

Critical review of practice - Andrew Hayward - April 2020

Early in 2020 I took the decision to change my current practice from where it had been and move it in a new direction. The change came about from a feeling that the direction of my previous practice had been growing stale and more difficult to produce.

From here my photographic practice started to explore the field of Still Life Photography. My motivations came from a desire to experiment and explore an area of photography I felt I had not visited in my practice as yet. Upon initial inspection I found that, when one looks at still life objectively, some of my past practice had already wandered into the field of 'still life'.

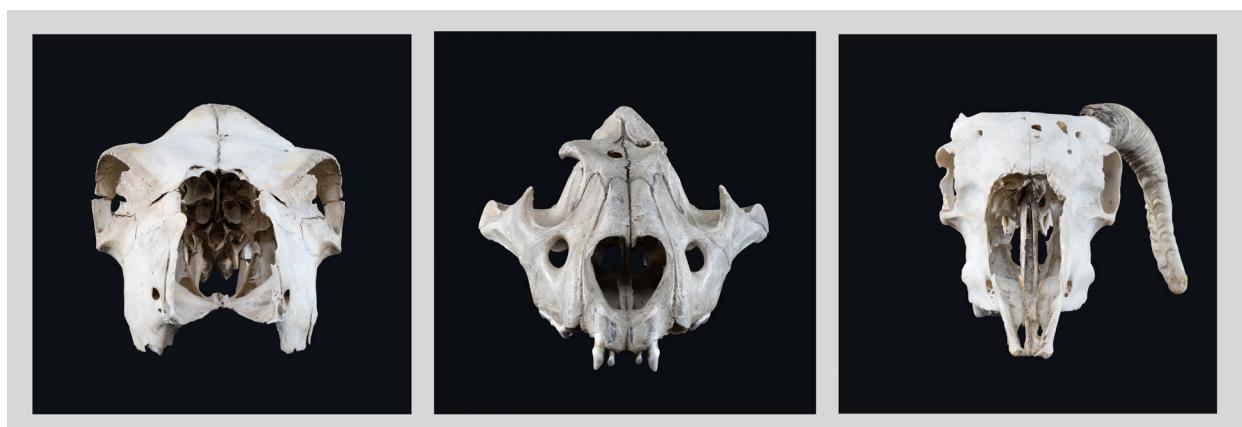


Figure 1. *Decay Panel of Three*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2018

'Decay' (fig.1) had been a brief study of skulls using hyper deep depth of field through focus stacking. The subject matter presented on a deep black surrounding with the subject matter apparently floating in the darkness.

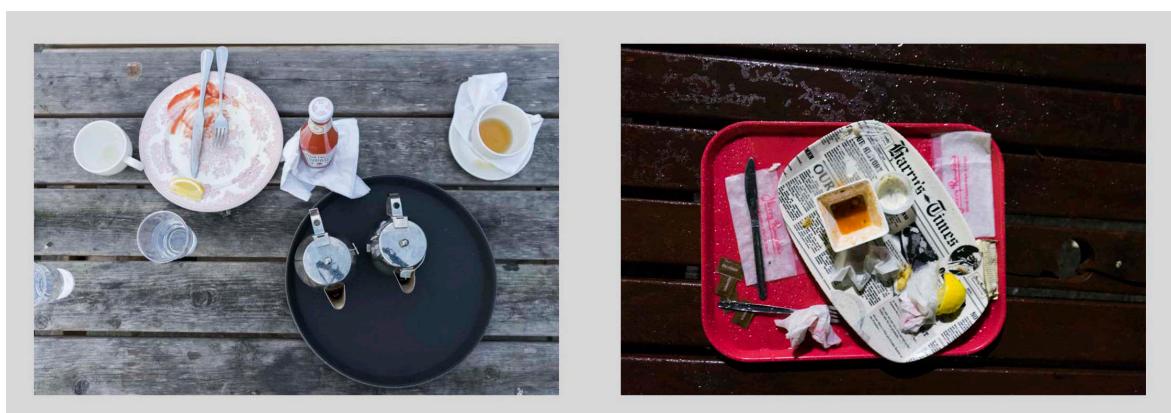


Figure 2. *Signs of Life*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2017-Present

'Signs of Life' (fig.2) is an ongoing look at the evidence of human presence left behind in cafes, restaurants, service stations and, sometimes, public spaces. The table top scene was different and unique every time and showed what had been left behind. The absence of actual people coupled by the evidence of their being there come together to create a commentary on how we leave these spaces to be cleared away for us.

Introduction to current practice:

With these unintentional starting points in mind I now need to consider the direction of this and future practice. The images from my own practice set out in this review stem from investigations into some of the origins of still life as art as well as photography.

Through my theoretical studies I have sought to consider several principles of the image as devised by Barthes and Szarkowski separately. When one considers these elements there is a realisation that these core concepts apply to all photographic images and many other art practices alike. These have been more extensively visited through my Critical Research Journal and will be referred to during this review. As a brief synopsis, Barthes considered, in his essays amassed in *Image Music Text* that all photographs are comprised of six elements. These are; Trick effects, Pose, Objects, Photogenia, Aestheticism and Syntax (Barthes,1977,p.21).

Similarly, Szarkowski considered five elements that make up photographs; The Thing Itself, The Detail, The Frame, Time and The Vantage Point (Szarkowski,1966,p.8). These have been written about more extensively in my CRJ but will be referred to again during this review. Consideration of these points by both Barthes and Szarkowski has influenced my theoretical considerations of my practice and also some of the resolution elements of my Work in Progress Portfolio.

Initial visual explorations sought to experiment with arrangements of objects and lighting akin to that found in the paintings of the golden era Dutch masters. Art over



Figure 3. *Still Life with Salt*, Pieter Claesz, c. 1640



Figure 4. *The Body and the Blood*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

the centuries has always been steeped into symbolism and still life is no exception. We as the viewer connect with the presence of these symbols through, as Barthes called it, 'the existence of a store of stereotyped attitudes which form ready-made elements of signification' (Barthes, 1977, p.22).

In the above example by Pieter Claesz we see an arrangement on a table corner consisting of wine and bread (fig.3). As a viewer in what is defined as a western country, we connect these with that store of stereotyped attitudes to be representative of the Holy communion. The bread and the wine symbolising the body and blood of Christ. My own photographic recreation of this scene can also be seen above in figure 4. The objects within the frame have been arranged in a way that mirrors the Claesz original. The lighting and the setting of the scene is replicated in a way that compliments the objects. There will always be an aesthetic which art has over photography and this is through the way the paint upon the canvas creates a different atmosphere. This can be attempted to be replicated through filters and editing or printing onto certain materials but these cannot replicate the aesthetic of the era from which Claesz work hales.

The term chiaroscuro comes from Italian and means 'light-dark'. In visual culture this is demonstrated through the use of a heavy contrast between the light and dark of the image, typically in its aesthetic appearance. There are many examples throughout history of chiaroscuro being used and my investigations look at the work of Henri Fantin-Latour (fig.5). My own experiments with Chiaroscuro lighting focus more on the method with which to light the image than with the content of the images found in Fantin-Latours work. One of these examples can be seen below (fig.6).



Figure 5. *A Plate of Apples*, Henri Fantin-Latour, 1861

Still wanting to follow traditions of symbolism in these works I returned to that 'store of stereotypes' (Barthes, 1977, p.22) through the use of bread and fish.



Figure 6. *Feeding 5000*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

I consider myself to have a very sound technical background to my photography and call upon it regularly through my current practice. Many of the technical considerations in recent latter weeks have not been without their challenges due to reduced access to equipment due to the restriction of movements currently in place. For this reason my photographic practice shifted more towards homages to some of the staple names in still life photographic practice of the mid-20th Century up until contemporary times.

These are exemplified by the works of Karl Blossfeldt (fig.7) and Peter Lippmann (fig.8). And my relevant responses to them as shown below (fig.9 and .10).

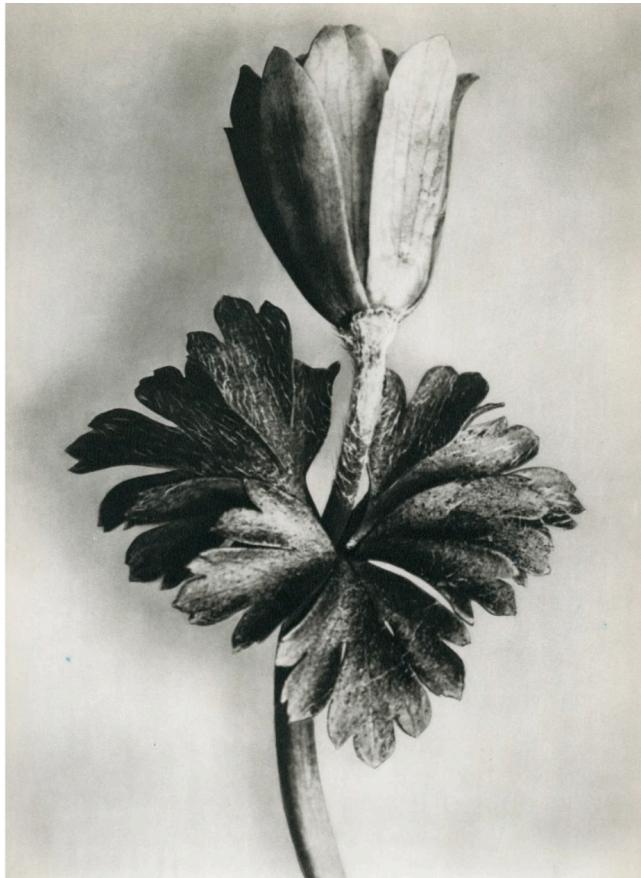


Figure 7. *Anemone blanda*, Karl Blossfeldt, n.d.



Figure 8. *Cacti 3*, Peter Lippmann, n.d.



Figure 9. *Lily*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020



Figure 10. *Thistle 10*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020 (right)

The desire to photograph thistles came from being inspired by the works of Lippmann (fig.8). The objects within the frame stand solitary. They are well lit with high key lighting and the contrast applied to the cacti as a result of that lighting forms, as Barthes coined it, the punctum within this image (Barthes, 1980, p27). We as the viewer find ourselves 'pricked' (Barthes, 1980, p27) by this in the most metaphorical of ways. It is this emotion I wished to try and evoke in my audience. The use of thistles creates my own punctum to 'prick' my audience. To try and trigger a connection on an emotional level with The Thing Itself within my frame.

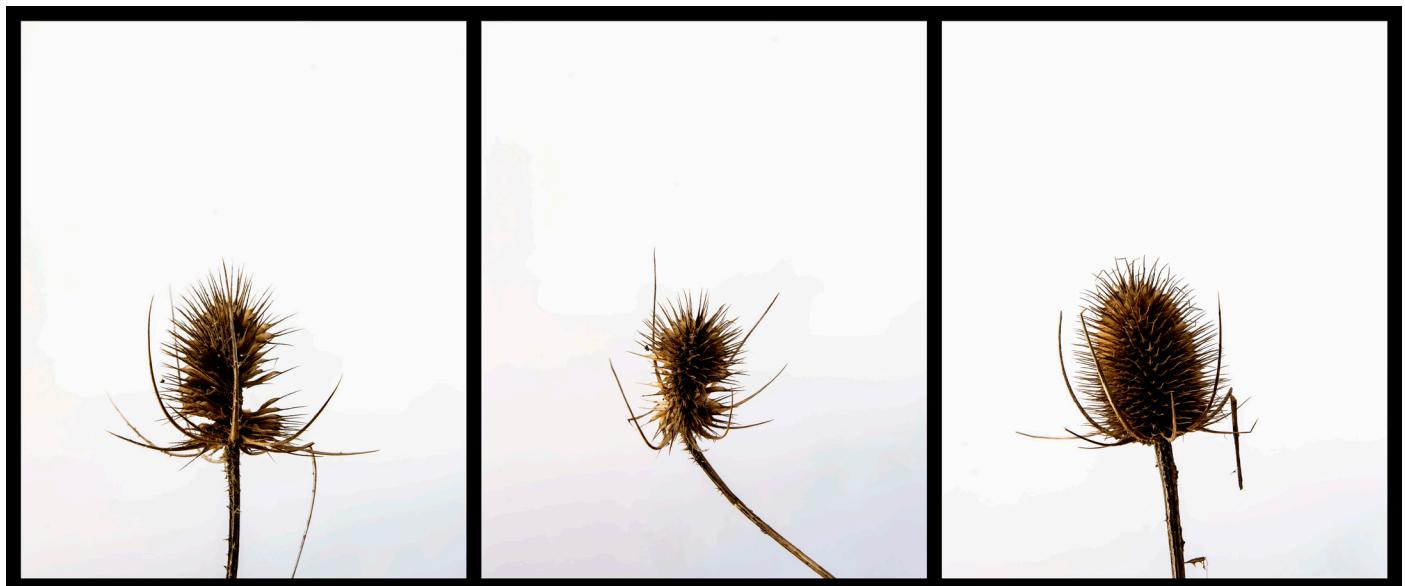


Figure 11. *Onopordum Acanthium* - Set Three, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

When discussing 'Syntax', Barthes intentions were of the words application to photographic practice as opposed to linguistics, where 'the signifier of the connotation is then no longer to be found at the level of any one of the fragments of the sequence but at that... ...of the concatenation' (Barthes, 1977, p.24). The principle is that one ceases to read the singular image favouring to read the collection of images. A term



Figure 12. *Blast Furnaces*, Bernd and Hilla Becher, 1969

in common usage through photography has been that of 'typology'. Probably most famed for the use of the typology have been the Bechers (fig.12) and their grid formations of industrial

structures such as mining towers, water towers, gas silos and the like. Although of a different subject matter, I resolved to collect the images of thistles and bring them together into their own concatenations. Much in the way that Sontag said that 'to collect photographs is to collect the world' (Sontag, 1977, p.3) these images form a collection of a specific form of plant life.

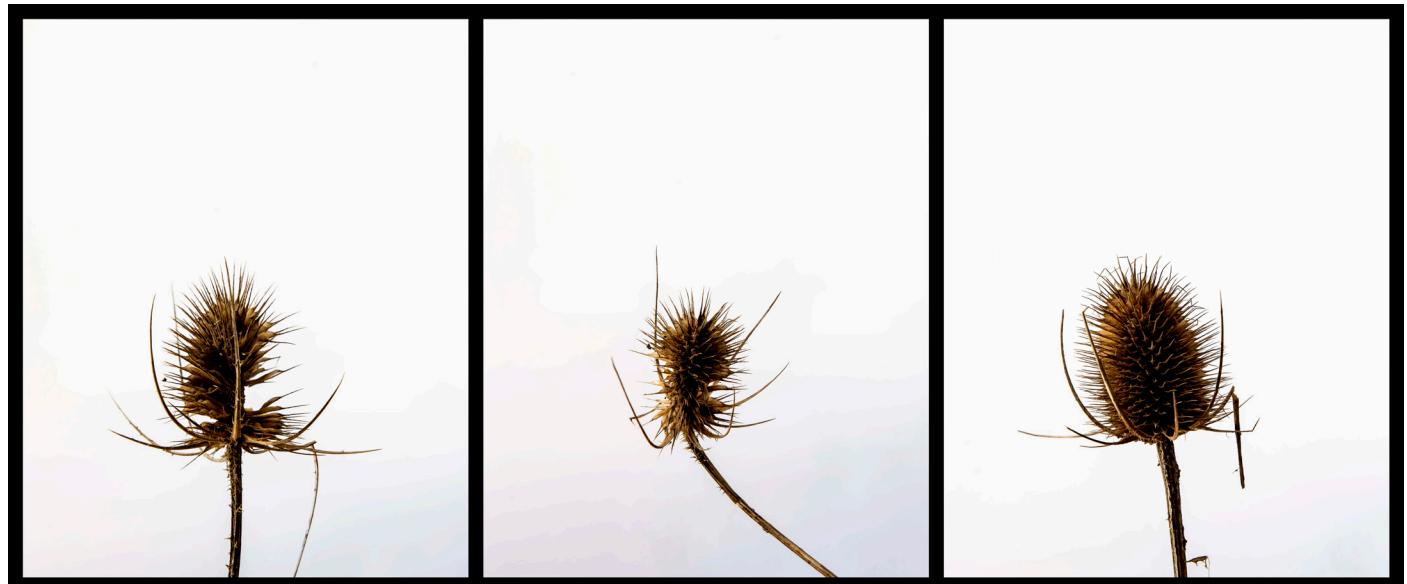


Figure 11. *Onopordum Acanthium* - Set Three, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

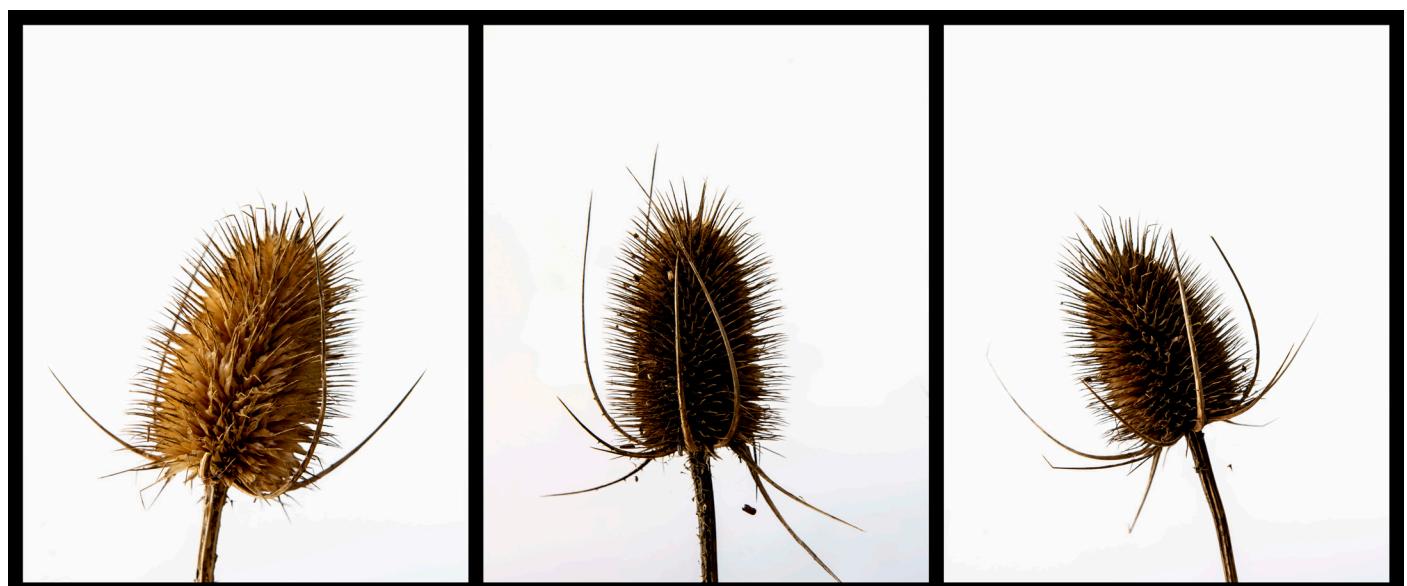


Figure 13. *Onopordum Acanthium* - Set Two, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020



Figure 14. *Onopordum Acanthium* - Set One, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

In the selection shown above, where figure 11 makes a reappearance, I present the concatenations of thistles. In each photograph the base of the flower head was set at the same height and the impending size and presence of the remanence of the specimen filled the frame from there. Initially my intentions had been to treat my images with a monochrome edit as inspired by Lippmann (fig.15). As my attempts with these images progressed I felt that the colour properties of the specimens had far more

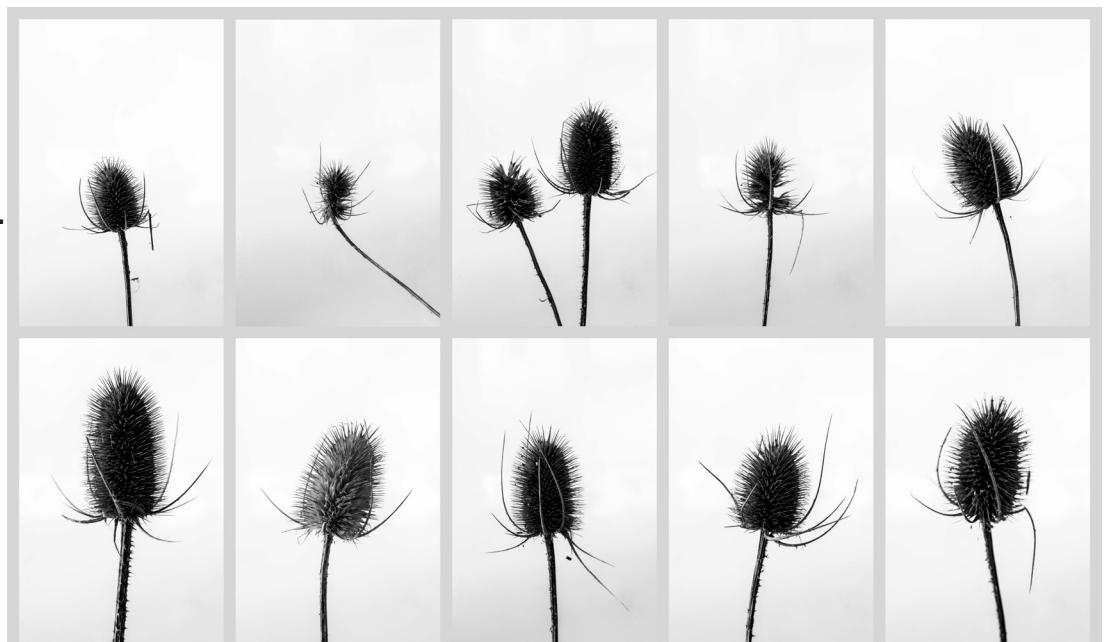


Figure 15. *Onopordum Acanthium* - Selection of Ten, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

interest and were more befitting of the Aestheticism which Barthes referred to (Barthes, 1977, p.24).

The previously discussed punctum of Lippmanns cacti (fig.16) lead me to also experiment with photographing a specimen of aloe vera (fig.17). This had limited photographic success and the images did not 'prick' me in the way that those of the thistles had. The images came away with a washed out, flat appeal to them which weakened them overall. Despite this I continued to experiment with those images in post-production as my CRJ reveals. The density of the original green in the image was weak and as a result weakens the image as a whole.

Figure 17 still has some intrigue for me and this study may be returned to in future. Presently the use of a concatenation between different images of the same sample maintain my interest in this compositions future. The presence of the shadows and imperfect colours link nicely with the works of Felicity McCabe as outlined in my CRJ and later in this review. For the time being, the image shown in figure 16 has been deselected from my Work In Progress Portfolio.



Figure 16. *Cacti 1*, Peter Lippmann, n.d.



Figure 17. *Aloe Vera Collection One*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020



Figure 18. *Monstera deliciosa* #1,
Felicity McCabe, n.d.

My use of flowers for experimentation comes from the works of both Felicity McCabe (fig.18) and Irving Penn (fig.19). The use of often wilted forms reminds us of the ephemeral and fleeting nature of flowers and, in turn, life. The veracity of this point is clearly exemplified through my use of the perennial daffodil. Lit with high key natural light and an optimised depth of field to show the specimen in as much detail as possible. As can be seen, the sample in figure 20 is blooming with life. These same specimens were revisited a week later once they had begun to wilt (fig.21) and so the exemplification of their ephemeral nature is made clear.



Figure 19. *Rose 'Blue Moon'*, Irving Penn, 1970



Figure 20.
Narcissus
Pseudonarcissus -
Ten, Andrew Paul
Hayward, 2020

Figure 21.
Narcissus
Pseudonarcissus -
Eleven, Andrew
Paul Hayward,
2020 (right)



An element which I found of particular interest was the inclusion of the apparatus utilised in McCabes images in her images (fig.22). We as a viewer are used to the flawless image with things presentable in a way that hides any accessory whether we consider them or not. This presence of the man made, in this case lab stand, realigns our perception of what is shown. The coming together of natural and unnatural forms within the frame. With further consideration of Szarkowskis consideration of



Figure 22. *Unnamed Image*, Felicity McCabe, n.d.

The Frame and how it effects our viewers consideration of what is within the image (Szarkowski,1966,p.9). What we as the photographer choose to include and choose to exclude can shift the context which our image sits within. This consideration became a focus of mine in some of my recent practice also as shown in figure 23.



Figure 23. *Narcissus Pseudonarcissus - One*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

As a final reflection before concluding this review I would like to present one other concatenation. This returned to my earlier more symbolic images using depictions of religious iconography and is displayed in figure 24. The darkness blends the images together and removes the notion of where the edge of the frame starts and finishes. This adds to the chiaroscuro effect from the lighting and deepens the focus on the thing itself within the image. This combining of photographs has been quite effective and I would like to experiment further with symbology within photographs in coming practice.



Figure 24. *A Matter of Life and Death*, Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020

It is my intention over the coming year to develop this practice and to begin to move away from replicating the work of others and towards creating my own narratives within my photographic practice. To do this I would like to study and exploit more deeply the store of stereotypes formed by icons within different cultures and display these for the viewer.

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