



## Moira Lovell – Commission proposal

*There's a point between what you want people to know about you and what you can't help people knowing about you. And that has to do with what I've always called the gap between intention and effect.... And if you scrutinize reality enough - if you really get to it - it's fantastic.*

*Diane Arbus*

I am interested in those elements, apart from the scientific process and the photographer's deliberate choices that combine to produce a portrait. My curiosity delineates these elements into the negotiations of power and the revelations of performance.

Susan Sontag in her seminal book *On Photography* stated that, though the camera does not kill, it is marketed as a confrontational weapon. *There is something predatory in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed.* In light of this, the act of photographic exchange, the *shoot*, could be read as a battle. The struggle lurking behind every studio door is between the photographers' *hunt* for their vision, and subject's wish to be *captured* in *their* best light.

The subject often has a preconceived idea of how they would like to be perceived by the spectator. They have an image to project and affect poses to evade the photographers' *hunting* lens. On being photographed Roland Barthes noted that, *I constitute myself in the process of "posing," I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image.* The photograph provides an opportunity to promote oneself; it's an advertisement. I believe that the pose that the sitter holds before the camera is one that is culturally constructed and media informed rather than one's true self, which I believe cannot exist. I consider one's true self; one's identity as something performed. A performance restrained by the norms and informed expectations of our society.

What would happen to the struggle for dominance between the artist conception and the sitters will if there was more than one person being photographed, i.e. a team? There would surely now be a more complex power structure at play and if the subjects were female footballers, whom would they base their media informed performances/identities on? Images of male footballers dominate the media.

On the pitch the Doncaster Rovers Belles female football team project an image, one that is combative, gladiatorial – perhaps aspiring to an aura of male competence? I would like to put forward that sport serves to ritually support an air of male capability and superiority in publicly acclaimed skills, strength and stamina, and a male monopoly of aggression and violence. A corollary of this is an inferiorisation of women and their skills, and their isolation from the ultimate basis of social power—physical force. A Doncaster Rovers (male team) supporter recently said to

me that he couldn't bear to watch *female footie* as it appeared to be in slow motion. The Doncaster Rovers Belles are not feeble. They are fit, strong and passionate - they are a Women's Premier League team. But they cannot achieve and aspire to the rankings of male football teams. The direct comparison between the male leagues and female leagues is not the crux of my photographic investigation however I do hope that this photographic project will ask questions as to why women's football is treated so differently.

I don't have a passion for football. I'm not against it, nor for it. I am completely impartial. Yet two of my cousins on my Father's side are ex Doncaster Belles players. One retired and the other was awarded a scholarship to play in America, a country where women's football has a high profile and is established also. My cousins' enthusiasm for the game is the driving force behind this project. Unlike their male counterparts they were not paid an overwhelming amount of money. They were not paid at all. No huge pay cheques and no flash cars sees a return the origins of the sport; a game of two halves, over 90 minutes; mud, blood, solidarity and a will to win.

I've taken some preliminary shots of the players to help form the basic framework of what I'd like to investigate. So far I have only photographed the Belles on match day, showing the girls grouped in their positions; goalie, defence, midfield, attack and as subs. I can't help but read the photographs as a representation of the relationships within the team. In front of the camera a hierarchy is revealed. The more experienced player poses confidently with an air of belligerence and the younger player appears to try to replicate their position but uncomfortably. I'm eager to find out how the dynamic would alter if I added the manager to the photographs. The manager is himself an ex professional and there is a pressure on the Belles to constantly prove their worthiness to him. They compete against one another for his acceptance - to keep their positions.

These initial shots feel emotionless. The Belles had won the match however this isn't evident within the photographs. The portraits echo the atmosphere between the players. There was no celebratory behaviour. They were reflective and highly critical of their performances. After they changed they never spoke of the game, their mood altered—a transformation occurred. I'm incredibly interested in the effect that the football strip has on the players. The girls often comment on how 'unflattering', 'angular' and 'masculine' it is. The team has expressed a wish to be photographed in their own clothing, almost as if they want to prove their femininity. I'm curious to further investigate the uniform that transforms them from feminine to footballer from an individual to a tribesman.

Some of the preliminary photographs taken were shot on the team territory, in the changing rooms straight after a game, before the players had a chance to change or comb their hair. I disrupted their routine by creating my own space (within theirs) and inviting them to pose together with the rest of the team watching. This abnormality within their routine assisted with my initial investigation. I'm looking for that moment when the subjects appear to be lost, when the individuals are in effect caught between states that are at odds. Diane Arbus called this the gap between intention and effect. This is the point at which images gain some potency from the subject's conflict and uncertainty and I aim to take this notion further.

This commission will be an exploration into the ways in which topographic, ethnographic and aesthetic representations combine in the photographic representation of a social group.

## Moira Lovell - Curriculum Vitae

### Education

- 2006 MA Photography, London College of Communication (London)  
1999 BA (Hons) Photography, Kent Institute of Art & Design (Rochester)

### Selected Group & Solo Exhibitions

- 2008 *Pavilion Commissions Programme 2008*, National Media Museum (Bradford) – September  
*Teen City, the adolescent adventure*, Musée de l'Elysée (Lausanne, Switzerland)  
2007 *The After School Club*, Bash Creations Prince Albert, Notting Hill (London)  
*Jerwood Photography Award Winners*, Jerwood Space (London & UK tour)  
*No Ball Games*, Four Corners (London)  
*Identity*, The Art Organisation (Nottingham)  
*Women's Work*, Hull University (Hull)  
2006 *MA Photography Final Show*, London College of Communication (London)  
*25 Women's Show: Experience, Identity, Representation*, Norwich Arts Centre (Norwich)

### Awards

- 2007 Jerwood Photography Award Winner  
2005/6 ICI Olmec Digital Photographer of the Year Award & Independent on Sunday Reader Awards  
(Highly Commended - Reader Awards, People Category)

### Residencies & Commissions

- 2008 *Pavilion Commissions Programme 2008*, Pavilion Commission (Leeds)  
2007 Pavilion study Centre. One day-a-week residency (two terms) based at a Pupil Referral Unit in High Barnet (London). The residency was funded by The Milly Apthorp Trust, Barnet Council.

### Talks

- 2007 *Jerwood Prize*, artist talk and educational event, Jerwood Space (London)  
*No Ball Games*, artist talk, Four Corners (London)  
*Plat(t)form 07*. Nominated by The Photographers' Gallery, London to present work at an annual event for 'emerging talent', Fotomuseum, Winterthur (Zurich)  
*Photoforum*, Four Corners (Brighton)

### Published Work

- 2007 Jerwood Photography Awards, Introduction by Martin Barnes Portfolio Magazine, November issue, number 46  
Portraiture Issue. London Independent Photography Magazine Summer Issue. No.6  
2006 Less Common More sense Magazine, November Issue  
Medium Magazine, Online publication  
Voyeurism issues ARC, Royal College of Art magazine, No. 6  
British Journal of Photography, Endframe