

I feel that the theme of loneliness could come under documentary photography. This is because the photos I aim to produce show truthful, objective and usually honest photography of a particular subject, most often pictures of people, this is typical of documentary photography. I aim to keep my photos as natural as possible in keeping with the documentary theme. This is why for my

I am going to explore how documentary photography is interpreted and how the term defines its image making.

The term 'documentary photography' is used widely to describe the taking of images to provide a record. The documentary genre of photography has different modes of representation that I will be looking at. I will be exploring its various styles, movement, practice and its role in social investigation

The word 'document' literally means evidence. Since the beginning of photography in 1839, photography is our most accurate record of reality, and has been used to document real people, events, places and circumstances. Documentary photography developed around the time of the Civil War and was assigned a genre closer to journalism. At the beginning of photographic practice image making was viewed very differently to how it is now. This implied that the photographers were skilled technicians rather than artists and just observers of the social scene. Early documentary photography consisted of subjects such as war, the dead, but mainly of the working class and immigrant workers. Before photography the middle and upper classes had very little exposure of witnessing working class life and people from overseas. This rise in the documentation allowed people to see real evidence and helped in the education process of society.

Two pioneers of documentary photography were Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine. Hine photographed immigrant and working class life in the United States. His images showed child labour, children working in factories highlighting poor conditions such as "Addie Card, 12 years. Spinner in North Pormal Vt." Showing a 12-year-old girl spinning cotton in a factory. His images informed us of the multiple contingencies that affect the life of an individual. He allowed his subjects to keep their sense of self, free of exploitation. His work was effective in prompting first state regulation and eventually federal regulation of child labour. This is an example of how documentary photography has an active influence on society.

One of the biggest questions in documentary photography is 'how is an image defined as being documentary?'. With these vague distinctions any photograph could be labelled as being 'documentary' also historians often regard photographs as a critical form of documentary evidence. This can be answered by connecting it to a kind of social investigation and to produce something that makes a difference. Karin Becker Ohrn says, '...documentary was thought of as having a goal beyond the production of a fine print. The photographers goal was to bring the attention of an audience to a subject of his or her work and in many cases pave the way for social change'.

Another question that arises from the documentary image is why do we accept what we see as a faithful representation? We seem to look at a photograph and immediately assume that they give us an accurate and authentic view of the world. Perhaps this is because of the nature of photography being a

mechanical representation of reality. If the photographers were regarded as skilled technicians operating tools then there was probably not much ambiguity surrounding the image.

Jacob Riis went on to photograph working class living conditions showing communities and the streets they were living on.

In his famous 1888 photograph *Bandit's Roost*, Riis argued that the alley, like the tenement, was a breeding ground for disorder and criminal behaviour. The image shows men and women standing in the street and hanging out of windows. There was nothing however to suggest that any criminal behaviour was taking place. I am sure that if they were criminals that they would not have been so keen as to co-operate having their picture taken. This left the authenticity of the image to be challenged along with the issue of genuine representation.

People trusted the mechanics of the camera which left them with questions about the personal integrity of the photographer. This was the beginning of a new awareness of the 'image maker' with personality and creativity over the image.

During the 1930's several photographers were hired to by a government agency called the Farm Security Administration. Their job was to highlight the impact of the depression and resulting poverty upon farm workers in America. Photographers for the FSA among many included Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans. The work of Evans was influential to documentary photography and given the comment 'the photographic editing of society'. Evans's was part of these new ideas about documentary photography focusing more on the influence of the photographer.

Evans was a man was an innate sense of wit with a constant understanding of irony. Many documentary style photographers have been influenced by his work over the years such as Robert Frank (his series 'Americans' shows similarities) along with Lee Friedlander and Diane Arbus. One of Evans's most famous works was 'subway pictures' where he concealed a hidden camera in his jacket to photograph commuters sitting opposite him in the carriage. This enabled him to make completely truthful documentary images as the subjects were completely uninfluenced by the camera.

The use of documentary photography in the media brought on the new category of photojournalism. This was photography that accompanied news articles. The news agency Magnum was established in 1947 and has produced some of the most definitive documentary photographs of our time. Magnum paid attention to individual styles of documentary photography and included photographers such as Henri-Cartier Bresson and Robert Capa. The images explored cultures in South America, Africa and Asia. The difference with these images is that the observation remained at a distance to try and give a full

honest representation of culture. With this it then becomes hard to distinguish where the objective view of the camera ends and where the photographer begins. When trying to give a completely impartial view you encounter the problem that with documentary photography the notion of an objective view ignores the cultural and social background.

Another documentary style photographer influenced by Evans was William Eggleston. Eggleston was one of the first photographers to use colour in documentary photography. He had a whole new influence on it by no longer using photography as a documentary medium in the classic sense, but rather as a means of giving expression to their own personal, unconventional view of the world.

This explores ideas about the job of the artist and the relationship between the document and the art of photography.

Documentary photography depends highly on the intentions of the photographer. It is decided if they wish to create this completely objective record of events, they want their own subjective view of the world or where they draw the line between photography and art.

'The job of the artist is to pay attention, collect, organise, archive, preserve then write a report, document then make your presentation. The job of an artist is just not to forget'

1. <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/hine.htm>
2. <http://www.yale.edu/amstud/r66/fr1.html>
3. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068389/>
4. <http://www.annedarlingphotography.com/documentary-photography.html>