

Masculinity: The Leaning Tower of Power

Research Project Proposal
Chris Matthews
Word Count 1999

Chris Matthews (2019)

Overview

Men have tended to rule the world and, in many ways, we still do.

Perry (2016)

As Perry highlights, we still live in a patriarchy and the balance of power is still very much shifted in men's favour. With only 23% of the world's politicians being female, much of the decision-making is man made.

But, is this dominance a good thing for men? Is it holding them back? Suicide is the leading killer of men under 45 and of all suicides in the UK, men account for 76% of them. The archetypal model of the alpha male, strong, stoic and unemotional, is alive, though perhaps not so well. Vulnerability is undoubtedly viewed as a weakness by men and talking about their problems is to be generally avoided. Where do this set of standards by which men are measured derive from and why are they so resistant to change? The loss of power is something men fear because they have it, but with this comes responsibility, expectation and the threat of others trying to take this power. Perhaps we might argue they may be happier with less of it. Perry certainly thinks so.

As the oppressed victims of dictatorships would no doubt attest to, power generally leads to poor behaviour. As men generally have the power, they are generally the perpetrators. Interestingly women in positions of power are not immune to accusations, as Sarah Vine mused in a recent article regarding singer Katy Perry's treatment of a young male actor. However, it must be said that as things stand, men simply are responsible for the majority of the evils in this world, there really is no escaping this fact. Looking at national statistics for crimes, men commit the vast majority of crime with 95% of the England Wales prison population being male.

My research centres around masculinity. I'm interested in exploring the make up of this and how this is changing or evolving more recently. What makes a man? The desires they have, the fears they have, the expectations of them. It's an interesting debate considering the nature of men being called into question 'quite rightly' in the 'me too era'. Is the face of masculinity changing, is gender becoming fluid, as Perry suggests, and therefore meaningless. Is the masculine label an outdated concept? How might men react to these changes? Perhaps not well considering some of Perry's findings .



Grayson Perry (2016)

They [men] are clinging on to an outdated gender role, and resent the way the world has gone on changing without their permission

(Perry 2016):101

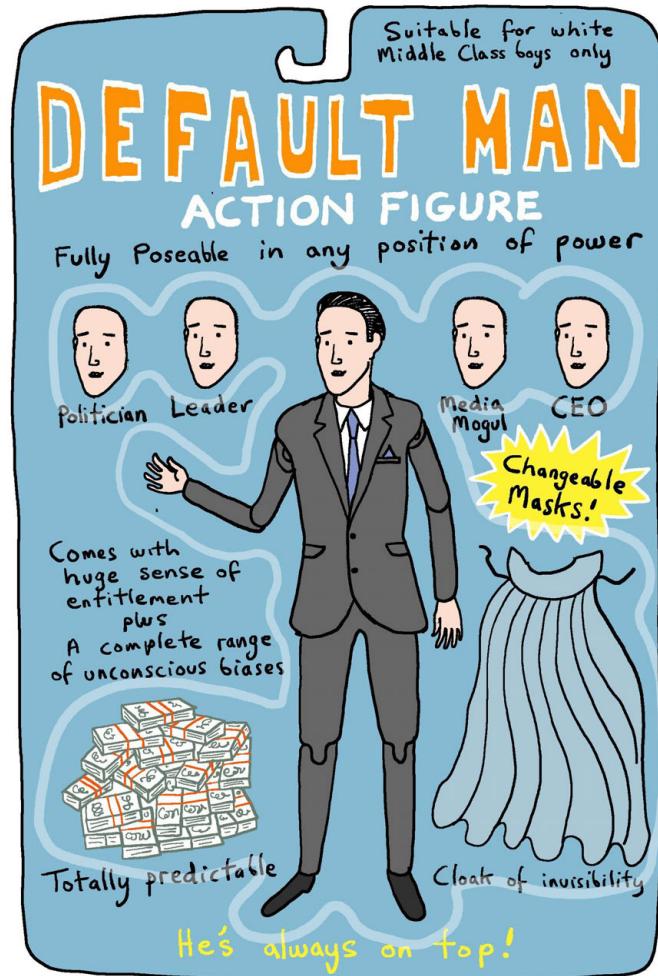
Objectives For Research

To create an awareness of the current state of masculinity, defining it if possible, to establish the harmful effects of the society's expectations of men. This will then lead on to the identification for avenues for change and the intention of contributing to the evolution of masculinity.

To produce a body of photographic work that explores masculinity from both a reflective and evolutionary standpoint.

To develop my photographic practice to identify a sense authorship and style that will enable me to connect to a broader audience.

To network and connect with people within my areas of interest locally and then expanding this as the research develops. This will primarily be maintained through social networking and email contact. I have already have a broad range of contacts particularly in relation to Boxing and Wrestling.



Grayson Perry (2016)

Work in Progress

My starting point photographically has been with my own father, as perhaps from this exploration I can dissect my own masculinity and see how this has been shaped by him, my first male role model.

In 2014 my father had a stroke, which was attributed to a life long battle with alcoholism. When he had the stroke the last thing he did before he had to be helped to bed was to wind his grandfather clock, suggesting he was 'buying himself more time'. The next morning he was paralysed on the right hand side of his body which he would never recover from. In many ways he was correct, he has bought himself more time in the sense that the stroke has limited his drinking and freed him from it's trapping or at the very least from total dependence.

From discussions with him told me that in his condition it is important for him to have purpose, so this is why he actively engages in activities such as sailing, fishing, travelling and socialising.

Whilst we journey to Norway this summer via the sea, I aimed to photograph the Grandfather clock with a long pinhole camera exposure, which would expose over the course of 8days. I set up another camera in the cabin on the boat. The chances of success were slim, but perhaps there is something in these slim chances. In experimentations with the pinhole cameras I have had to take care to place these, so they can't be moved, writing 'please don't move' all over the boxes. It occurred to me that these words had significant personal meaning to me. The consequences of my fathers stroke is something of a paradox to me and to my father. In many ways the words 'Please don't move' resonated with me and thoughts that the stroke has been a controlling force to limit his drinking as well as being representative of the resistance to changes in masculine expectations.



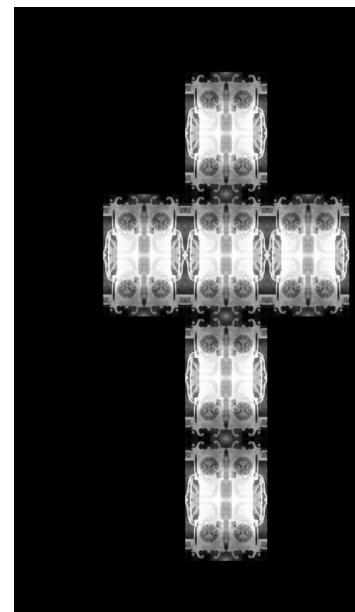
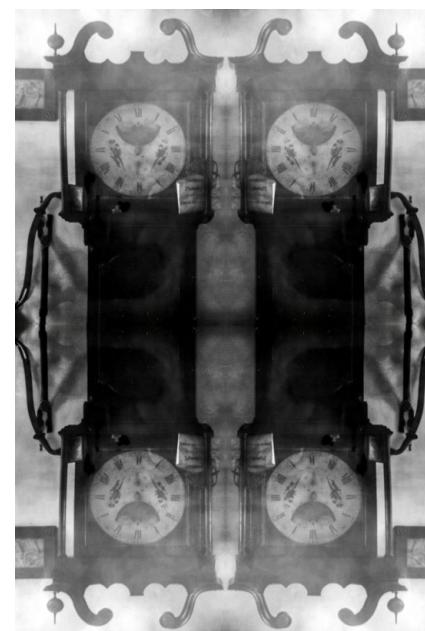
Work in Progress

I have had a long interest in using pinhole cameras to capture long exposures, I find the roll back to using methods not far removed from Fox Talbot's early photographic work rather freeing, rather than being constrained by the basic technology. Modern digital images are virtually instant and can be captured repeatedly in a short space of time. There is a purity in the pinhole images in that they require patience and each single image takes considerable time to produce. There is also risk attached, with a successful exposure not a guarantee. Initially you produce a negative and then this can be easily inverted into a positive either through contact printing in the darkroom or by editing a scanned version digitally.

I looked at monuments as I wanted to create a living monument to my father and to the old constraints of masculinity. War memorials are typically monuments to men, undoubtedly many women died during the world wars, but at this time took on non-combat roles, meaning that the vast majority of monuments refer to the loss of men's lives in battle. They are 'towers of power', phallic like, resilient and a testament to the past. Initially I created a cenotaph like structure with four identical images of the grandfather clock arranged symmetrically. From researching monuments I came across many that incorporated crucifixes, so following on from this produced a composite that used 24 identical images of the grandfather clock arranging them into the shape of a crucifix. On the Grandfather clock sits a daguerreotype of my father's Great Grandfather Thomas Hindle Sykes born 1827 and a copy of his probate. I created these set of monuments for my father and to masculinity as something to be remembered, but also perhaps a reminder of some of the things to be left in the past and the hope that things can change. The hands of the clock are not visible due to the two hours exposure, so this is something of a blank canvas as the 'clock hands' on masculinity could yet be changed.



www.english-heritage.org.uk



Work in Progress

From extended discussions with my father regarding his childhood, one repeating discussion was a recurring dream he had as a child. We had discussed it before, but revisited this during my research. He believes the dreams started around the age of 6. In the dream he is a child with a child's point of view and is led into a large shower with a group of people, all wearing pyjamas and holding hands. All he can see is other peoples legs. He says that he did not make the connection with the Nazi Concentration Camps until he was older and that he had the belief that he had been a child that had died in a death camp only to be reborn. It's quite a story, and whilst I have no intention of examining the validity of the supernatural given the now no doubt distorted memory of a distant childhood dream. I do appreciate that the memory of this is something that has had a profound impact on him. He was a weak child and had a distant relationship with his parents. Being sent to boarding school at seven years of age damaged this bond he believes. His relationship with his Father only became closer when he reached the age of 20 and unfortunately his father died shortly after this. He felt as though he had been an abject failure with no achievement ever good enough for his fathers expectations. This dysfunction led to many of his emotional problems and specifically to his alcoholism. As his carer during the trip I would help him take his daily shower. With his permission I was able to capture a few frames of his feet as he showered. No matter how old we become we often still cling to the things that impacted us as children. The memory of that dream or perhaps the psychological positioning of himself as a victim continue to haunt him, just as his condition as result of his alcoholism does at times when he feels depressed.



Influences and Inspirations

Sophie Calle's incorporates text in her very personal work. Her set 'Take Care of Yourself' is a response to a partner ending their relationship via an email. I found this use of overlaying text an effective way of using relevant hand-written elements that were associated with my Father's care. I am also familiar with and have revisited the work of Barbara Kruger and Gillian Wearing in relation to the use of text with imagery to convey meaning.



Sophie Calle (2018)



Justin Quinnell (2008)

Justin Quinnell's experimental Solargraph's require exposures of several months and this have been an inspiration in the way that I will capture my pinhole images. I am creating a memorial to my father which features both his successes and failings. Ultimately he has a relatively short time left of his life, so the chance to capture this memorial is in itself a 'ticking clock'.

Alas the results from the 8 day exposures were unsuccessful, so I continued to experiment with other exposure before a satisfactory result was achieved.

Influences and Inspiration

Bruce Gilden's photographs of unlicensed boxing capture the unregulated and underworld environment that is associated with this particular form of boxing. There is a sense of danger in this place, both for the participants and the spectators there to watch. I intend to build on this study of boxing and wrestling during my research as I feel there is much to learn from men that inhabit this machismo filled environment.

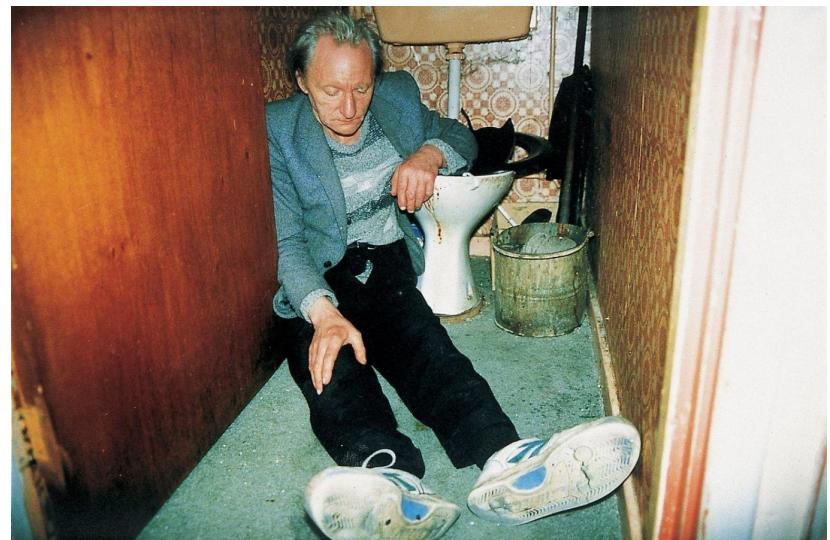
Roland Barthes' essay on the World of Wrestling has provided a useful discussion on the 'Spectacle of Excess' that wrestling embodies. I intend to explore this unique performance based medium and have made links with local professional wrestlers to facilitate this.

In Richard Billingham's photographs of his parents in his 'Ray's a Laugh' book, there is a chaotic feel to the images, we see an addict who cares little for anything other than the continuation of his addiction, which I can certainly relate to. Photographing family members is a risky proposition, as no doubt Sally Mann can attest to given the reaction to her work featuring her children.

I was aware of Billingham's work and I photographed my father whilst he was under the influence of alcohol in 2000, he was helpless and pathetic. I felt that seeing the images might be a useful intervention and might be powerful in aiding him to get help. Much like Billingham has stated, I wanted to capture the 'tragedy of it all'. However, I never developed the film, I could not bring myself to do so. I have kept the film for close to 20 years. It's a symbol now of the pain caused by his addiction. I may never develop the film, perhaps I want to forget it. It's locked away in deep dark storage both physically and metaphorically. I intend to incorporate this object in some way in the work that I produce as I believe it is a symbolically strong object to use in some way within my work.



Bruce Gilden (1994)



Richard Billingham (1996)

Timeline

June/July

Begin research and make links with boxing and wrestling fraternity

Interviewing fathers and planning shoots e.g Flying, Sailing and trip to Norway

July/ August

Trip planned to photography flying lesson at Exeter Airport

Trip planned to photograph disabled sailing race in River Dart Kingsweir.

Visit to my Father's home to begin capturing pinhole images of Grandfather Clock.

August/ September

Trip to Norway via boat with my father, documenting his journey and completing planned Shower shoot and the Hunter.

Complete final edits and produce a portfolio of selected images from WIP so far.

September/ October

Photograph local white collar boxing show in Torquay

Interview and Photograph Professional Boxer Jamie Speight

Photograph wrestling shows in the local region

Meet with Tom Chapman to discuss the 'safe place for men to discuss mental illness' at his Barbershop in Torquay.

October/ November

Edit and select final images from previous shoots.

Consider next steps for further research

References

Figures

Figure 1 - Chris Matthews, Monument #2 Paignton, Devon UK (2019)

Figure 2 - Grayson Perry- A Time to Talk (2016)

<https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/private/colourful-phalluses>

Figure 3 - Grayson Perry - Default Man (2016)

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/368732288233417506>

Figure 4 Chris Matthews, The Hunter #1, Trollstigen, Norway (2019)

Figure 5 Chris Matthews, Flying #2

Figure 6 - Cenotaph

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/20th-century/london-ww1-memorials/>

Figure 7 - Chris Matthews - Monument #1 Paignton, Devon UK (2019)

Figure 8 - Chris Matthews - Monument # 3 Paignton, Devon Uk

Figure 9 - Chris Matthews - Comes with Intructions - On Board Britannia in the North Sea (2019)

Figure 10 - Chris Matthews - The Dream #1 - On Board Britannia in the North Sea (2019)

Figure 11 - Sophie Calle 2018, My mother, my cat,my father in that order

<https://www.art-agenda.com/announcements/247679/sophie-calle-my-mother-my-cat-my-father-in-that-order>

Figure 12 – Justin Quinnell – Solargraph, Bristol

<https://pinholephotography.org/>

Figure 13 – Bruce Gilden – Unlicenced Boxing, London

<https://pro.magnumphotos.com/CS.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&VBID=2K1HZ049RIMV9D&SMLS=1&RW=1624&RH=811>

Figure 14 – Richard Billingham (1994) Ray's a Laugh

<https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Untitled--RAL-32-/C8A0243F0EC0E1B8>

Quotations

Perry G (2016) All Man Episode 1: Hard Man, Television Series, Channel 4 UK

Perry G (2016) The Decent of Man, Penguin, London

Barthes, R (1993) Mythologies, Vintage Books, London

Billingham, R - https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/richard_billingham.htm date accessed 17th August 2019

Statistics

23% of the worlds leaders are female- (2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2017/nov/29/female-political-leaders-women-change> -

76% of Suicide by men under 45 + 95% of prison population male
menandboyscoalition.org.uk

Other sources

Sarah Vine article (2019)<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-7354061/SARAH-VINE-status-power-make-women-lose-morals-too.html> Date accessed 16th August 2019

Rachel Sudlow Cowscapes – In relation to the The Hunted

<https://www.rachaelsudlow.com/cowscapes>

Costs

I will mostly be shooting digitally and the cost of any analogue work I shoot will be covered personally. I have access to a darkroom to process and print colour/ monochrome at South Devon College(my employer)

Studio access will also be available from South Devon College as well being able to borrow equipment when required.

Travel costs to Norway will be covered on the basis I will be my father's full time carer during the trip.

Travel to local wrestling and boxing events will be covered personally. Access to the events is generally free if I am covering the event for the promoters though in some cases I may need to pay for access which will be self funded.

I will seek support for exhibition and publishing costs from sponsors and my employer though will cover these costs personally if needed.

Risk Assessment

Photography Risk Assessment form



Please read the Risk Assessment Guidelines before completing this form which contains further resources, available from [The Photography Centre](#).

- Please save a copy of this form to your computer
- You will need to attach a risk assessment form to your Research Project Proposal and your Final Major Project Proposal.

Photographer's Name:	Christopher Matthews	Date(s) of Shoot:	Ongoing from 1 st Jun 2019
Assistants' Names:			
Module Leader:	Paul Clements		
Location:	Newton Abbot, Devon, UK		
Description of work:	I will be exploring aspects of masculinity photographically, using both film and digital techniques. Primarily this will be based in the Devon South West England. As part of the research I will also be travelling to Norway with my Father where I will act as his care for 8 days.		

Persons at Risk Identify all those at risk

Technical Staff:	Academic Staff:	Students:	Admin Staff:	Canteen Staff:
Contractors:	General Public:	X	Visitors:	Estates Staff:
Cleaning Staff:	Emergency Personnel:			Library Staff:

Other:	Especially at risk:
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Check list				
Equipment	Flash/tungsten	Stands/tripods	Hot lights	Smoke machine/fire
Flammable materials	Risk of Fire	Welfare of Assistant	Welfare of model	Working at Heights
Location	Transport to location	Parking	Vehicles/traffic	Weather conditions
Public	Confined spaces	Derelict Buildings	Animals	Children
Tides	Compressed Gasses	Water	Noise	Chemicals

PRIMARY RISK ASSESSMENT			
Example			
HAZARD	What kind of hazards are there at the site or in your task? <i>i.e. Light stand</i>	RISK OF	What risks do those hazards create? <i>i.e. Light stand falling over</i>
CONTROL MEASURE	How are you going to <u>minimise</u> the risk associated with the hazards you've identified? <i>i.e. weigh down light stand with sandbags</i>		

Please continue your risk assessment, adding additional pages as necessary.

Risk Assessment

HAZARD	Weather	RISK OF	Norway - Storms pose a risk on sea and on land. Camera equipment could get wet or damaged from falls
CONTROL MEASURE	Monitor weather reports. Ensure I have raincover for my camera Ensuring I have adequate supplies and wet weather gear.		
HAZARD	Cameras and Equipment	RISK OF	Camera equipment could get wet or damaged from falls. Equipment could also be lost or stolen
CONTROL MEASURE	Ensure all kit is stored safely bags and not left open to avoid theft. Covers to keep the camera and bags dry will also be used		
HAZARD	My Father's care	RISK OF	During the Norway trip I will be my father's full time carer so my priority may be to ensure his safety at all times
CONTROL MEASURE	I am experienced in caring for my father's condition. I will ensure that all safety measure eg using wheelchair brakes etc are in place when I am in the process of conducting a shoot.		
HAZARD		RISK OF	
CONTROL MEASURE			
HAZARD		RISK OF	
CONTROL MEASURE			
HAZARD		RISK OF	
CONTROL MEASURE			

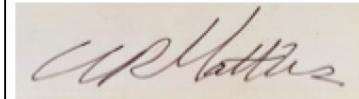
On site risk assessment: these are control measures that arose on your shoot**Emergency Information and Procedures**

Phone	Charged mobile phone with full signal / Nearest Payphone / Landline
Medical Expertise	Are you or a member of your team First Aid qualified? Do you know where the nearest one is?
Emergency Procedure	In the event of an emergency dial 999 or 112 ensure that you or someone with you can accurately describe where you are (ideally nearest postcode)
Medical Treatment	Minor Injuries Unit, Falmouth Hospital Open weekdays 8am to 8pm A&E Treliske Hospital, Truro, Open 24 hours
Evacuation procedures	Ambulance can evacuate from main road.
Incident/accident reporting	All incidents or accidents should be reported to tutor at Falmouth University

Assessment carried out by

- I have ensured that I have reviewed the hazards and risks associated with this project and taken necessary steps to remove hazards where possible or reduced the risks associated with the remaining hazards to a minimum.
- I have recorded the main hazards, risks and control measures in this document.
- I have ensured that those working with me have been briefed on the nature of the tasks they are to perform, and are aware of the hazards associated with the task and the measures in place to reduce the risks associated with those hazards. (if applicable)
- I will continually assess hazards and risks 'live' on site to ensure that nothing has been overlooked or has changed since initial assessment.

Signed: Christopher Matthews

Date: 26th June 2019**Assessment reviewed by**