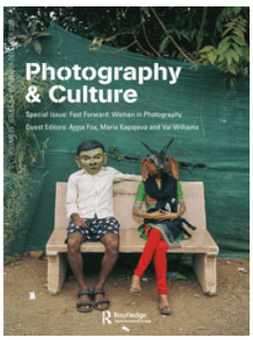

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Fast Forward and Rewind: Voices of Women Photographers

Jean Wainwright

Abstract

Revisiting an archive of women's voices talking about the reasons they create work using photography, reveals more than just the questions asked, the topics discussed, and the words spoken, but whose narratives are being told and who is missed. Each photographer has a different story to tell, but they are all linked by gender and tenacity. Some were drawn to using photography as a political tool, others to find a new language to interpret the world around them, still others as social commentary. All the interview extracts are from my archive of artist interviews that now number over 1,600 and which I began twenty-five years ago. From the 96-year-old Dorothy Bohm to the New Zealand feminist Alexis Hunter, who sadly died in 2014. From Violeta Bubelytė working in Lithuania to the German photographer Steffi Klenz working in Britain, from the African American Nona Faustine and her personal interrogation of black history in New York to Haley Morris-Cafiero and her engagement with Fat Shaming and the Internet.

Keywords: Women photographers, Interviews, Feminism, Black History

I begin with the ninety-six-year-old photographer **Dorothy Bohm** who was put in contact with me after the first Fast Forward: Women in Photography conference at Tate Modern in 2015 where her daughter Monica Bohm-Duchen approached me and arranged an conversation with her mother for me. The extract below is from our conversation that took place in Bohm's home in Hampstead in December 2015. Bohm discusses her important exhibition at the ICA in 1969 and the founding of the Photographers Gallery in 1971 with Sue Davies OBE[1] (Figure 1).

Jean Wainwright: *Why did you want to become a photographer?*

Dorothy Bohm: Well it is quite a good question. I was born in Königsberg which is now Kaliningrad, my cultural background was German, I wish it has been French instead. When I was a child I was very bookish, my father believed in education, we were always meant to learn as much as possible. He was a big industrialist and was always interested in the welfare of people and of his staff. I remember that my father used to like everything that was new on the market and at the time it was the Leica, and he went around shooting snapshots. I personally was a rather

Figure 1. Dorothy Bohm. Twins, Villa des Tulipes, Paris, 1953. Archival Print Silver Gelatin (printed 1953). © Dorothy Bohm Archive.

dumpy young child and I really didn't like being photographed, I was reading a lot and I was good at writing. Also, our house was always full of medics and I wanted to be one when I grew up, but it was not to be, I was sent to England because of my Jewish background in 1939 and my father gave me his Leica and I became a photographer. My father believed in women, which meant I never doubted myself (Figure 2).

JW: *What were the circumstances of your exhibition at the ICA in 1969 and why was it an important exhibition?*

DB: Well, in 1968 Roland Penrose was running the ICA in Dover Street and then they moved to the Mall. It was because of Lee Miller that Roland wanted photography in the exhibition spaces. The idea was that the ICA were going to have four photography exhibitions, all men. When one dropped out, the Director of the Design Centre [Paul Reilly] suggested me to Roland and he liked my work. The exhibition was following the first photography exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery of Cecil Beaton's photographs, but photography was down there and was not valued like it was in America. The title of the ICA show was *Spectrum: The Diversity of Photography: Four Photographers in Contrast*. I showed *People at Peace* which were photographs I had taken early on after the war in Europe, all black and white and Don McCullin showed *The Destruction Business*. I was amazed at the time by how many Journalists took an interest in my work. It did not occur to me that there were three men and one woman. At that time Sue Davies was working with Roland Penrose and the Director Michael Kustow and she wanted something to do, she had lots of energy. Kustow said to her, "There are so

Figure 2. Dorothy Bohm. Rue de la Loi, Brussels, 1949. Archival Print Silver Gelatin (printed 1949). © Dorothy Bohm Archive.

many photographers that come to us and say, 'look can we have an exhibition' and we have to tell them that we are not really into photography, only occasionally like this one". So he suggested that Sue should start a photography gallery and he said "Turn to Dorothy who has been a photographer all her life and is financially independent" which was very important, and Sue turned to me and I was thrilled at the idea from the moment she mentioned it. I had quite a lot of contacts and everybody said "It can't be done". Norman Hall was working for the Times and he said "we have all tried". My husband asked Sue "let me see the figures" and he looked at the figures and said "according to accounts it can't be done, go ahead and do it", and she did. So she founded The Photographers' Gallery and she was working in a little room at the back and I was at the front. Every photographer has to thank Sue Davies for what she achieved, and she worked so hard.

In contrast Alexis Hunter's interview which took place at the London Art Fair in 2011, explores how much has changed since the 1970s in photography, particularly in relation to women. At the time I had no idea that less than a year later she would be robbed of the power of speech by Motor Neurone disease, dying three years later at only sixty-five.

Jean Wainwright: *What informed your decision to become a photographer?*

Alexis Hunter: I studied photography just for a short while with Tom Hutchins [1921-2007] who was known as a socialist photographer. When I came to London in 1972 [from New Zealand] I struggled with how to makes socially directed paintings, but then I realised that with the feminist theory, painting almost had a

Figure 3. Alexis Hunter. 1948–2014. The Model's Revenge I-III, 1974. One from a set of three silver gelatin prints, printed 2010. 50.8 × 61 cm (20 × 24 in). © Estate of Alexis Hunter. Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery, London.

kind of difficulty, not that we had a problem painting anything, but rather being looked at with this huge baggage of art history: so in a sense the newer mediums film, photography, and performance were kind of without that baggage, so they were easier to actually get hold of feminist theory and try to analyse it and make art out of it.

JW: *You also were involved with the magazine* Spare Rib[2] *so you definitely have your feminist credentials there.*

AH: Yes, one of my photographs from 1974 is of a self-portrait which is in a washroom mirror of a petrol station in the middle of the United States somewhere, I wanted to take it to document myself going through the States writing an article on feminist art for *Spare Rib*.

JW: *There was so much being written about, at the time, on the gaze.*

AH: Yes, one of the things that I was interested in was the gaze: Why I actually used my hands in a narrative situation through my photographic series *Approache(s) to Fear* 1975-1978 was because I wanted a man to look through a woman's eyes. Also, when you said the word photographer in those days [early 1970s] you always meant a man, so that was important to take a photograph of myself as a photographer but as the sexual object and of course *The Model's Revenge I-III* (1974) leads into that. The model is taking revenge and looking back at the viewer, in the three shots I've got of the model she actually has a gun pointing at the viewer, but you don't see her face. So, I was very interested in who the viewer was, and who I presumed the viewer was, and also the changeability of the viewer. For instance in films, when the young maiden is being pursued by the man, is the man watching the woman? Or the man? And is the woman watching and so on and so on. I was very interested in the Hitchcockian view of the camera being the pursuer or the pursued, I was brought up with those films and my father belonged to a film club, so I saw all the John-Luc Godard, Luis Buñuel, and Ingmar Bergman films when I was quite young, so that was a really big influence on me (Figure 3).

JW: *You initially worked in black and white, what informed your decision to start to shoot in colour?*

AH: Well I moved into colour quite quickly and the style I used was a very glossy, hard one with influences from films like *Dr No* or *Barbarella* that's a very harsh sort of environment, very modern. I also worked with the input from women's magazines because we were very much about "who is the audience" which was women, and if they didn't go to art galleries they still read glossy magazines, so what I copied was the adverts in the magazines, stylistically. So [the images] were actually nothing to do with any art that I saw at the time, they are purely about advertising directed to women. So, I thought, "right, they do it, I can do it too." I actually worked in advertising as a painter in the animation business so that was it.

JW: *These were very edgy provocative works how did the audience react?*

AH: My images for *The Model's Revenge 1-111* were made into lithographs so they weren't seen as photographs, because I would have had a problem, not only with the male curators but with people trying to destroy my work. I actually had to frame these images because first of all I wanted to show them just pinned up on to the wall, but because they kept on getting ripped down I ended up having to frame them; it was the same problem Nancy Spero had with the insurance and then having to frame her work for exhibitions.

JW: *Tell me about the feminist network you belonged to in the 1970s and how that impacted on your work.*

AH: Well I was travelling through San Francisco in 1974 and I had just joined a feminist network, so once you are actually in a feminist network you could stay anywhere, all around the world. You would be put up, fed, everything, and you would do a bit of work for them and then when you went home you would put them up and so on, so it was very, very good. And I was put in the room with the lodger and that was his gun in *The Model's Revenge*. I looked at my diaries and I actually did the drawing for this photograph … now the way I take photographs, I am a painter as I said and I construct them first with drawing them, writing about them, and then maybe years later I might take the photograph, and it's always exactly the same as the drawing. I very rarely deviate, so I'm very much image based and very constructive, so even though they look like they are documentary, they are not at all. They give the appearance of being like snapshots. I'm very interested in the aesthetic of the amateur, and also the way for instance leaving my nails a bit dirty or so they're a little bit grimy, and that stops it being advertising. So, my images often look like advertising and then there's something slightly wrong and I give the little clue that it's not, because advertising is always very sterile.

JW: *Can we talk about how you deconstruct?*

AH: Deconstruction was a popular term in those days, we presumed things were always constructed and your role was to deconstruct them, so the un-deconstructed man, bit of problem in terms of grammar, he is a constructed male, he hadn't been deconstructed by anybody yet.

JW: *How much is the photographic being challenged now in the 21st century?*

AH: I don't have any problem with the challenge, I am on Facebook and social media and currently I am building up a series of photographs, also very constructed, on demonstrations. A lot of people take the same photograph at the same place, but mine are very very different because I think of the photograph I want before I go, usually. So other people are not going to take the same shot, even if they stand in front of me or behind me to take their photograph, which people do, it is rather annoying. But I have a completely different lens and because I became a painter I am very aware of the picture plane and how things are constructed over to the surface. I have particular things in the background that have to be there, in a certain direction, I am very bossy as well and the person I want to photograph has to go through contortions. I say to them "Don't feel ridiculous, it's going to look perfectly alright when it is finished" and they wonder what on earth it is going to look like.

Interviewing **Violeta Bubelytė** presented a different agenda. I met her when we were in Lithuania for the Fast Forward conference in 2017 and she came to my hotel to be interviewed. We worked with an interpreter which meant that the usual ebb and flow of the conversation was interrupted as my questions were translated and then her answers were translated and relayed back to me. She talks about her series of nudes and her use of analogue photography (Figure 4).

Jean Wainwright: *What first attracted you to photography*?

Violeta Bubelytė: My uncle was an amateur photographer and I was very interested in seeing the image appear. I was always searching for quality and when I first picked up a camera I was fifteen, I was not sure I would be allowed to borrow it so I just took it. As I could not draw or paint, photography seemed to be the way forward.

Figure 4. Violeta Bubelytė. Pries starta, 2019. Pigment Print. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 5. Violeta Bubelytė. Apdainavimas 1, 2018. Pigment Print. Courtesy of the artist.

JW: *You have perused for so many years images of the body, was that problematic when you began to make work of yourself and your friends?*

VB: When I started working with the nude it was not widely done, but it was not so problematic in the way that it would be removed from the exhibitions, but rather people kept quiet about it, nobody talked about [my work] it was ignored. I was really interested in Renaissance paintings at the time, but as I could not draw or paint, photography and the nude entered.

JW: *You are the woman looking at the woman so what made you want to take on art history but reverse the aesthetic?*

VB Well, how the nude was perceived in the earlier days of my practice was the naked body was associated with shamelessness and I was accused that somehow it was a way for me to seek out male sexual relations through my practice.

JW: *You were working in black and white rather than colour, why was that*?

VB: It was very difficult to obtain and very expensive, there was no colour paper and that was why everyone was doing black and white. I worked with colour the first time when I started working with digital photography and when I did those images I thought this is not an artwork anymore it was a photograph of a woman. When I work with colour I have to do a little bit more to avoid this reality, you need to bring in something more to the picture, you can't do it as efficiently as with black and white. I also mainly work with natural light because you can find that almost everywhere, artificial light feels, to me, somehow dead, lighting from the side is also very important for me.

JW: *Your photography appears to be about the aesthetics of pure form* …

VB: Yes, that is exactly my role and I am happy that you read it like that. Also, originally all my work was made thinking about myself as a person rather than thinking about women, I was thinking about my

Figure 6. Nona Faustine. 72 Canal, Sojourner Truth's Home, 2016. Chromogenic photograph. Courtesy the artist.

place in society. I never felt ignored as a woman (Figure 5).

JW: *How do you prepare for a self-portrait?*

VB: Everything is done [the preparation] in my house at home and I do not know when the nude will come. By the time I get to the studio I might not have inspiration. I don't prepare specifically but I always have vision and composition before shooting: of course I cannot see the result until I process it. Sometimes there are moments when I see the result and think "Oh no I have cut off my feet". So, I don't like not knowing [the end result] but I like seeing it when it appears, so there is a tension. I see the negatives and there is something really interesting, but there are times when it is still wet and it looks good but that can change when it dries, but if I didn't like the process I wouldn't do it.

Nona Faustine also works with her own naked body. From a younger generation of artists, her interview took place in The Brooklyn Museum in New York in 2019 where the director Anne Pasternak's policy since 2015 has been that the museum needed to 'do things differently, causing her to look at areas where people had not yet caught up' and collecting some work from those that 'had been historically missed out.'

Nona Faustine: Being born and bred as a New Yorker I never ever imagined that my work would be part of the collection [at The Brooklyn Museum] so it's quite stunning that my life took this turn, and that this work [*White Shoes* project] that came from my heart and soul, is now here (Figure 6).

Jean Wainwright: *Can I draw you back to when you first conceived of making this series. They are*

very brave works in terms of your performance in them, what was the germination of the idea?

NF: I think the kernel of the idea had been lying within me for dozens of years from when I was an undergraduate at the School of Visual Arts and started to do research as part of a class I had taken on the history of New York City. I began to learn about slavery in New York and about how the African presence was always a part of the history from the very beginning; so that lay dormant in me for many years. Then fast forward to graduate school, learning about how to express my own voice and find it within photography. From there I began to formulate my own language and what it was I wanted to say. There were a lot of things happening in New York City and in the country at the time, around killings of African Americans by police, there was a lot of strife, Obama was in office but we quickly learned that all we had hoped his presidency would bring had not really materialised, and for many of us there was still a lot of poverty, although African Americans were still striving we were losing ground in unemployment. I was thinking about what I wanted to say in my work. I was in a very strenuous rigorous graduate school programme, I felt the need to express myself, but I wasn't being seen or heard [in college] I felt invisible and very stressed about the things that I cared about, and all of that culminated in *White Shoes* where I put the black body right in the centre within a historical context of the past and the present.

JW: *You chose photography as your medium and I wanted to ask you about that choice?*

NF: Well it was simple, I have always been a photographer, and loved photography from a little girl. My father was the family photographer, my uncle gave me my first camera at four, so it was part of my life and there was no other medium I could think of that could capture and express what I wanted to say. I knew there was a void in photography where people like me, who looked like me and had my kind of body, were missing, and I knew that [this] was the right way I wanted to go. It was like I had a mission to fill this void or put myself in that category … I wanted to come into museums and see someone like *me* on the wall. That was my goal, photography is this super powerful medium that just *transcends* so I just knew that I wanted to use it to tell my story.

JW: *Can you remember the first photograph you took?*

NF: Yes, it was of my sister as a baby in my mother's arms and I still have the polaroid …

The role that mothers play in the world is so important, we make the world go around, none of us would be here. I take my role as a mother very seriously, my daughter is ten and the love of my life, she was my inspiration to go back to school and to tell these stories. Before I entered into the graduate programme I was an unemployed 'stay-at-home' mother and when I entered the programme my daughter was three and half years old. I worked as an office manager, then in 2009 I was laid off. For two years I couldn't find work, but at the same time it was a blessing, I spent that time with my daughter. One day my sister said "What are you going to do with your life you are so talented?" and then I thought, "I had better go back to school." I bought a camera, a Mac and I started taking pictures of my little girl and applied to a Masters Fine Art Program. In 2011 I was accepted to the International Center of Photography at Bard College in New York.

JW: *You have said that you felt frustrated at college …*

NF: Absolutely, from my perspective there were very few artists of colour in the curriculum there are maybe more now but in 2011, 12 and 13, the issues that I cared about were not part of the curriculum in my institution of higher learning, there were a few but not many, it was still the white Western point of view of photography and pretty male as well with women few and far between. I was thinking about what was going on in our country and history, how that impacts art, and how to discuss that in my work, but the curriculum was about the early history of photography. There was a point where I felt that I was not being heard but I

already knew what it was I wanted to do and I kind of shut myself off from everything else in order to survive. I was crying my eyes out and it was not easy, I felt alienated, I talked to other artists of colour and they told similar stories and so I felt that was the way I could survive, I hung on to that kernel of beauty that I had and my ideas and I just went about it. So, while I was shooting the *White Shoes* series I came across the idea of monuments now called *My Country* series, I wanted to show my diversity and I realised I did not have to show my body or always be nude; in talking about great American monuments and what they mean to me as an African American and the history imbedded in them.

JW *Do you consider yourself a new feminist?*

NF: I would definitely describe myself as a feminist. At first when I was in college I thought I wasn't. I was made to feel from the conversations that were occurring that calling yourself a feminist was a dirty word. I would like to think that the younger women coming into the movement have redefined what it means to be a feminist and to even reclaim from being what it used to be, into a new meaning, and that is incredible because before what it did was it made people afraid to stand up themselves and to say what they truly feel and it was hushing women "oh you don't want to call yourself a feminist you don't want to say that" and now it is "No, I am for women and I am for women's rights" and that is a proud thing.

In contrast **Steffi Klenz** is an East German photographer now resident in London. Her childhood was spent in a divided Germany separated by the Berlin Wall. She has always been fascinated by the fact that the photographic medium had a synergy with architecture and also questioned how the history of photography was mainly a male one (a point echoed by a number of the interviewees) citing the 19th century photographers Henry Fox Talbot, Francis Frith, Samuel Bourne, and Roger Fenton's early photographs of buildings. She was interviewed in 2019 (Figure 7).

Jean Wainwright: *What made you first become interested in photography as your medium and what is your relationship to architectural photography?*

Steffi Klenz: I chose photography because I liked its potential as a source of creative imagination, and I have always been interested in architectural photography as a tool for spatial knowledge. As you mentioned the work by Bourne or Talbot, many early studies of architecture took on the role of accurately recording historic buildings. Other architectural photographs taken predominantly by male photographers celebrated the city's exciting new architectural developments and achievements of human's progression in the late 19th century. So, the history of the subject fascinated me, for example architects and their clients realising the camera's usefulness for documenting and publicising projects and by the beginning of the 20th century the establishment of a thriving business in the photography of new architecture in many industrialized Western countries. In the UK architectural magazines such as *The Builder* (launched in 1842), *The Builder's Journal* (launched in 1895), *Architectural Review* (launched in 1896), or *Academy Architecture* (launched in 1889) were reporting on architectural and construction industry trends as well as featuring in-depth building studies through the visual means of photography. I noticed that currently mainstream commercial and editorial architectural photography still promotes the fact that a series of photographs of a building can make sense of and adequately represent the complex experience of encountering and occupying architecture. So this tendency of architectural photography to uncritically flatter its architectural subject matter seems to persist, and the photographic representation of buildings in architectural publications has become largely conventionalised.

JW: *So, you are challenging that?*

SK: Yes, I am particularly interested in challenging predominant models of architectural photography through a reconfiguration of the image. My own photographic practice has been consistently preoccupied with the built environment, critically

Figure 7. Steffi Klenz. Untitled from the series Beun, 2015–2016. Digital C-Type Print. Courtesy of the artist and Kehrer Galerie, Berlin.

exploring the notion of place and spatiality. My work unfolds in urban places and buildings, but not as commercial architectural photography but rather uncovering unexpected narratives and traces of history embedded in the place. You could refer to the disciplines of architecture and architectural photography as functional, rational, and grounded but I constantly strive to reflect critically on the camera's ability to invariably construct what it depicts.

JW: *I think I became very aware of this in your work* Caster *and* Ariadne's Thread.

SK: Yes, *Caster* and *Ariadne's Thread* were important in my practice in that I very much worked against the Modernist notion of the house as a 'machine for living' as identified by Le Corbusier, and Surrealists such as Louis Aragon, became more important in my work.

All of the images of the individual series' *Caster* and *Ariadne's Thread* use my own house in London, which, when moving in, appeared to be inhabited, if not by the former occupants in their physical form but by their ghosts. All the works regard the house as a stage: a theatre of the domestic that represents the house as a mysterious space embodying strangely animated furniture, convulsive forms and unruly guests.

JW: *Yes, those bodies of work very much present the space of the house as an architectural space to be constantly redefined. Your desire to challenge architectural representation becomes even more visible in your more recent work* Beun *(2015-2016) and* He Only Feels the Black and White of it *(2016) where repetition, appropriation, and fragmentation become themes in your practice.*

Figure 8. Steffi Klenz. Untitled from the series Beun, 2015–2016. Digital C-Type Print. Courtesy of the artist and Kehrer Galerie, Berlin.

SK: Yes, *Beun* and *He Only Feels the Black and White of it* explore the moment when a photographic image fails to communicate as an index. In both works each image is the space of revelation of particular details, so that what is revealed in one image is concealed in another. Each image becomes both a space of presence and absence at the same time (Figure 8).

This continues my interest in the expansion of the representational, of the potential of space, in these cases mediating between figuration and abstraction. For both works I used archival material that I alienated, in *Beun* through the application of digital software programs, transforming and erasing the information of the image, and in *He Only Feels the Black and White of it* repetitive screen-printing techniques. My intention was that viewers can comprehend the complete image only by putting the fragments of the single works together in their mind.

JW: *There is an uncanny de-stabilising of the image* …

SK: Yes, the effect of the uncanny fragmentations in both series is to de-stabilise our understanding of these historically charged architectural buildings and sites. The digital manipulations and the use of repetitive screen-printing question the slippages of our memory and evocatively reflects on the way we reconstruct our sense of the past through architectural representation. The directness of traditional architectural photography is replaced by images that themselves can be described as 'wrecked' or 'bruised' rather than truthful or representational.

Figure 9. Haley Morris-Cafiero. Steam, 2018. Archival Inkjet Print. Courtesy the artist and TJ Boulting.

Finally, **Haley Morris-Cafiero** raises questions about the power of the Internet and its implications. Her series, *The Bully Pulpit*, was made in response to online bullying and her taking back control. In the age of ever-increasing social media her photography not only provokes debate but also highlights the social responsibility of posting.

Jean Wainwright: *When did you first pick up a camera and decide that you wanted to be a photographer?*

Haley Morris-Cafiero: Well I was going to be a lawyer, but I found when I worked in a lawyer's office in America that I hated it, all the form filling. So, photography didn't happen until I was twenty years old in college, when I took it as an elective as part of my course and fell in love with it and ended up doing a double major.

JW: *Can you remember the first photograph or project you did that inspired you and why*?

HM-C: The first photo project that I was proud of was during my Photo 1 class. We were given a brief to create a series of photos inspired by music. My grandmother had a stroke at the time, and I did a triptych of her smiling, sleeping, and then an empty bed. I wanted to do a Duane Michals' style series that responded to "Say Goodbye" by Throwing Muses [an alternative Rock Band]

JW: *Can we talk about* The Bully Pulpit *(2018) and your approach to that body of work* (Figure 9).

HM-C: For my series, *Wait Watchers*, I photographed strangers as they passed by me while I performed mundane tasks in public. When it went viral in 2013, I immediately started getting hateful comments, but I never had a moment where I doubted myself or my values. I knew that I was doing something right as my photos were causing people to have strong reactions. I received thousands of hateful comments from people which made me laugh. I

Figure 10. Haley Morris-Cafiero. Fear of Lions, 2018. Archival Inkjet Print. Courtesy the artist and TJ Boulting.

wanted to respond to the bullies but not with text as it would fuel their hate. It was difficult to find a way to outsmart the bullies, but not emotionally—I am the person who calls everyone when there is bad news or difficult situations, so I am somehow equipped that way. With the bullies it was solving how I was going to deal with their reaction to my work. In my first 'case study' I didn't have to google my bully as he had given me his office email address and his name and I was thinking about going to his office and trying to photograph him as a *Wait Watchers* image near his office. I got to the point where I was researching what the technical definition of harassment was and I thought "that's not me" I was like "wait a minute": I took a step back and I thought about what is this really about and of course it's about the Internet, it's not really about this person, it's the ability of an online response to live for ever and he can't do anything about that. He can't get it taken down.

JW: *Each of* The Bully Pulpit *images has such attention to detail, for example the exact clothes they were wearing on their online profile that you then wear as you 'inhabit them' or the backgrounds* (Figure 10).

HM-C: Yes, I had a shopping list so I would take each person, find the item and tick it off the list, then I was thinking about "Well she is just wearing a white dress so I could take the text and print it on that"? Or I would try to think about the background I would use find a way to incorporate text into the background. One guy who 'trolled me' tried to hide himself using cartoon dog faces, but I googled him and within five seconds I found out he had been arrested, within ten hours I had his mug shot for five pounds, so he is part of the project. So, this idea of being anonymous, no you are not anonymous any more

JW: *People feel that they are though, they feel that they are doing it with impunity and are protected.*

HM-C: A lot of people. When I found a hateful comment about me in a Facebook post, I would click on their name and went to their curated profile page, they would have put up "Support gay rights" or "Gay marriage", "Support for parents", "Love everybody", anything they thought was trendy. And it was not just one time they were commenting on me, the people I chose had a pretty dedicated practice of commenting and sending hate messages. The odds of me happening on one person who did it once was minimal and actually a lot of the people in the project made multiple comments, across multiple sites on my work; sometimes there were a crossover between email, if you are reaching out to me that is another level. However, there were blog posts dedicated to how horrible, fat, and ugly I am, it is just ridiculous, multiple blog posts. So often we are not talking about one for example. One man I chose "Steam" dedicated four blog posts criticising me over three years. But to me it was really not about me, so some would do a post, just a landing pad where people would comment "Yes she probably got diabetes", "She is probably on welfare … she is stealing our tax dollars", all the presumptions made about someone's identity based on looks and their own prejudices (Figure 10).

JW: *What I love about* The Bully Pulpit *is the way that you turn the comments into your art, into something positive that allows debate.*

HM-C: People have different strategies and as long as it's not internalised … I tend to call people out on things, and I do get emotional when I see something that is not right and would feel annoyed with myself if I didn't say anything. A lot of people have questions one on one about what I do; when I am on panels I get a lot of questions afterwards.

JW: *When your work went viral and reached national and international news channels presumably it has an extraordinary effect on your social media as well.*

HM-C: Yes, on social media it was negative, lots of negativity, early on the comments section was anonymous in 2013, so there were lots of those then later they were on Facebook and vetted so those anonymous comments were not there anymore.

JW: *Why do you think they felt safe?*

HM-C: Because they thought that nobody was going to do anything. The odds of them saying it in person to me are very low, but by saying it online they felt that nothing was going to happen to them, no one was going to say anything or do anything. But they were wrong, so that is what I am hoping with the project socially. I want someone who has been bullied to see that bullies don't get away with it, or the bullies to see it never goes away, and with the project and performances I want it to be seen that they don't get away with it.

JW: *I also wanted to ask about the positive comments?*

HM-C: In the beginning it was comments and posts that were negative, but the emails were positive. I did get negative emails and I did have positive comments but really it was inverted and later, when it went viral, I would see the people fighting for me, and that was good. I would say the positive is pretty consistent, in an email they reach out in a positive form, and there are lots of blogs dedicated to positive things about the project. I think my unique experience was my way of handling the negative ones. I know that bursting out laughing at these hateful things is perhaps not normal, but I am ok with it. So, what I do with the positive ones is investigate the phenomenon of the life altering event through seeing just a post on the Internet, that is another new phenomenon we have. People emailed me very

personal, very private, very significant decisions that they made based on looking at my images online. How I use those comments takes a little more care, *The Bully Pulpit* was about me and my research of them, but my follow up work is going to be a collaboration with the people who had a life changing moment by seeing my photos on the Internet.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Sue Davies has now passed away.
2. *Spare Rib* ran from 1972-93 and challenged the exploitation and stereotyping of women.

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