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Photography as Expanding Form: Virtual and Actual Expansion in the Work of Saron Hughes and Martina Corry

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Abstract: This article considers the notion of expanding photography in relation to the work of Saron Hughes and Martina Corry. Both artists produce work that challenges conventional readings of the photograph. Hughes' *A1 Still Life* causes pictorial confusion -within photographic representation- and suggests the possibility of virtual expansion. Corry's *Colour Works* series also generates pictorial ambiguity, yet this arises from the actual expansion of the photograph. Shaped into three-dimensional forms, *Colour Works* posits the photograph as an object. These distinct examples of expanding photography both employ folding as method. Their contrasting approaches converge in their exploration of the fold's ability to transform a flat paper surface into a three-dimensional form. I will explore the operations of the fold through the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. Hughes' and Corry's expanding photography correlates with accounts of internally and externally generated media expansion (derived from Rosalind Krauss and Peter Osborne). The virtual and actual expansion of photography here will be read in conjunction with art historical and theoretical notions of medium.

Keywords: materiality; surface; object; fold; Deleuze; Osborne

The question *what is a photograph?* has been implicit in an emergent genre of contemporary photography. Recent exhibitions -notably *What is a Photograph?* in 2014 at The International

Center of Photography- have explicitly responded to these ontological explorations. This questioning of what photography *is* has arisen against the backdrop of increasing digitalisation and dematerialisation. Reflective practice (such as the work featured in *What is a Photograph?*) explores the medium-specific conditions of photography by considering the traditional function and form of the photograph. Particular strategies are evident in self-referential photographic practice: a disruption of conventional photographic representation and a renewed emphasis on the materialisation of the photographic print. This article will explore two such approaches. First, the work of Saron Hughes will be considered as a visualisation of the, usually invisible, photographic surface by means of a disruption within, and of, photographic representation. Second, Martina Corry's work will be explored as a visual tracing of its process and as a materialisation, of the assumed immateriality, of the photograph itself. A consideration of visibility and materiality necessitates paying close attention to these works. This close reading will be informed by theoretical and philosophical accounts of expanding media, folding, materiality and space. I propose that these works entail a virtual and actual expansion of photography. The notion of expanding photography will provide a conceptual framework for this analysis.

Expanding Fields

The idea of expanding photography suggests that the medium is somehow increasing in size, inhabiting space in a different way, perhaps extending its dimensions by becoming sculptural. An expanding photograph could be one where the photograph itself is subject to the addition of external media, such as paint or collaged materials. Expanding photography could also suggest an expansion of the medium derived from new technological developments, or that photography is increasing its dissemination or critical reception. The question of medium expansion was explored in Rosalind Krauss' essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (1979). In Krauss' "expanded field", sculpture's expansion had occurred by means of a transformation in its relation to landscape and architecture (which had previously been external to sculpture as a medium). Krauss' essay influenced subsequent explorations of expanding media (of which Peter Osborne's expanding field of photography is a particularly pertinent example). Artistic explorations of expanding media considerably predate theoretical considerations (note 1). In the 1960s however, there was a significant convergence of artistic and theoretical explorations in relation to "expanded cinema": Stan Vanderbeek's (1966) article "Culture: Intercom and Expanded Cinema" was an early articulation of this phenomenon. Expanded cinema comprised a liberation of cinematic form and content, and incorporated self-referential explorations of film as a physical and historical

medium. The prerequisites of expanded cinema included “intermedia techniques, the destruction and abstraction of the material” as well as explorations of film’s spatial and haptic potential (Valie Export 290). Expanded cinema has particular resonances with the self-referential and expanding photography of Hughes and Corry. The work of Hughes and Corry provokes similar questions regarding the boundaries, both virtual and ontological, of the (photographic) medium.

In his paper “Photography in an Expanding Field: Distributive Unity and Dominant Form” (2003) Peter Osborne examines the question of the ontology of the photographic image. Osborne begins with the premise that photography is currently in a state of flux as a result of technological developments and cultural-economic factors. Hence his idea of the *expanding* -rather than *expanded*- field (Osborne asserts his contrast with Rosalind Krauss’ examination of the “expanded field” of sculpture, which posited expansion in the past tense). Osborne’s account of photography’s expanding field comprises the constantly changing transformation of the *idea* of the photographic. This *idea* of the photographic encompasses disparate technologies that are continuously becoming photographic. Osborne takes these “photographic” technologies to include television, film, video (and even short-wave radio and micro-wave imagery). Thus his expanding field consists of moving as well as still images, and can be seen as a radical expansion of the traditional conception of the photographic medium. This expansion is derived from what he considers to be cultural determinations of the photographic whereby distinct technologies can (somewhat simplistically) be seen to be various evolutions of, or developments from, the photographic as such. Although conceding that “the photograph” has functioned as the founding form of these photographic technologies, Osborne is keen to stress that the unity of photographic technologies operates only at an imaginary -culturally determined- level. Osborne’s “expanding field” is comprised of disparate “photographic” technologies that expand from within this (immaterial) conception of the photographic. Osborne insists that “the expansion here is internally technologically generated, continuing and open-ended, rather than reducible to a discrete set of external relations” (66). This internal expansion contrasts with Krauss’ “expanded field” where sculpture had expanded by means of a transformation in relation to things that are external to sculpture as such.

Contrasting theoretical accounts of media expansion provide useful contexts for what occurs in the work of the artists Hughes and Corry. Both artists produce works that originate in folding. While this folding is representational in the work of Hughes, in Corry we encounter the folding of the photographic medium itself. The folding of paper or fabric is often understood as a compression of spatial dimensions (in terms of surface area), but it also

produces a thickening or expansion of the folded material's spatial depth. In Deleuze, folding and unfolding generates new surfaces. Hughes' and Corry's folding is subsequently unfolded to reveal three-dimensional forms that transgress the boundedness of paper. Hughes' *A1 Still Life* series will be seen to comprise a virtual expansion of the medium that occurs from within the confines of photographic representation. Corry's photograms in contrast enact an actual expansion of the photograph: from the domains of flat image to the realm of a three-dimensional object. The capacity of reflexive works to provoke questions of medium expansion is highlighted in Carol Squiers' introduction to *What is a Photograph?* in which she states that ontological concerns have "led to an expanded vision of photography as an expressive form" (9). In what follows, I will consider the concept of photographic expansion to think through what occurs in the work of Hughes and Corry. I will begin with Hughes whose *A1 Still Life* series enacts a virtual expansion of the medium.

Saron Hughes; *A1 Still Life*

Hughes' artworks resist medium categorization. Existing somewhere between the two- and three-dimensional, much of her work appears to converge and deconstruct media. Her *Painting as Sculpture as Photography* (2008) – consisting of suspended painted forms in space – is simultaneously a painting and a sculptural installation. Other works are manifested as floor-bound sculptural objects that nevertheless possess many of the characteristics of painting (including flatness). Hughes questions the nature of representation and provokes reflection on the materiality of her quasi-sculptural objects. Her work actively considers the spatial position of the viewer and explores issues of perspective and pictorial space. This concern is evident in her *A1 Still Life* series (2005).

Hughes' *A1 Still Life* series consists of photographs of a domestic interior. Although inspired by still-life painting, the subject matter is unconventional. The A1 of the title refers to the recurring feature of the work: a sheet of white A1-sized paper. *A1 Still Life* is the photographic documentation of the artist's manipulation of a sheet of drawing paper. The work exists in photographic form, but it is Hughes' training as a sculptor that comes to the fore. The paper is employed in a sculptural way, the three-dimensionality achieved through a series of creases and folds. However, the presentation of the A1 paper in the form of two-dimensional photographs produces an effective flattening of the sculptural object and provokes confusion in the viewer's depth perception. The work engenders a movement between two paper surfaces: the actual A1 sheet and its photographic mediation. The work as such, happens in the interplay of these coexisting surfaces.

[INSERT FIGURE 1]

A1 Still Life charts the journey of paper through the front room of a suburban house, it entangles itself with the furniture, it envelops a cushion, it caresses and covers a fruit bowl, it sidles up to a television. The progression here is not simply the movement of the paper through the room but also a transition between media – from drawing paper to sculpture and from sculpture to photography. The folded sheet momentarily adopts the characteristics of a three-dimensional form. The home serves as the milieu, with the paper mapping both the spatial interior and the psychic and conceptual activity of the artist. Hughes began folding the paper in an attempt to understand the Lacanian “Real” (note 2). *A1 Still Life* originates from the artist’s attempt to think through Lacan’s operation of the Real “as that which resists symbolisation” (Hughes, “A1 Series”). The *imaging* of the Real is non-representational and occurs purely through diagrammatic folding.

The A1 paper becomes an image within the still life of the domestic interior. Yet this motif acts not as a subject for the picture so much as an anti-pictorial device. The paper sheet masks the interior beneath it, obscuring it from view and operating as a type of screen on the surface of the photograph. It may be argued that this screen is *in* rather than *on* the photograph, but its effect is to push forward from the receding pictorial elements of the photograph onto the surface. The paper appears as a floating abstract form that obscures a field of variegated coloured planes. Its advancing form rises to the surface of the photograph causing the divergent planes and colours to recede. The A1 paper disrupts the plane of representation and acts as an opaque veil on top of the image.

Hughes’ *A1 Still Life: Armchair* (Figure 1) depicts a red chair in a domestic space, to the right is a window and to the left an open door. What is most striking about this image is not the interior scene but the sheet of paper that floats on top of it. We cannot say where the surface of the paper is. Impossibly suspended, the A1 paper appears as a ghost that haunts the domestic space. The disembodied form produces a similar effect to the anamorphic skull in Holbein’s *Ambassadors*, creating uncertainty in our position as viewer. The paper is twisted so that it almost seems to be escaping from the picture. It is as if the sheet has unfolded itself and is preparing to take flight through the open door. Hovering menacingly, this phantom provokes the uncanny in the viewer both through its out-of-placeness with the domestic interior and via its apparent animation. The looming rectangular form that cajoles us into the picture also points us in the direction of its exit – one corner of the sheet forms an

arrow head that juts into the dark space behind the picture. This expanding monumental form destabilises the photograph.

Hughes' work often creates a fracturing of the virtual photographic surface resulting in the visibility of the photograph as a material medium. In an earlier series of work Hughes employed holiday brochures as source material – folding, distorting and re-photographing the publicity images. Hughes “recreated the space of the landscape by folding the image along the horizon and rephotographing the picture along the ground of the image” (Hughes, “Materiality of the Photo”). Reflecting on the idea that holiday brochures invite the viewer to enter their (depicted) space, Hughes manipulated the images (sometimes introducing new lighting and depth of field) so that the viewer is effectively “thrown further back out of the image as the picture” (Hughes, “Materiality”). Hughes observes that “the picture plane remains impenetrable – its materiality is emphasised not diminished... Sometimes you can clearly see the texture of the [original] page” (“Materiality”). Hughes' motivation for making the work arose from a sense of “frustration at the smooth photographic surface that I want to break through” (Hughes, “Materiality”). This desire to disrupt the surface recalls Yve Lomax's account of fracturing within the photographic image:

A fracture appears in the seemingly smooth and transparent surface of the photographic image. The fracture (or is it a cut?) draws my attention to the photographic surface; no longer can I look through the photograph as if it were a window, a pane of glass which unobstructively allows a view “outside” to shine “inside”; to be plainly and truly seen (Lomax 16).

Folding

It is a single fold that transforms the paper in *A1: Still Life Armchair* into a sculptural form, thus introducing another dimension to the previously flat sheet. Paper can produce an infinite number of spatial variations. In *A1: Still Life* paper takes on multiple shapes, embodies new forms; it produces continuity and contiguity between inside and out. Folding produces new surfaces, textures, layers and constructions of matter. The fold possesses a particular ontological and aesthetic potential for Gilles Deleuze for whom it is aligned with Baroque art (which demonstrates an infinity of multiplying folds in its rendering of garments). For Deleuze the Baroque is concerned with materiality – “Baroque underlines matter” and this “matter tends to flow out of the frame, as it often does in trompe l'oeil compositions” (*The Fold* 141). Discussing the fold's movement towards volume, Deleuze asserted that “it may be that painting needs to leave the frame and become sculpture in order fully to attain these effects” (*The Fold* 140). We could draw some correspondences between this aesthetic dimension of

the fold and what occurs in *A1: Still Life Armchair*, particularly with regard to its *trompe l'oeil* effect. The fold in *A1: Still Life Armchair* operates as a diagonal ascending the paper that, in turn, appears to ascend to the surface of the paper print. The A1 paper operates as a type of Möbius strip unfolding onto the surface of the artwork – there is an apparent inseparability between the virtual and actual surfaces. The folding of the A1 paper sheet anticipates the paper surface of the photograph. Folding is introduced as an action that traverses the impenetrability of the picture plane. The viewer perceives a virtual immaterial folding that occurs only in the landscape of the mind (an imagined folding that echoes Deleuze's account of the Baroque fold). Through folding, Hughes engenders a multiplicity of the surfaces of the work.

[INSERT FIGURE 2]

In *A1 Still Life: Cushion* (Figure 2) the A1 paper takes the form of a folded diagram resembling an incomplete origami experiment. The paper is folded in half along the diagonal and the top section is folded in half again to produce a sail-like effect. The corners each point to the frame of the picture – drawing our eyes to the edges. One corner is curled up and tucked underneath a gold cushion; this quarter of the paper envelops and mirrors the form of the cushion. The paper is buckled at the intersection of the folds and creases. Although one part is tucked underneath the cushion and rests on the sofa, another section of the sheet appears to hover free from the sofa producing a discernible shadow beneath it. The sharp aerodynamic corners resemble those of a paper airplane. Although *A1 Still Life: Armchair* and *Still Life: Cushion* are similar in subject, the result of the folding is distinct. In *A1: Still Life Armchair* the paper appears to advance onto the surface of the picture, inducing unease regarding its actual place in the image. *Still Life: Cushion* however lends itself towards a more conventional form of illusionistic depth; this picture has only one apparent surface. The entanglement with the cushion ensures that the A1 paper recedes to a plane beneath that of the advancing seat on which it partly rests (it is thus effectively contained and constrained in the picture). While *Still Life: Cushion* invites us into the picture, in *A1 Still Life: Armchair* we are left to range over its surface.

The sculptor is traditionally concerned with the external surface or patina of the work – the outermost element that is visible to the viewer. The presentation of the sculptural object in the form of its photographic mediation suggests a withholding of the artistically handled surface. Yet in *A1 Still Life* the actual paper object and the paper on which it is reproduced become conflated. There is an apparent coextensivity between the literal and optical (virtual/depicted) surfaces of the work. The photograph here takes the place of the original

object; it is the secondary screen that produces the surface of the A1 paper as virtual image. The real surface -of the photograph- is intertwined with the virtual surface so that each becomes present in the other. The A1 sheet unfolds between the internal and external surfaces: from the surface of the folded paper to the photograph as the actual surface of this “sculptural” work. The shaping of the paper creates ambiguity when manifested as photograph onto another paper surface. The representational folding of the A1 paper surface produces a virtual folding that is coextensive with the virtuality of the photographic image.

A1 Still Life challenges the boundary between three-dimensional sculptural form and two-dimensional photography. The folding of the paper introduces volume into the otherwise flat sheet. However, the presentation of the sculpted form as photographic image produces a compression. *A1 Still Life* illustrates the flattening effect of photography when it *pictures* a sculptural object: volume is reduced to flat representation. Yet there is a virtual internal expansion that occurs through the ambiguous depiction of the folded paper form. The obscuring of the pictorial image by the paper disrupts a reading of the photograph purely in terms of the optical, depicted surface. Although the folded surface is internal to the photograph (it happens within photographic documentation), the viewer encounters a doubling of (literal and optical) surfaces in *A1 Still Life*. There is an indiscernability or indeterminability between the (virtual) photographic representation and its (actual) surface. It is as if the (original) three-dimensionality exceeds the purely representational confines of the picture – expanding onto the surface of the photograph. The failure of the photograph to function as image, draws attention to the, usually invisible, photographic surface. The effect that the paper has on the viewer is similar to Deleuze’s account of Japanese scroll painting: “it is no longer the medium that rolls up on itself; it is what is represented on it that rolls up at its surface” (*Essays Critical and Clinical* 22).

A1 Still Life engenders a virtual expansion that is proper to photography. This effect is partly caused by the pictorially ambiguous depiction of flat depth. Hughes’ expansion is virtually generated and is purely photographic: its mediation of its referent confirms the inherent documentary and indexical qualities of the medium. The photographic documentation of sculpture (or performative/ephemeral practices) was itself an important -historic- step in photography’s expansion into art, and one that was evident from the beginning of conceptual art. Corry’s work by contrast rejects the representational and referential role of photography. Corry’s *Colour Works* consists of actual folded photograms. This work transcends the constraints of photography as a flat method of picturing and produces a material, rather than imagined, expansion. Moreover, in Corry’s *Colour Works* we encounter photography that eschews internally-generated expansion and instead tends towards external convergence.

Martina Corry; *Colour Works*

Corry's work shares similar concerns with that of Hughes. Corry has a background in sculpture and explores questions of objecthood and media convergence. Corry's work also challenges notions of photographic and sculptural form. Her early sculptural work tended towards flatness; the focus on geometrical constructions and on surface belied the influence of minimalism (particularly the work of Donald Judd and Carl Andre). There are close correlations between these sculptures and Corry's early photographs. *Seem* (2000) from the *Photogenic Drawings* series consists of photographic paper with a single vertical crease. The title is perhaps intentionally homonymic. The crease looks like a seam running up the vertical length of the paper, with corresponding buckling on either side. Corry has highlighted that the work's metallic appearance coincides with the metal support on which it is mounted. This sheet metal was donated to the University of Ulster by the aircraft manufacturer Shorts (now Bombardier): imperfections on its surface rendered it unsuitable for airplane construction. Corry's work is concerned precisely with such imperfections and interruptions to the surface. There is an interaction between two surfaces in *Seem* – the metallic appearance of the photograph aesthetically reflects on the hidden surface on which it is mounted.

Actions such as folding are integral to Corry's practice. In her *Colour Works* series Corry's process often begins with her folding and creasing -and sometimes crumpling- photographic paper before exposing it to the light of the enlarger. The paper is flattened out for exposure but will retain the creases of the folds, and a degree of crumpling which will comprise peaks and troughs in the planarity of the paper. Corry combines this with the photogram technique to create abstract photographs that challenge the illusionistic and purely depictive nature of the medium. Photograms are unique camera-less images generated by the direct exposure of light onto a light-sensitive surface. Corry's *Colour Works* however pertains to a particular sub-category – that of the luminogram. Like conventional photograms, luminograms employ the enlarger only as a light source (rather than to optically project negatives). However, the luminogram goes further in its stripping away of the mechanism of photography because it is simply a record of the interaction of light and the light-sensitive paper. Luminograms do not employ objects between the light source and the paper in order to depict them. Corry's colour luminograms are created using a black and white enlarger in combination with colour filters or gels. Corry's *Untitled 3.2* (Figure 3) from 2008 does not at first glance look like a photograph. Instead it resembles bright yellow wrapping paper that has been flattened after use. The crumpling and folding of the paper further suggests that this is not a photograph:

photographs are conventionally treated as fragile and revered surfaces. However, *Untitled 3.2* is a colour luminogram created in a similar way to *Seem*. Although folded prior to exposure, the paper appears relatively flat with little variation in its surface aside from the creases produced by folding. The paper possesses a uniform monochrome quality with a lack of variegated colour. This uniformity is partly a result of the fact that the paper received two exposures of light using the same colour filter; the large sheet (92.5 x 72.5 cm) was turned between exposures in order to even out any natural fall-off of light caused by the paper's distance from the enlarger.

[INSERT FIGURE 3]

Corry's folded works are different in kind from Hughes' *A1 Still Life* series. Corry's photograms do not consist of the photographic representation of a folded form, but instead present us with an actual folded photograph. Deleuze's account of the fold in modern art has a particular resonance with what occurs in Corry's *Colour Works*. Deleuze refers to the work of the Hungarian painter Simon Hantai who progresses from a depiction of folds to a folding of the canvas. "Hantai begins by representing the fold -tubular and swarming- but soon folds the canvas or paper" (Deleuze, *The Fold* 40). Like Hantai, Corry has introduced folding as "a 'method', a process, an act" (note 3). Corry's action also entails unfolding the paper for exposure and processing. For Deleuze "the unfold" is not the opposite of the fold but "the continuation or the extension of its act, the condition of its manifestation" (Deleuze, *The Fold* 40). Deleuze asserts that it is in modern art that we encounter the "all-over fold" (*The Fold* 141). Carl Andre's "planar sculptures" illustrate art in which "form no longer contains a volume but embraces a limitless space in all directions" (Deleuze, *The Fold* 187). Corry similarly embraces space in her folded and crumpled photograms. In employing the fold as method, Corry materialises the photograph as a malleable tactile surface and as a three-dimensional object.

The distinction between Hughes' *A1 Still Life* series and Corry's photograms is not as clear as it appears to be at first glance. Although *Colour Works* consists of actual folded photographs, they do not eschew photographic representation (a fact that is due to the particular photographic process employed by Corry). Looking closely in the areas around the folds of *Untitled 3.2* we can observe the photographic representation of folds on top of the actual folded photograph. What was projected onto the paper was simply light, yet it resulted in an imaging of the photographic surface. Corry folds and crumples colour negative paper *before* exposing it: the folds, creases and crumples effectively become ridges and furrows. It is these same concave recesses and convex advancing forms that are *photographed* during

the method of production. The depth of the respective peaks and troughs determine how much light that area of the paper will receive. Recesses in the paper sit flatter on the baseboard and will be comparatively further away from the enlarger light. These areas will also be shaded from the light resulting in less exposure of that area of the paper. The peaks of the paper that advance will be comparatively closer to the enlarger. One would expect the advancing areas to receive more light, but the process is more complex than this. There is a natural fall-off in terms of light touching the paper due to the required distance of the large sheet from the enlarger, but the angle of the light with regard to the peak or trough will also impact on the relative exposure. Any part of the peak that is not *facing* the enlarger will also be in shadow and thus be less exposed. Corry's folded photograms are not simply photographic paper that has been folded, their being folded prior to exposure results in a photogram that *pictures* its own surface. The shaping of the paper determines the resulting form, but also has a dialectical relation with the subsequent photographic image. Corry has highlighted that "although abstract in appearance, the works document the history of their own making" (Corry, "Thoughts on Abstraction").

[INSERT FIGURE 4]

The uniformity and flatness of *Untitled 3.2* contrasts with Corry's more crumpled and variably coloured works. *Immaterial* (Figure 4) employs multiple crumpling and creasing in its construction with resulting ridges and furrows. The differentiated planarity contributes to fluctuations in colour (and tone) in what would otherwise be a red monochrome. The crumpling of the surface creates crevices and peaks that fall away from the enlarger or rise to meet the light. The raised areas of the paper received light only when they were in a position where they faced the enlarger. Because Corry uses photographic negative paper (rather than positive paper such as Cibachrome) the areas exposed to most light will be darker in the resultant photographic image. This causes some optical confusion in the viewer. In our everyday experience, we perceive shadows as darkness – as the absence of light, but in making photograms this process is reversed. In a photogram, any opaque object will be rendered in white negative form since it blocks the paper from being exposed to the light. In *Colour Works*, any area of the paper that is at a greater distance from the enlarger light, or a recess area that is shaded, will be rendered lighter than the rest of the fully exposed paper. *Immaterial* presents a striated quality. There is an apparent shaft of light that spills vertically from the top edge of the photograph. This luminescent whiteness occurs where the paper received no light from the enlarger (because it was in the shade). These crumpled photograms produce a tonal reversal of how light usually operates in terms of advancing and recessing form. The convex areas of the paper are precisely those areas that

receive most light. The concave areas are less exposed because the light does not get into the crevices created by crumpling. Yet those areas will appear most “illuminated” by comparison. Although this work documents its own making, it does so by producing its own negative. The documentation is produced through a type of reversal of form *through* image. This reversal is further complicated by the fact that after being shaped and exposed, the paper is subjected to a degree of flattening in order to be processed and mounted.

[INSERT FIGURE 5]

Untitled 2.1 (Figure 5) embodies a picturing of light similar to *Immaterial*, and appears to resemble the latter’s (dominant) highly saturated bright red colour. However, *Untitled 2.1* exhibits variations in chromatic intensity that result from discrete colour exposures. *Untitled 2.1* presents variegated colour on an irregular surface that determines where those colours occur. Although mostly red in colour, there are contrasting areas of bright purple that are particularly noticeable in the top right hand corner of the photograph. It is worth reflecting on process here. The large size of the paper (and its distance from the enlarger light), in combination with the relatively large peaks, meant that the paper required more than one exposure. While *Immaterial* received two exposures of the same colour filter, *Untitled 2.1* received one “red” and one “purple” exposure. The crumpled sheet of paper, with significant raised peaks and recessed troughs, was turned between exposures. The light purple flares correspond with the areas of the paper that received no light from the first “red” (filter) exposure, but did receive light from the second “purple” exposure. In addition to the lighter purple areas, there are also large areas of the paper that produce an overlap of both colours resulting in a dark purplish red. Similarly, there are isolated areas that have a deep purple colour and that appear to almost float with luminescence on top of the red surface. *Untitled 2.1* visualises its discrete colour exposures.

Expanding Form: Medium, Materiality and Objecthood

Colour Works exists simultaneously as crumpled paper and as photographs of crumpled paper: they are at once sculptural and photographic objects. Their not-photographicness (to paraphrase Krauss) consists in the fact that they also function as sculpture. Corry has shaped photographic paper into something that transcends the limitations of the medium. The photograph has expanded beyond its prescribed spatial characteristics as a two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional object with advancing and receding form. The concept of photographic objecthood is central to Corry’s practice. She is “interested in how

photographs are experienced simultaneously as image and object, tangibly real and yet somehow remote. Not merely images, but seen, encountered and negotiated as real objects” (Corry, *Artist Statement*). Employing only the use of light and chemistry -without any intervening negative or object- Corry’s luminograms treat the photograph as an object in itself. These folded and crumpled works function as objects; they are not reproductions of something else. Indeed Corry has asserted this work is “not a photograph of something, it is something” (Corry, Interview). There is no separation between the image and the object. The image on the surface is inextricably and irremovably linked with its “thingly” support .

In “The Origin of the Work of Art” Heidegger asserts that “all works have this thingly character”: there is “something stony in architecture, wooden in a carving” (19). For Heidegger, “the thingly element is so irremovably present in the art work that we are compelled rather to say that the architectural work is in stone, the carving is in wood” (19). Photographs are mistakenly interpreted as immaterial depictions; the image on the surface is posited as the content of the photograph. Corry’s work however challenges this interpretation demonstrating that the photograph’s meaning is entangled with its materiality. *Colour Works* prompts the question of the thingly character (or photographicness) of the photograph and suggest that there is no separation between image and material support. Corry is acutely aware of the correspondence between image and ground in her work and has asserted how “image and object... [become] inextricably linked” (Corry, “Thoughts on Abstraction”). In *Colour Works* the photograph is posited as an object that images itself during its own production (this imaging is determined by the advancing and receding form of the paper). Photographic paper is not merely a receptive surface for depicting an external signifier; the paper can become its own document and an object in its own right. The three-dimensional shaped paper-object produces an image of its own surface. *Colour Works* enacts a self-picturing of the photographic paper as an object. Furthermore, this self-picturing demonstrates actual coextensivity between photograph and referent.

Corry’s photograms can be seen as simultaneously expanding and contracting: expanding by means of their haptic manipulation but contracting in their abstraction and in their deconstruction of photography. The expansion of the medium is evident: the photograph expands beyond its assumed or given dimensions from a flat picture plane to a sculpted form. Shaped by the hand of the artist, these photographic objects comprise a sculptural expansion from surface-bound depiction to three-dimensionality. However, the employment of an abstract camera-less method of photography can be seen as a contraction of the medium. The photogram is a proto-photographic process – emblematic of photography’s deconstruction into its core elements of light and chemistry. Abstract photography has been

characterised as a reduction of the photographic as such. Lyle Rexer has asserted that abstract photography “implies a reduction of photography, a stripping away of what is essential, a movement toward (what the artist Ellen Carey calls) ‘photography degree zero’” (11). Thus what may at first appear to be an expansion of photography is simultaneously a contraction. Coextensive with the physical expansion of *Colour Works* (as three-dimensional form) is the spatial and temporal compression at the level of the pictorial. Conventionally photography enacts a virtual expansion – it references an external subject or object beyond the print itself. Conversely, Corry’s *Colour Works* reject transcendent signifiers for immanent self-reference. The optical is replaced by the tactile. The materiality and tactility of the photograph comes to the surface unencumbered by the virtual optical and illusionistic surface. This move from optic to haptic reveals the literal expansion of the medium from within, an expansion that is simultaneously a contraction of photography’s optical possibility.

Colour Works engenders the possibility of a new type of photographic expansion – an expansion that transgresses the flat surface and embodies multifaceted form. But how does this expansion relate to theorisations of the medium? Peter Osborne’s “Photography in an Expanding Field” posits an internally generated expansion of a medium (that is undergoing constant change and redefinition). Osborne asserts his contrast with Krauss for whom the expansion of sculpture occurs through relations with not-sculpture (such as architecture) and can be seen in works where “there is some kind of intervention into the real space of architecture” (Krauss 41). Initially, it would seem that Corry’s folded photograms conform to Osborne’s idea of internal expansion - “the expansion here is internally technologically generated, continuing and open-ended, rather than reducible to a discrete set of external relations” (66). *Colour Works* undergo a physical expansion in being shaped into a paper form, yet they are not combined with external elements. They do not borrow from other media in order to acquire objecthood. In this sense it is an expansion that is distinct from the increasingly convergent photographic objects that have featured in a number of recent exhibitions (for example, *What is a Photograph?* at the International Center of Photography in 2014). Where works converge quite literally with other media their expansion is subject to the addition of elements external to photography. *Colour Works* in contrast does not combine with other media but instead produces an expansion that occurs without convergence with, or the addition of, external sculptural or collaged elements. *Colour Works* remains purely photographic in material composition.

Yet despite remaining photographic, these works nevertheless transform into photo-sculptural objects by means of borrowing something from sculpture’s method. The photographs have undergone an action that is the preserve of sculpture; an action that is not

internal to the photographic process. *Colour Works* comprises an incorporation of sculpture's techniques. Moreover, they occupy real space in a manner that transcends the inherent flatness of the photograph. *Colour Works* can be seen in Krauss' terms as comprising a change in medium such that "the bounded conditions of modernism have suffered a logically determined rupture" (Krauss 42). Although Corry's photograms consist purely of the photographic, their being shaped into three-dimensional objects suggests that these photographs have been transformed *in relation to* sculpture. Extrapolating from Krauss we could assert that *Colour Works* consists of "some kind of intervention into the real space of [sculpture]" (Krauss 41). The objectlike quality is achieved by an encounter between sculpture and photography, an encounter that is nevertheless devoid of actual inter-media convergence.

Conclusion

The term expanding photography suggests an extension in the dimensions of photography, or in how we perceive it as a medium. This article considered the virtual and actual expansion of photography through the work of Hughes and Corry. Both artists use folding as method, shaping paper into ambiguous "sculptural" forms that extend into space. Folding and unfolding are not merely topological metaphors, these same actions enable an expansion of paper's spatial properties. *A1 Still Life* and *Colour Works* comprise a spatialisation (through the shaping of a two-dimensional surface into a three-dimensional object); this paper form occupies and embodies space in a manner that exceeds the flat plane of representation (note 4). While Hughes produces an imagined expansion that occurs within conventional photographic representation, Corry's expansion transcends these limitations and produces a physical expansion of a shaped photographic object. Hughes' *A1* paper is mediated in the form of a photographic document, while Corry presents the actual photographic object. Yet *A1 Still Life* and *Colour Works* both generate pictorial ambiguity in their photographic representation and prompt reflection on photography's contiguous surfaces. In Hughes' *A1 Still Life* the virtual surface of the folded paper has an effect on the actual surface of the photograph; the optical surface draws attention to the literal surface. This produces a *virtual* expansion in the imagination of the viewer – and an alteration in their perception of the medium. *Colour Works* however embodies an actual expansion of the medium through a shaping of its surface; it reveals how photography can physically transcend its flat dimensions. In *Colour Works* the photograph expands from its topological dimensions and acquires new spatial properties. These distinct manifestations of expanding photography comprise a shift from the pictorial to the spatial; from photography to sculpture.

In undermining the pictorial aspect of photography, Hughes and Corry simultaneously encompass a transition from the optic to the haptic, from the iconographic to the indexical. *A1 Still Life* and *Colour Works* resonate with expanding cinema's rejection of illusion or "symbolic expression" in favour of "signs of the real" (Valie Export 290). Hughes' work was consciously motivated by an attempt to confront photography with empty signification and to materialise the non-symbolic Real. *A1 Still Life* originates with Hughes folding paper around three-dimensional objects in a way that emphasises moulding and indexical contact. Although embodying the shape of what they envelop, these blank paper forms "thwart access to the object" (Hughes, "A1 Series") and disrupt the representational and iconographic aspects of the photograph. In Corry's *Colour Works* the photographic image comes into being only in interaction with the tactile surface terrain of the paper. The topological surface is primary, imagery is secondary. The photograph is no longer a passive vehicle awaiting the superimposed projection of an external signifier. *Colour Works* are immanent in their reflexive depiction of their own becoming. Corry's work particularly correlates with expanding cinema's rejection of iconographic signification and its shift to the real surface of the light-sensitive medium. Malcolm Le Grice similarly employed strategies that "emphasised the materiality of the film's surface and the image as a material and photochemical trace" (163). In being shaped by Corry's hands, her photograms not only emphasise the haptic materiality of their support but may acquire a patina of fingerprints that interact with their photochemical registration (that responds to touch as well as light). We could say then that there is an interaction between optics and haptics, between seeing and shaping. What results is the product of a tactile engagement with both the photograph's surface and the optical operation of light on photosensitive paper. Vision and touch are brought together on one contingent and contiguous surface. Hughes' *A1 Still Life* and Corry's *Colour Works* embody a Deleuzian genesis from a metaphysical surface concerned with signification to a physical surface concerned with the thickness of bodies. This same material expansion is nevertheless a contraction of the medium's referential possibility. *A1 Still Life* and *Colour Works* provoke an expansion of photography's ontological characterisation; the recognition that the photograph is not only a visible medium, but a material one.

Notes

1. The idea of expanding media can be traced back to early twentieth century avant-garde practice. The work of Moholy-Nagy is of interest here since he not only produced experimental photograms (including crumpled photograms similar to Corry) but he also demonstrated a concern with photographic and filmic reflexivity, with the materiality of the medium and with a deconstruction of its components.

2. Personal interview with the artist Saron Hughes on 25 April 2007 and a subsequent email in 2015 which transcribed the artist's notes from the time that she was working on the *A1 Still Life* series. Hughes' notes reference how she was interested in "Žižek's definitions of the Real (through Lacan) as that which resists symbolisation". She further references Žižek's account of the *objet petit a* as – "precisely the paradoxical object generated by language itself as its 'fall-off', as the material left over of the purely self-referential movement of signifiers" - *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* by Slavoj Žižek (1996) p.145.

3. See Deleuze, 2006, p.40. Hantaï himself referred to his work as "le pliage comme méthode". See Julie Candler Hayes, "The Body of the Letter: Epistolary Acts of Simon Hantaï, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Jacques Derrida", *Postmodern Culture* (2003): 13. 3: "1960 is

often seen as a turning point in his work, with the emergence of 'folding as method' (le pliage comme méthode) that he has explored in one form or another in the decades since: canvases folded or crumpled, painted or written upon in different ways, stretched or left folded". See section 'I. "Travaux de lecture"' (para. 4). [accessed Mar. 2010].
<<http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/issue.503/13.3NEWhayes.html>>

4. In "Art and Space" Heidegger asserts that "the sculptured body embodies something" and that "sculpture deals with artistic space" (3). Heidegger further reflects on whether sculpture comprises "an occupying of space, a domination of space" (3).

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Figures

Figure 1. Hughes, Saron. *A1 Still Life: Armchair*. 2005.

Figure 2. Hughes, Saron. *A1 Still Life: Cushion*. 2005.

Figure 3. Corry, Martina. *Untitled 3.2*. 2008. 92.5x72.5cm. Unique Photogenic Drawing, photographic paper, Dibond.

Figure 4. Corry, Martina. *Immaterial*. 2008. 85x99cm. Unique Photogenic Drawing, photographic paper, Dibond.

Figure 5. Corry, Martina. *Untitled 2.1*. 2008. 102.5x83cm. Unique Photogenic Drawing, photographic paper, Dibond.