

John Levett and Anne-Marie Glasheen at The Viewfinder Photography Gallery

Friday, February 26, 2010

By 1stAngel

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Viewfinder Photography Gallery presents unusual reworkings of family photographs, by two artists: John Levett and Anne-Marie Glasheen. Both use their family photographs as a resource in creating new series, and as a tool for understanding

and reinterpreting their own family histories. Anne-Marie creates new images, layering old and new photographs; John re-photographs existing photographs, finding new meanings in them through photographing them in different locations and on different surfaces.

Anne-Marie's series uses old and new photographs, old and new techniques, and feature three generations of her maternal family. Anne-Marie's great-grandfather was a master baker in Lee High Road. Her grandfather was a butcher, also in Lee High Road, before enlisting. She presents reproductions of original family prints, images created combining these with digital ones, and pinhole shots of 'Pettifer' addresses; poems and texts inspired by stories told and information gleaned.

Anne-Marie comments: "Having reached a 'certain age', I am increasingly fascinated by transience and the passing of time, and the nature and elusiveness of memory and its relationship to identity. How much do we know about the histories of the families we are born into? With each death, so much is lost. Family photos provide answers, but throw up questions. They hold keys, and they hide secrets. What is reality and what is myth in the various family stories that circulate, often modified depending on the teller's viewpoint."

John Levett is also intrigued by the mysteries of family photographs. For John, the truly interesting feature of the family album is what the family hides— "the abuse, the ignoring, the lies, the violence, the gathering disappointments, the slow death of ambition."



In 1987 John moved out of the house in which his mother had died eight years before. Amongst the clutter that went to the tip was (most of) the family photo collection—the repository of all the myths, assumptions, creations, deceits, omissions, avoidances and elephants in the room. He retained a handful of snaps, some taken by his father, some by himself, some by ‘an other’. John’s mother never talked to him of who his father was, or of her life before they met. Reworking the images complemented John’s reevaluation of life with his mother—giving certain moments a fresh immediacy; asking who was behind the camera; who was absent; what events were never recorded; what was the photograph never taken—recreating the narrative, rewriting the memory. He describes this process as “falling again, falling better.”

Accompanying workshop, Sunday 25 April, 2-5pm

John Levett is running an accompanying workshop at the Viewfinder, at which Anne-Marie Glasheen will also present her work. Those taking part in the workshop will be invited to bring along their family album—all of it or part of it. They’ll be asked to consider what the album represents to the family, what hasn’t been included, who hasn’t been included, what events are absent, what photographs could have been taken but weren’t. Participants will be looking at re-shooting the image—under light, under glass, in shade and shadow; in a formal context and casually. Participants will consider how we might question the stories that the family snap tries to tell; what we might learn from pairing image and image. This workshop is funded by the Capital Community Foundation and Grassroots Grants. Places are free but booking is essential – email louise@viewfinder.org.uk to reserve a place.