

## Some research notes scanned CS A4:

✓ find & edit.  
Further reading for ass 4 Post & add to bibliography. i- CS AY

Barrett, T. (1986) 'A Theoretical Construct for Interpreting Photographs' In: *Studies in Art Education* 27 (2) pp.52-60.

Barrett explores past categorisation of photographs, then proposes his own. He says that purist, Pictorialist and straight labels, indicate that images are unmanipulable, which is untrue.

I was interested that he cites Minor White with others developing an approach to photographic criticism called "reading" with the categories: Documentary (pure recording), Pictorial (personal ways of seeing), informational (explaining, reporting), equivalent (transcending its original purpose).

Beaumont Newhall identified the categories of, straight, formalistic, documentary and equivalent, with the later being metaphorical with personal and emotional significance. Barrett suggests that White's pictorial versus documentary categories are naive, whilst Beaumont Newhall's use of equivalent is more descriptive.

Barrett also cites Szarkowski's division into Mirrors and windows as a bi-partite; does it reflect an artists self-expression (mirror), romantic tradition or a window (realistic) to better understand/explore the world?

Barrett suggests that his new categories allows for questioning strategies in art criticism, and reinforces that photographs are expressions that should be "interpreted and evaluated" (Barrett, 1986:53) before being accepted. He points out that if we simply assign photographs categories like paintings as art "their contributions to knowledge and values are lost" (Barrett, 1986:52). He suggests 6 categories:

1. Descriptive- not more than descriptions. e.g. Medical X rays.
2. Interpretive- To make assertions about the world that cant be verified.
3. Explanatory- To expressly to explain. e.g. social anthropology portraits
4. Ethically evaluative- To make moral judgements e.g. Lewis Hine's propaganda photos of the Nazi regime.
5. Aesthetically evaluative- those primarily for this purpose.
6. Theoretical-about art or photography.

### **Most important learning points for me were:**

- Obvious but to categorise you must pay attention to the detail of the form, content (denotations, connotations) and rhetoric about its subject.
- Moving images from one category to another can bring a fresh perspective on the work.
- Reading photographs to categorise them involves interpretive and critical considerations about the work, beyond assigning them as "art".

Killip, C. (s.d.) *Life in Pictures: Chris Killip*. At: <https://www.frieze.com/article/life-pictures-chris-killip> (Accessed 24/03/2023).

In this article Killip talks about the images that have influenced him. He uses Walker Evan's photograph *Bed, Tenant Farmhouse* (1935) to explain how he writes about a photograph. First he lists his impressions of everything that he sees in the work, though his example sees like a descriptive list to me. Killip emphasises the need to be factually accurate. This does tie in with some of my learning from Barrett above. I then researched to see if I could find anything more out about his notetaking system.

I did go to the Chris Killip retrospective at the Photographers gallery in December 2022, which was the first time I had seen his photographs in an exhibition. I was struck by the life in the photos and his framing in particular.