

Introduction

This book project started in 2021, when I decided to look at every one of the seventeen thousand digital photographs on my laptop and phone. I wanted to do two things: to get them into some sort of order; separating photographs of family and friends from those I had taken with my artist hat on, and to see if I could bring into focus some moments from the blur of the previous two decades. As a painter, I have always taken photographs to use as reference, but by looking back through the mass of neglected snapshots from the past, I was hoping I might learn something about myself, how I see the world, and maybe discover ideas and subjects for new paintings.

I selected, and subsequently had printed, just over four hundred photographs that I felt 'had something'. I focused on my gut response, not allowing myself to analyse or question the reasons for my choices, and not choosing images just because they might look like what others might consider to be a good photograph. I just clicked the heart icon each time an image caught my attention, with myself being the only audience.

I spent weeks working with the printed copies; I spread them out over large tables in the studio, moved them around, paired them up and created various sequences. Conversations between previously unconnected photographs began to develop, connecting to one another, not only with regards to the subject matter, but also the abstract, visual elements within the compositions; the rhythms, patterns, textures, colours and tones. Many of the photographs became frames in short, imagined, stories; unexpected scenarios emerged, coming together for whatever reason, with no consideration to the time or place of their original creation. Gradually, and after a number of weeks, I selected just over one hundred photographs for a first edition of this book, and had one hardback, coffee table sized, book printed.

My intention had always been to reevaluate the first book and produce a second version, but I decided first to scrutinise the photographs more intensely, by making paintings of them. To date, I have painted more than half of the images, and in doing so, have continually discovered more about each one. With a deeper understanding of the images, and what might have compelled me to take the photographs in the first place, I came back to the book, with an aim to wrap the project up.

For you, the viewer, I see this photobook as working sequentially, from the start to the end, blurring themes and timeframes, and real-world connections. But I also see it as a bowl of serendipity; something you can dip into at any point, consider this way or that, and contemplate the images with those that appear before and after, to see what flights of imagination they might inspire.

For me, this photobook has bought some order, albeit a new order, to a period of life that had somewhat been 'spinning gently out of time'. It has allowed me to discover, reflect upon and fix to memory, not only the unexpected, reoccurring visual motifs and subject matters that stop me in my tracks day to day, which I'm compelled to record, but also the pictorial DNA strands that link them together. I feel that I am starting to learn the secret visual language of my daily life.