporated both into their making and their production. Style in this sense is ...

'an integral part of sets of rules, codes and conventions which organise and are contested in forms of social interaction, communication and identity...they combine certain recurrent and patterned elements into a structured ensemble or form which signifies and proposes an identifiable position within wider social relations' <sup>1</sup> (O'Sullivan et al.)

This 'structured ensemble or form' is therefore a fundamental element of signification and meaning, and can be more precisely analysed through what Saussure and Eco describe as codes. These three series of works largely share at a fundamental level of production, a set of codes which can be described as technical codes i.e. those particular to the photographic medium. These consist of lighting, view point, focus, camera, format, etc. They offer scope for both selection and combination and therefore contain what Saussure describes as both a paradigmatic and syntagmatic dimension to provide a signifying whole.

In these particular works these codes are adopted as follows: -

Lighting: The lighting is either natural daylight lit exteriors or the 'available lighting' of artificially lit interiors (Crown Building, Ideal Homes). It is both full and frontal. The illumination is frequently even. When occasionally the lighting is harsh and direct

(Puig Mayor-Observations in Passing), the position of the sun is such that the shadows are short and there are no substantially large areas concealed by shadow. It is rarely 'contra-jour'. It is, in essence, a lighting of revelation.

Viewpoint: View point is 'normal'. It is the view point of eye-level. It is horizontal, neither obviously looking up or down. It is frontal, with the subject matter frequently occupying the middle distance. Occasionally there are close-ups (Ideal Homes and Crown Building) or long-distance shots where the key subject matter occupies a small or very small part of the image e.g. the establishing shot from 'A Crown Building', or the mountain tracking station in the central image of 'Puig Mayor-Observations in Passing'. The camera orientation is level rather than tilted.

Focus: Focus is 'deep', the subject matter is in focus from front to back. It is sharp.

Camera: The camera lens used is one that (re)presents a perspective closely to that of the eye. It is neither wide-angle nor telephoto. The camera format is usually large or medium, (Crown Building, Puig Mayor-Observations in passing) and where it is small i.e. 35mm (Ideal Homes), particular photographic material is utilised to maximise sharpness and detail and to minimise film grain.

Umberto Eco describes such codes as codes of transmission 'infringing on the aesthetic qualification of the message and give rise to tonal codes which provide systems of connotations ready stylised'<sup>2</sup>.

These codes, of camera, materials and processes, combine to maximise resolution and clarity, and serve to reinforce the iconic component of Piercian analysis that describes photographs as indexical icons. They are, as are all photographs, indexical because they are 'of their subject' i.e. created through a causality, connected because, as Susan Sontag states, 'they are stencilled off reality'<sup>3</sup>, however and most importantly, these particular qualities serve to elevate their iconic status even further. They become highly motivated through a process that endeavours to create a more analogous photographic representation of the subject\*. The syntagmatic element of these technical codes provides a signification of (pseudo)-scientificity, alluding to a 'technical' and 'objective' representation that is at once both transparent and belies a lack of mediation. As Roland Barthes states...

\*It is recognised here that Eco points out that a photographic image is not truly an analogue of reality, but rather analogous to the retinal image, and one that 'is born of a series of successive transcriptions.

‘When one wants to be ‘neutral’, ‘objective’, one strives to copy reality meticulously, as though the analogical were a factor of resistance against the investment of values’. <sup>4</sup>

Such a reading is further developed and reinforced *intertextually*. Broadcast intertextual codes are those based on popular readings of photographs, and are rooted in a popular myth of the camera’s objectivity, that ‘the camera doesn’t lie’. Such intertextual readings are generated through family album images, the passport or identity photograph, the news photograph, forensic photography etc. These are similarly, although more critically, developed through the route of narrowcast intertextual codes within the arena of photography itself. There is, within the ‘documentary mode’ or ‘genre’, the notion of both photographic neutrality and ‘objectivity’. Such intertextuality is provided, amongst others, through the work of photographers such as O’Sullivan, Atget, Walker Evans etc., and more recently through a group of photographers and photographic work known as the ‘The New Topographics’. There is then an underlying level of ‘signification’, a photographic discourse, already incorporated deeply into the work itself. This inevitably forms part of the text and will become one of the potential signifiers within a creative engagement by the reader. This is recognised by John X Berger in describing ‘A Crown Building’,...

‘The framing, focus and exposure of these photographs effect a clarity of composition, depiction and illumination *that is at once seemingly natural\** (my emphasis), as in dispassionate architectural elevations’<sup>5</sup>.

Ideal Homes is a series of sixteen photographs of exteriors and interiors of modern houses. It was conceived and executed as a critique of aspects of modern affluent society. An exploration of the easy comforts of the ‘middling’ classes, the (petit)-bourgeoisie- ‘the social class that does not want to be named’ <sup>6</sup> (Barthes), that sought to expose values and attitudes that were signified through property and possessions, (houses and contents) recognising that possessions are themselves signifiers.

The series of photographs was made in \*\*\*\*\* a small late Victorian coastal town in the north west that has neither a manufacturing nor industrial economy but was rather a commuter town that served nearby cities. It is also, and has been for many years, a holiday town. Each of the images is accurately described by an additional written text that simply provides a specific address (street, number, house name). The town is not identified to the reader as a location, not in order to preserve its anonymity, but rather to

signify it's typicality, the fact that it could be almost anywhere, The series is one of metonymy, in that it attempts to provide a wider meaning. As Fiske appropriately states, ... 'we choose part of 'reality' to stand for the whole...a photographed street is not meant to stand for the street itself, but as a metonym of a particular type of city life - inner-city squalor, suburban respectability, or city centre sophistication.' <sup>7</sup>

'2, Twistfield Close' (fig 1) is a typical image from this series that adopts the codes previously discussed. Its denotational (Barthes) content includes a foreground of neatly clipped lawn, a crazy-paved (or imitation 'scored' concrete expanse perhaps?) surrounding a neatly pointed low stone (reconstituted?) wall that forms a pond containing two (stone/ plastic/ plaster?) leaping dolphins. Beyond is viewed the front entrance door, to its left and right are 'Georgian' windows, the whole covered by a tiled porch roof, itself supported by two 'Grecian' columns (fibre-glass/plaster?). Above and to the left and mounted onto the pale brick wall is the exterior cover of a burglar alarm. The connotations (Barthes) within this image are those of order, neatness, control, (the brickwork, the house, the lawn with neither weeds or debris); urban-ness, sterility, and aridity. There are no plants, trees or flowers. Animals are seen by representations rather than by the real. It appears as a property of self protection or containment (the alarm, the 'grill like' door/windows as of a prison).

'127, Waterloo Rd.' (fig 2) provides similar denotational elements, compounding those of the earlier image. At the top of a foreground of steps, a boxer dog sits, its pose, expression, and positioning in relation to the front door and 'Grecian columns', cast doubt whether it is in fact animal or artifact.

A close up of the brickwork in 'Garage, 29, Brinklow Close' (fig 3), further challenges perceptions of reality and artificiality. On close examination of the image, the 'mortar' joints of the 'brickwork' fail to align themselves perfectly. This visual clue reveals the wall to be three adjoining (fibreglass?) panels of bricklike construction, a galvanised bolt set into the 'mortar' providing their fixing.

'Interior, Casa Pepe, 2, Kenilworth Rd.' (fig 4), makes its only concessions to 'natural' objects through a leafy patterned carpet, artificial flowers and plants, and a porcelain Pekinese dog. There are no books, magazines nor reading material. It is a room of things rather than not thoughts. A room where Marcuse's 'one- dimensional' man and



Fig 1 '2 Twistfield Close'



Fig 2 '127 Waterloo Rd'

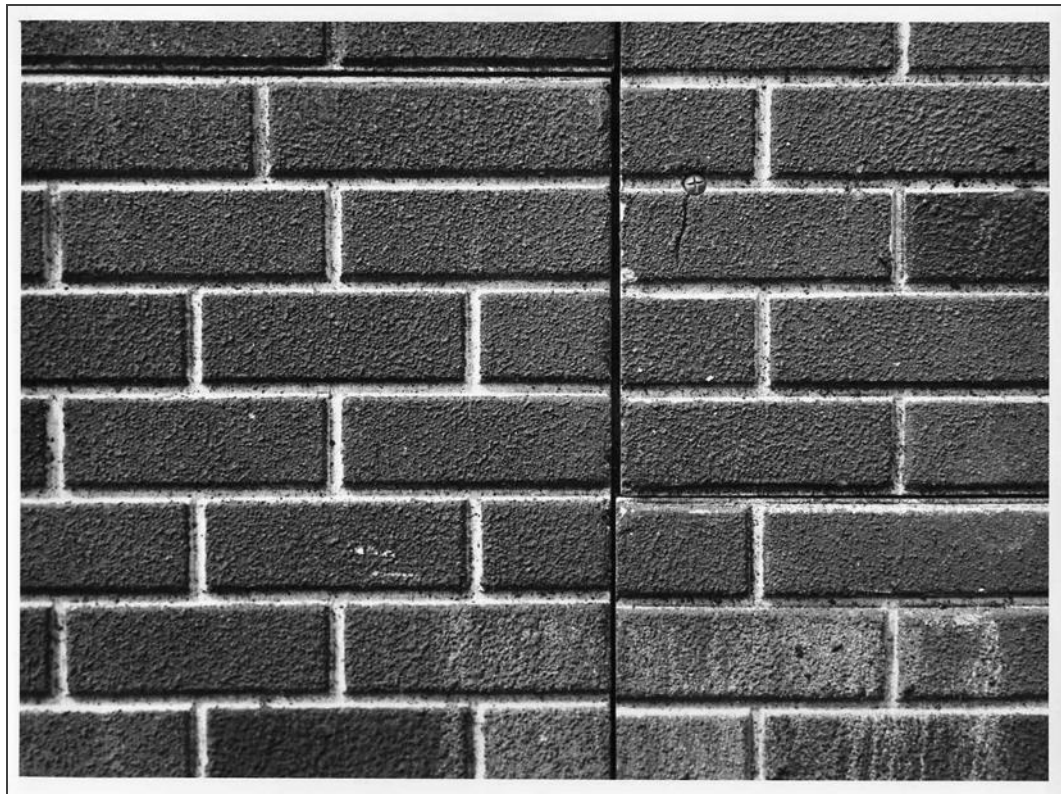


Fig 3 'Garage, 29 Brinklow Close'



Fig 4 'Interior 'Casa Pepe', 2, Kenilworth Rd'



his family, 'satisfied to the point of happiness with the goods and services handed down to them by the administration', allow the 'other dimension' of social critique rebellion and Utopian thinking, to slowly atrophy.<sup>8</sup>

The penultimate image of the series is 'The Promise, Derwent Avenue' (fig 5), with its four rose bushes blooming in the foreground of the small garden, its borders contained by a chain of plastic links. To the left of the entrance door, the nameplate scripted in the traditional values of a Gothic typeface, its very title implying a reward, a contract fulfilled, a bargain honoured, the material bounty from a bourgeois commitment to a capitalist ideology.

The final image of the series is of 'Plots 6 and 7, Chesterfield Close' (fig 6). It is of an immaculately ordered building plot, the outline walls of a pair of semidetached houses, their neat and precise foundations clearly in place. A plot designed to provide a seemingly stable structure, a base, the firm footings for a future. It has become then, an ideological promise in construction.

Barthes calls such a set of connotators 'a rhetoric' and such a 'reading' of the rhetoric of these images is culturally based and dependant on an ideology that both forms and informs it. It is equally important to recognise that the assumed preferred readings by these property owners, both of the visual statements made directly through their property and indirectly (should they see them) by my photographic representations of their property, are likely to be highly oppositional to mine. Their reading could centre on, expand on, and include such 'positive' (in their view) aspects of taste, status, respect, ownership, reward, wealth, class, newness, modernity, value, etc. and would be reflections of the dominant ideology of our wider society, (consumerist, capitalist, elitist, sexist, privileged, aspirational etc.). Such 'myths' (Barthes), acquired through this dominant ideology 'are so basic, so widely shared, so natural that they do not need referring to'. They are what Barthes calls 'exnominational'. Their reading of the text would be further informed intertextually through similarly assembled images, for example those of property found in property magazines, ('Homes', 'Homes and Gardens', 'Ideal Homes' etc.), estate agent's brochures/windows etc., and through representations of property associated with and through the dominant ideology. They will have become ... 'a reading subject, constructed by the text', and according to Althusser, 'the construction of subjects in ideology is the major ideological practice in capitalist societies' <sup>9</sup>. In such a text, in this case the magazines, brochures etc. referred



Fig 5 'The Promise' Derwent Avenue'

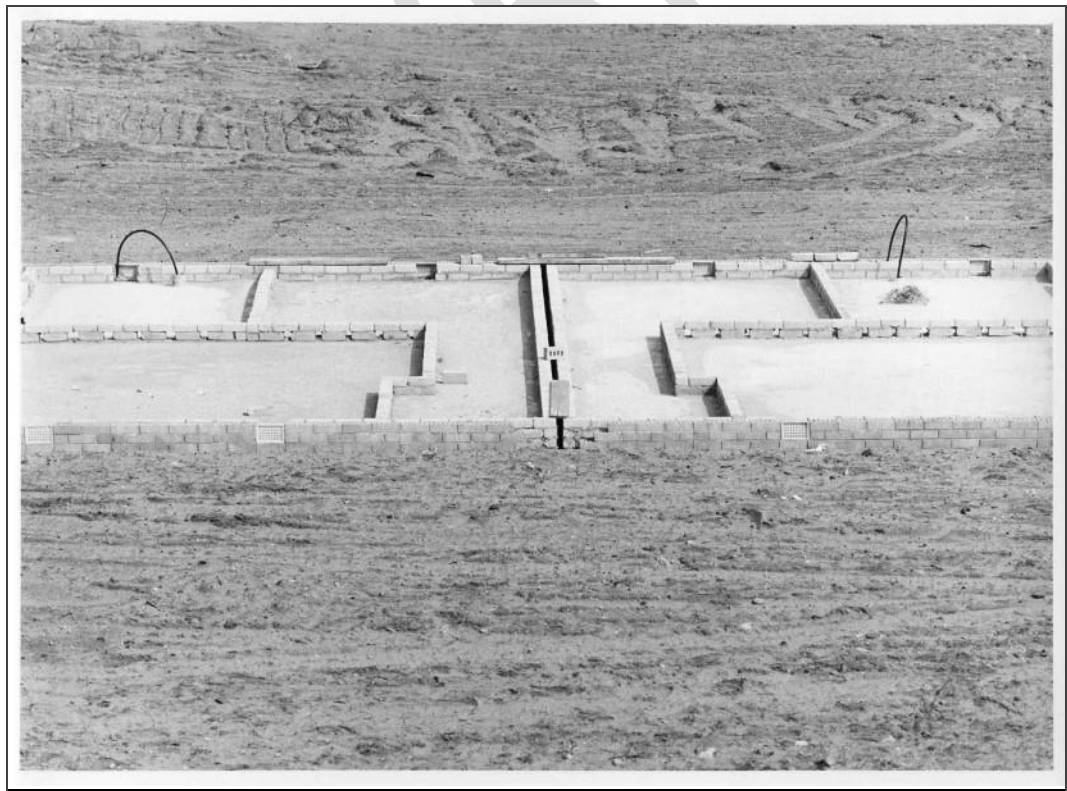


Fig 6 'Plots 6 and 7, Chesterfield Close'

to above, the reading subject recognises that they themselves are being addressed, that this particular discourse 'hails' them as addressee. Althusser calls this hailing of the addressee 'interpellation'. Without recognition and resistance to such an ideology, an oppositional reading of the work would be unlikely and may even be regarded as 'nonsensical'. Their preferred reading would be viewed as 'common sense' and self evidently natural, inevitably incorporating the 'positive' interpretations previously outlined.

A Crown Building is a series of sixty-three photographs. It shares with Ideal Homes the fact that it is metonymic. Whilst it is a building that obviously contains material, equipment and technology that are those of the processing of information, it is about and stands for a pervasive network of state power and control. Like Ideal Homes and with similar motives, it deprives the reader of its specific location\*. The structure or narrative of the series is created at one level through a physical movement of camera positions that begins with a distant establishing shot, and on to a circumnavigation of the building, via its main entry point and upward movement through its eighteen floors, culminating in a final series of four outward views of the surrounding landscape, oppositional to, but corresponding with, the initial four shots of the exterior. The photographs are located by titles, specifying their floor and often their function i.e., 'Computer Room Number 1, Lower Ground Floor', or 'Office 12th floor'

Their denotational elements are frequently those of technology. Computer hardware and software, networks of flow and connection (electrical circuits, heating, ventilation or water systems), storage systems for hardcopy data, areas of administration (offices etc.), and areas under construction. Signs of command or instruction are occasionally included.

A text that explores the denotational and connotational, creatively working with the preferred reading of 'A Crown Building's rhetoric is offered by Rob Powell in an review entitled 'Used in Evidence'..

'more unsettling, ultimately, is Chris Belcher's clinical room-by-room dissection of an anonymous new government complex. Here is a pokerfaced 'New Topographics' of interiors, functional spaces wired for control, loaded with electronic technology and captioned with signs and utterly depopulated. The blank eyes of VCR screens reflect strip lighting, (fig 7), nerve-like jungles of circuitry protrude from floors and walls, panels are packed with insulation matted like stiff hair. One emergent metaphor is that of a body photographed endoscopically, a labyrinth view inside some

*\*There is a recognition here that this could provide for aberrant decoding, over emphasising 'secrecy' at the expense of pervasiveness.*

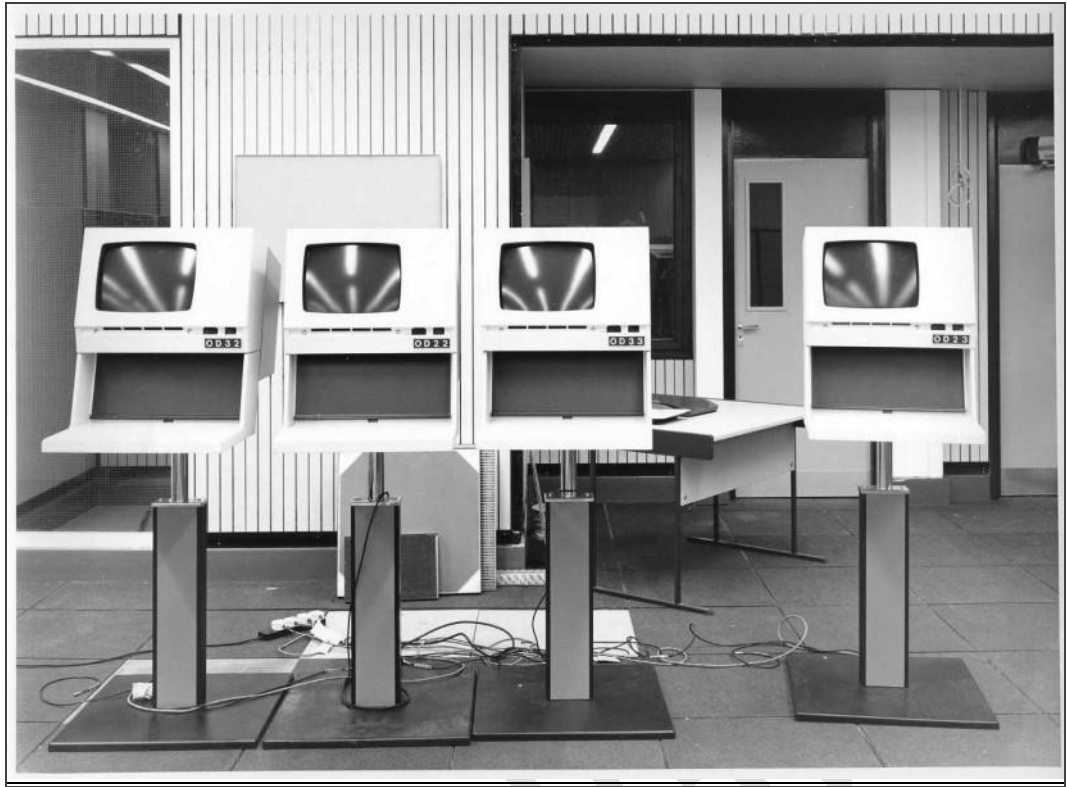


Fig 7 'Computer Room Number 1, Ground Floor'



Fig 8 'Coding Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor'

massive and inert robot. ‘Confidential Waste’ says a sign over a dustbin. ‘Bomb Blast First Aid’ (fig 8) says another in a corridor on the sixteenth floor. Everything is waiting expectant- for completion, for inhabitation, for orders,(fig 9) for a finger on the button . And in top-floor views to north, east, (fig 10), south and west, the kingdom stretches away from this strange citadel of parliamentary democracy in the 1980’s.’<sup>10</sup>

Powell recognises both how the narrative structure of the work and the implied narrative within single images create meaning. The rhetoric of ‘pseudo-scientificity’ and ‘objectivity’ are recognised and acknowledged both through the review’s title ‘Used in Evidence’ and through his phrase ‘a body photographed endoscopically’, and confirm and extend the codes previously discussed. The implied narrative of both the present and some future event expressed by his phrase ‘Everything is waiting expectant- for completion, for inhabitation’ etc. is generated through several individual images, ‘Area awaiting completion, 15th. Floor’,(fig11) and ‘Office awaiting occupation 3rd. floor’ (fig 12) for example. Powell might have also further developed his reading of the text to explore issues of network and power. ‘Emergency Power Supply, P.B.X.Room’ (fig 13) is an image denoting banks of large batteries linked together electrically, its thick cables exiting, via switching mechanisms, to another unseen room or space. Its rhetoric suggesting that of power in reserve, a surplus of power, a preparedness for all eventualities. The image that immediately follows this in the sequence is that of an arrow neatly drawn onto a piece of paper and Blu-tacked to a wall. This iconic command points left, back to its preceding image, potentially directing the viewer backward for a second look at this important previous signifier.

Images of, or containing, denotational commands for example the ‘stop’ button in ‘Office Ground Floor’, and ‘authorised persons only’ (Index Area, Ground floor) et al\* are used to give the viewer ...‘due warning of visual trespass and drawing attention to restricted access and behaviours which govern spaces’<sup>11</sup>(John X Berger).

The notice ‘Look-Think-Suggest’ in ‘Data Processing, Ground floor’ uses and subverts its own specific command concerning safety, by inviting the viewer of these photographs to apply those very actions to a reading of the work.

On the table, in the sterile waiting area of ‘H.O. Reception Ground Floor’, (fig 14) lies a copy of the magazine ‘The People’s Friend’. Are we to assume that the high irony of this transparently hegemonic message is lost on those visitors to this most powerful arm of the state, The Home Office, supposedly unrecognised by those so blinded by a ‘false

\* Both ‘Index Area’ and ‘Coding Rooms’ are titles of images in this work, but there is no conscious use of the semiotic meaning in the terms ‘index’ and ‘codes’ in these titles.



Fig 9 'Corridor, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor'



Fig 10 'East from the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor'



Fig 11 'Area awaiting completion, 15th Floor'



Fig 12 'Office awaiting occupation 3rd Floor'



Fig 13 'Emergency Power Supply, P.B.X. Room'



Fig 14 'H.O. Reception, Ground Floor'



consciousness'? Or, perhaps and more troublingly, are we to speculate that some minor mandarin, a grey suited figure of 'happy consciousness'<sup>12</sup>, and perhaps a resident of nearby 'Ideal homes', could have placed it there, with a meticulous casualness, and devoid of critical thought?

Jacques Durand defines rhetoric 'as the art of fake speech'<sup>13</sup>, bringing into play two levels of language, 'language proper' and 'figurative language', and suggests that what is said in figurative terms could have been expressed in more direct or simple fashion. Both Burgin and Dyer<sup>14</sup> expand in detail on Durand's theory. Durand suggests that by avoiding such direct speech the speaker employs Freudian concepts of 'desire' and 'censure', managing to achieve a mock transgression of legal, sexual or social codes, thus able to satisfy a forbidden desire, whilst staying within the bounds of acceptable conduct. Durand further developed Barthes' proposal that rhetorical figures be classified into two types; 'metabolas' based on substitution (metaphors, metonyms, and puns) and providing a paradigmatic dimension; and 'parataxes' based on relationships between elements in a discourse (such as a sentence) and providing a syntagmatic dimension. Durand proposed that these two types be combined together by means of the two axes, those of 'rhetorical operation' and 'relation between elements', thus providing a method for tabulation and classification.<sup>15</sup> The axis of 'rhetorical operations' contains items classified under 'addition', 'suppression', 'substitution', and 'exchange'. The axis of 'relation between elements' includes 'identity', 'similarity', 'difference', 'opposition', and 'false homologies'. The resulting table contains twenty-five classes of figures. Burgin and Dyer<sup>16</sup> both go on both to provide examples of their applications from advertising imagery.

Such a classification system provides an analytical tool of the rhetorical codes \*(Eco)<sup>17</sup> of the works under discussion. Thus both Ideal Homes and Crown Building employ ellipsis (a figure of suppression), people are unseen or absent (suppressed) even though their presence is implied. Metonymy, a figure of substitution, is employed where an associated detail is used to invoke an idea or represent an object. Simile, a figure of addition, is used in both series by the repetition of images of similar content. Further examples are found in the final work for discussion, 'Puig Mayor, Observations in Passing'.

‘Puig Mayor, Observations in Passing’, is a series of 13 images made in Mallorca, Spain during 1987 and 1988 but uncompleted in terms of its final structure and sequencing until this year. That resolution has been enabled through work undertaken done on this course.

Puig Mayor is Mallorca’s highest mountain and because of the island’s Mediterranean location, is the highest landmark within an expansive area of some thousands of square miles extending across the North African continent, Southern Europe, and towards the Middle East. Puig Mayor’s summit is the site of a military tracking station operated jointly by American and Spanish military personnel.

The sequence of photographs of this work were taken from, or close to a public road that runs more or less north/south and passes close to the foot of the mountain, and they are presented in their natural chronological order. The structure of the sequence is presented as an extended triptych with a supplementary piece of text. The central single image is of the mountain itself and separates the series symmetrically into six preceding images, and six following images. These three groups collectively are entitled ‘Approaching’, ‘Passing’, and ‘Receding’. ‘Passing’, the photograph of the mountain itself, whilst being the same size print as the other images, is afforded a larger mount and frame. This central image’s (fig 15) denotational elements include that of a ‘natural’ landscape of mountainside, a pale dry and rocky environment dotted with dark shrubs. At the summit of the mountain and barely perceptible, are two small white spheres. Both the ‘Approaching’ and the ‘Receding’ set of images are similarly of a ‘natural’ environment, but all contain, sometimes obviously and sometimes not, traces of human action (a dam, electricity pylons, telegraph wires, electricity cables, roads etc.) (fig 16). One ‘Approaching’ photograph is blurred, (fig 17) in a subversive challenge to an iconic command restricting photography and a ‘no entry’ symbol, both of which are never-the-less still discernable.

The final image (fig 18) shows a pair of mounted coin operated binoculars overlooking and pointing downwards to a hazy coastal town below. The supporting text presented after this final image is of a highly technical nature, (fig 19) and taken from technical specifications of the computerised aircraft surveillance and tracking system used here and known as ‘Combat Grande’, and as specified in ‘Jane’s Weapons Systems’<sup>18</sup>. This gives an anchorage (Barthes) to the work but also provides for a creative reading that invites an exploration of power, surveillance, control, technology and concealment.

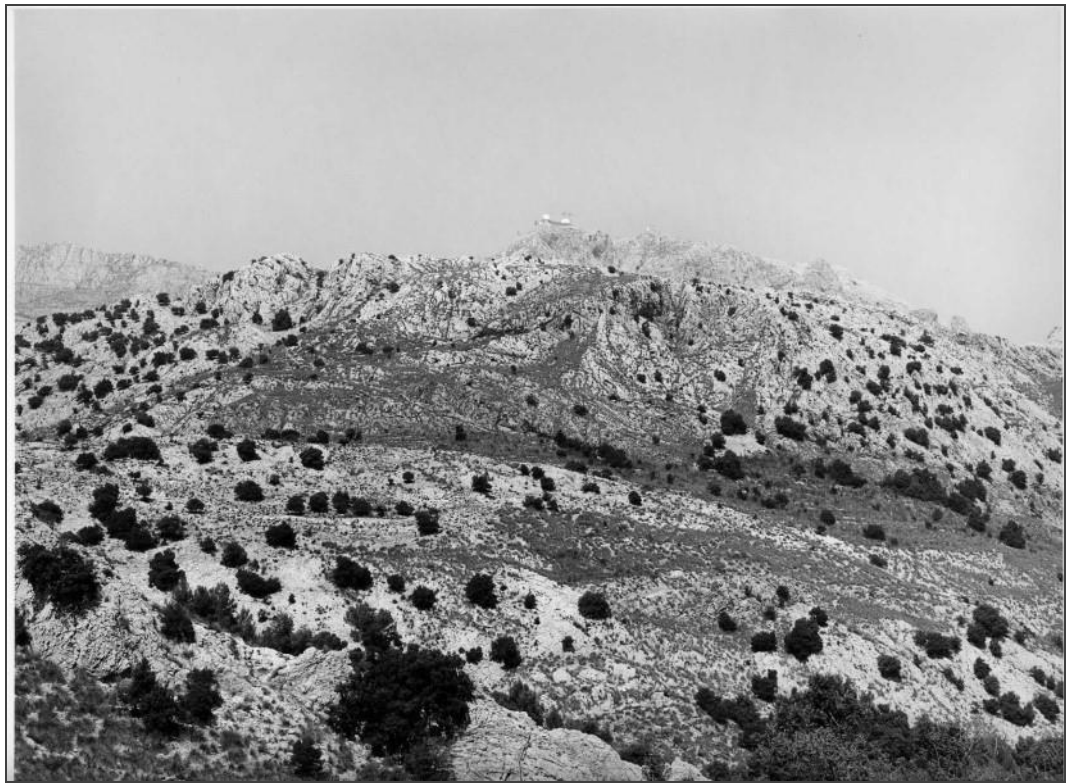


Fig 15 'Passing', from 'Puig Mayor, Observations in Passing'



Fig 16 'Approaching', from 'Puig Mayor, Observations in Passing'



Fig 17 'Approaching', from 'Puig Mayor, Observations in Passing'

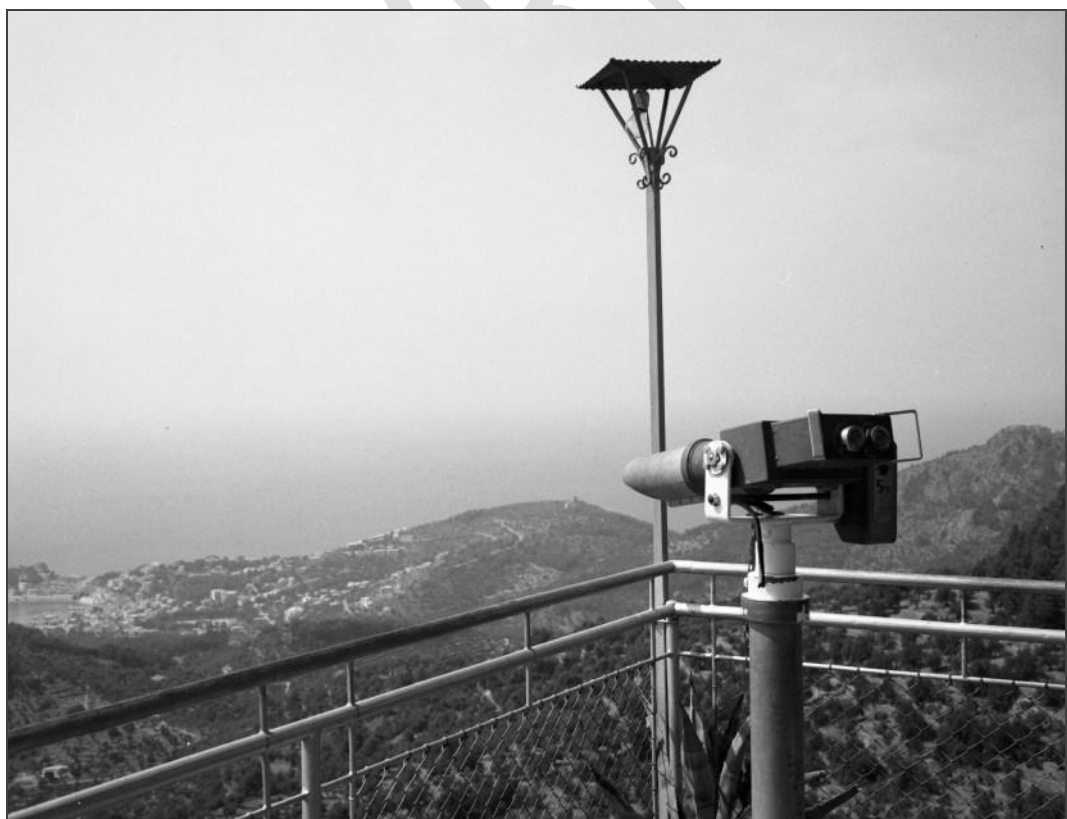


Fig 18 'Receding', from 'Puig Mayor, Observations in Passing'

Combat Grande, also known as SADA, is the name of the programme of automation of the Spanish air defence system by the USAF for the Spanish Government and supplied by a jointly owned Spanish-American company registered in California. The programme, coded 451D, was designed to automate Spain's manual air defence system by providing a computerised capability for aircraft surveillance and tracking. It includes the development of a combat operations centre and a sector operations centre with seven long range radar sites located throughout the Spanish peninsula. Included in the radar enhancement were the provision for new IFF/SIF facilities, video extractors, and modems. A capability for the remote operations of the radar site ground/air communications from sector operations centre for aircraft control was also provided. The system employs the Hughes H5118M computer, and the Radex system and provides video extraction and signal processing facilities. The H5118M is a medium scale, militarised computer specifically designed for command and control systems. In its basic configuration, it consists of a processor, buffered input-output channels, and 16,384 words of core memory. It is categorised as a modular, 18bit, binary, parallel, synchronous system with a 2 microsecond add-time and a 4.6 second multiply time. A building block design enables the H5118M to be expanded to a dual-processor system and a maximum of 131,072 words of core memory with no increase in cabinet size. Software packages developed for a number of other computers may be used interchangeably with the new H5118M, including the H3118M of NATO's air defence ground environment (NADGE) system, the H4118M used in the USAF 407L system and the Mk. 158 employed in the USN improved point defence target acquisition system (IPD/TAS). The Radex equipment provides automatic tracking of target returns from primary radars. When other modifications are added, tracking performance is improved by increasing the number of tracks that can be handled by a console operator; track accuracy on non co-operative tracks; the operators ability to detect valid targets by providing better recognition than with current narrow pulse video display. Prime contractor is COMCO Electronics Corporation, a company jointly owned by Hughes Aircraft and CESELSA. Hughes built the computers and designed the communications. CESELSA manufactured the communications subsystems and managed the civil engineering construction. About 7 kms. from the base is the power station which produces the electricity supply and provides the higher powered energy necessary for the operation of the air defence equipment. During the Libyan crisis, the American ships of the sixth fleet were supplied with information. The listening station misses nothing.

Fig 19 Supporting Text from 'Puig Mayor, Observations in Passing'

In addition to ellipses (the absence of people, though their presence is implied) seen in the previous works, this work employs three important rhetorical modes, one of content and two of form. Meiosis, the opposite of hyperbole, is used by representing the most important object in the series, the tracking station, as two very small spheres on the mountain summit, whilst its importance (function) hopefully must be/will be acknowledged as being very great.

There is a formal use of suspension, in that the whole piece holds back part of the message, by presenting an enigmatic or very open text whilst providing a potential meaning or solution through the technical text later. Finally, there is hendiadys, a formal similarity between concrete object and idea. This occurs in several ways. Firstly, through the centrally located 'Passing' image of the tracking station, which is presented with a large space around itself, similarly paralleled by the location of the tracking station situated in its own vast space. Secondly, through the symmetrical arrangement of the triptych itself, where the tracking station image is its pivotal centre, thus mirroring the tracking station as the central point of a 'radar like' sweeping arm. Thirdly through the relationship of the physical movement of the viewer 'through' the triptych itself:-i.e. approaching, passing, and receding from the work, just as an aircraft's 'blip' might move across or through a radar screen., Finally, hendiadys occurs in that the work suppresses the tracking station image, just as the tracking station is suppressed in actuality, i.e. it is distanced from view, it is secret.

The narrative structure of this work is intertextual both in its 'writing' and in its reading, and is dependent on a system of codes. Barthes posited that narrative is organised into five codes, the symbolic, the semic, the referential, the proaietic (actions), and the hermeneutic. In this work the symbolic includes the culturally fundamental binary oppositions of nature/technology and freedom/control. The semic code would normally be a character or a character's voice to which semes or basic units of meaning are attached, but this could also be objects or settings. In this work the mountain, for example, already has culturally based stereotypical meanings that may include those of the metaphysical, the spiritual etc. and can be brought to a reading of the work. The referential code refers to cultural knowledges already written, the intertextual 'commonplaces of a culture to which a writer refers.... in order to produce a sense of reality....(which) is the product of discourse' <sup>19</sup>. Codes of actions are provided intertextually through similar narratives, in this case a simple one of a journey, i.e. a

chronological and 'logical' progression from one point to another. The hermeneutic code is one that sets and resolves enigmas, using the reader's desire for closure and solution. In this work the technical written text provides both enigma and a potential solution. A casual reading of the photographic work would not reveal the use of suppression discussed earlier, and could provide for easy closure. The additional written text therefore provides a potential enigma, a juxtaposition of nature/technology challenging this closure and perhaps precipitating a second reading, that potentially leads to a 'revealing' of the suppressed and to a potential 'reading'.

A further reading this work (and of a Crown Building) could be developed through an awareness of the work of Michel Foucault.

Foucault's work has been described by David Green as having two interconnecting themes, that is '(i) the development of certain forms of rationality which posit man as subject and object of knowledge and (ii) the relationships bonding power/knowledge,'<sup>20</sup>

In developing these themes Foucault has directed much attention towards the 'disciplinary society' particularly of the 19th. and late 18th. centuries, a society that had shifted from being spectacularly ritualistic and violent, to a more modest discreet and subtle 'correction' whose target was the subjects soul rather than his body. This was not simply the result of reason over barbarism, but rather the implementation of a more pervasive and more calculated form of power and the exercise of discipline. Foremost in the implementation of this, Foucault suggests, are mechanisms of surveillance of which Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon Device provides the ideal model....

....'the principle was this... A perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the centre of this, a tower, pierced by large windows opening onto the inner face of the ring. The outer building divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening on to the inside facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell. All that was needed is to put an overseer in the tower and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, a worker or a schoolboy. The back lighting enables one to pick out from the central tower the little captive silhouettes in the ring of cells. In short, the principle of the dungeon is reversed: daylight and the overseer's gaze capture the inmate more effectively than darkness, which afforded after all a sort of protection'<sup>21</sup>

Foucault further suggests that this architecture of surveillance lead on from the prison to the school, the hospital, the asylum, the factory. and describes this as 'a carceral

network' that assures the capture of the body and its perpetual observation and the instrument of the formation of knowledge.

David Green states... 'the force and value of Foucault's ideas are owed to the fact that we continue to live in a society which is characterised, perhaps increasingly so, by the forms of discipline and mechanisms of surveillance which he has identified.'<sup>22</sup>

Geoffrey Batchen develops this further...

... 'its significance for Foucault goes beyond the architecture of prisons. For him it is a telling metaphor for the arrangement of power peculiar to the modern era, the arrangement referred to as 'disciplinary power'. It is not a system that just facilitates the surveillance of those without power by those who have it; more important, it represents a reflexive system of relations between gazes, bodies, and power that involves all parties. As the prisoner never knows when he is actually being watched, he must assume that it is always so; thus he necessarily surveys and disciplines himself. We need only think of such contemporary deployments as Neighbourhood Watch or photographic identity cards to recognise that we are positioned by them as both warden and prisoner. They are but two small elements in the continuing operations of disciplinary power.'<sup>23</sup>

Such power, as a two-way force, brings with it too its reflexive pleasures which may also be at play in the making of this work.

'The pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light\*; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade power, flee from it, fool it or travesty it. The power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalising, resisting' (Foucault)<sup>24</sup>

Finally, and importantly, there is another pleasure, that of the potential sense of pleasurable relationship between reader/text, which is explored by Barthes. This is the creative 'manipulation' or pleasurable experience generated through the text in conjunction with the reader. Barthes extends this notion of pleasure into what he terms 'plaisir' and 'jouissance', in order to distinguish between the two types of pleasure that

*\*There is a recognition here of Laura Mulvey's exploration of Freudian ideas of scopophilia<sup>25</sup> and whilst relevant to this discussion, it is particularly gender specific.*



a text produces. He is concerned not what the text *is*, but what it *does*, and central to this is the sense that the reader has some control of meaning. For Barthes, pleasure is opposed to ideological control through *plaisir* rather than *jouissance*...

‘*Plaisir* is a mundane pleasure that is essentially confirming, particularly of one's sense of identity. . . it is a product of culture and the sense of identity produced by that culture... it is plural, the variety of social identities it confirms requires us to think of a diversity of *plaisirs*.’<sup>26</sup>

*Jouissance* translated into English as bliss, ecstasy or orgasm and Barthes generally employs sexual metaphors to explain it ....‘it is a pleasure of the body experienced through sensualities...it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes, that is bliss (*Jouissance*)’.

*Jouissance* escapes the control of culture and meaning by distancing the signified and foregrounding the signifier... it is not concerned with meaning (either with self or of the world) but with presence and intensity.’<sup>27</sup>

In his particularly sexual description of *Jouissance*, Barthes makes no mention of the author's pleasure, either in the making or in the reading of one's own work. But one might reasonably assume that he too, experiences such *jouissance* of his own text as he writes. . .

‘the patina of constants, the voluptuousness of vowels, a whole carnal stereophony; the articulation of the body, of the tongue,... the sensuality...the voice, the breath, that writing as fresh, supple, lubricated, delicately granular and vibrant as an animal's muzzle... it granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it cuts, it comes, that is *jouissance*.’<sup>28</sup>.

As with Barthes’ and his assumed pleasures, this author’s (my) pleasures too of foregrounding the signifier (i.e. my photographic works) are of paramount importance in my photographic practice. For without.... those tones of perfect greyness, their pearly iridescence and liquid smoothness, stretched taut, held in perfect and archival tension within the supple firmness of a rectilinear space...and blacks, so rich, so thick, so deep, those dense and velvet subtle tones, caressed, stroked, by just the merest hint of magenta, a metallic sheen, that hints, flirtatiously suggests, offers and finally reveals...they meet, they touch, they merge, to form a line, a curve, an edge so perfect, so sharp, so honed, it cuts, it is bliss.....there can be nothing.,

## NOTES

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- 8 Herbert Marcuse, from 'One Dimensional Man' but quoted p65 'Marcuse' Alasdair MacIntyre pub. Fontana 1970
- 9 L. Althusser, from 'Ideology and the State Apparatus' (1971) but quoted in John Fiske, p12 'Television Culture', pub. Routledge 1987
- 10 Rob Powell 'Used in Evidence', Northern Eye, British Journal of Photography, 2nd. August 1985
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- 12 Herbert Marcuse, op. cit.
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- 14 Victor Burgin *ibid.* and Gillian Dyer p159 'Advertising as Communication', Routledge 1982
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