

Still in the Game

A photographic enquiry into the potential for inclusive expressions of masculinity in a community of older white men who play Walking Football.

Author: Liam Bailey

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Author: Liam Bailey

Master of Culture and Arts, Photography

Novia UAS / Campus Allegro, Jakobstad, Finland

Specialisation: Photography

Supervisor(s): Dr Paul Bevan, Course Artistic Director;

Emma Westerland, Head of Degree Programmes, Visual Arts

Academic support: Dr Nicola Simpson

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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes a practice-led enquiry into an older white heteronormative community in Norwich, in the east of England – one that forms part of a larger ongoing image project on retirement practices (set in the context of the fact that the population of developing countries is proportionally getting older).

The subject and subject cohort were established as a result of my enduring interest in football, and my recent return to playing the game via Walking Football, a form of the game in which the pace and style of play are adapted to reduce the risk of injury. The subjects with whom I worked are all part of a Walking Football club in my home town: Norwich Soca Seniors (The Football Association, 2019). This enquiry centred on the evolution of my photographic method to explore the relevance of known genres including reportage, the snapshot portrait and constructed digital portraiture. The form the work currently takes is 11 individually constructed portraits and a set of collectable football cards, together with a soundscape created from field recordings. In the conclusion, I assess whether being a part of the production of this work has broadened the thinking of the individuals involved (as well as those in the wider community connected to Soca Seniors), and enabled them to see themselves in a different context.

Language: English

Keywords: Football, photography, male, seniors, portraiture, digital

CONTENTS

p.5	1. Introduction
pp.6–8	2. Rationale
pp.8–18	3. Research context 3a. Reportage 3b. The snapshot 3c. Constructed portraits
pp.19–22	4. Project development 4a. The composite images
pp.23–32	5. Project evaluation 5a. Sold Out Gallery 5b. External evaluation and amplification
p.33	6. Project appraisal and outcomes

Appendices – see separate documents

- Appendix 1. Reportage shots of Walking Football players
- Appendix 2. Snapshots of the Walking Football players
- Appendix 3. The halo and religious imagery
- Appendix 4. Image assets for final works
- Appendix 5. Mid-project: Walking Football players with objects
- Appendix 6. Mid-project: Walking Football players
- Appendix 7. Sold Out Gallery images
- Appendix 8. Final images for review at Rencontres Arles festival of photography 2022
- Appendix 9. Future project opportunities in Dall-e AI-generated works
- Appendix 10. Description of the ethical framework for this project (TENK)

Bibliography – see separate document

1. INTRODUCTION

Using decorative elements, religious iconographic imagery and (constructed) digital framing, the new works presented for review as part of this photographic enquiry offer a timely and potentially provocative re-situation of the historical male sports figure within the context of contemporary constructed portraiture. This study aims to examine the evolving nature of the white heteronormative identity of an ageing male demographic and to suggest new ways of showing gender, class and visibility in the context of a specific group of older men, as well as situating the work within current photographic practice.

For my protocol, I have used as a guiding tool the TENK ethical guide to working with human participants. I have made significant efforts to create work that is both uniquely my own and which has been created within the framework of the community. The process has featured regular progress updates for the subjects, as well as the opportunity to discuss visual outcomes and related topics. The practice has evolved to be immersive and acts as testament not only to the authenticity of the built relationships but also the creative freedom those interactions have elicited.

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which heteronormal older white men who play Walking Football in their leisure time are able to support inclusive perceptions and expressions of masculinity, and the degree of concordance between their beliefs and their behaviours. To meet that objective, my photographic practice was centred on two questions: Would the group engage in an involved photographic study that both observed and reported to them? And: Would the results of the creative practice be accepted and embraced, both by the individual subjects and the group as a whole?

The project has allowed me to analyse my understanding of my practice, as well as enabled me to understand how best to position my constructed digital portraits within the ecosystem of contemporary photography. The dual benefit of creating these works has been significant creative evolution as an artist, and valuable international networking opportunities.

2. RATIONALE

Both the gathering of research materials and the rationale for this enquiry have in part been derived from the overarching theme of a larger body of work I wish to create, which is based on the question: What do humans do when they reach an arbitrarily defined phase of their life described as 'Retirement'?

My practice and observational research have emerged through meaningful encounters, self-acceptance and the interpersonal nature of the experiences I had with my chosen subject community. My involvement with the team allowed me to directly interact with the Walking Footballers, both sharing and evaluating our communal experiences on the pitch and in the dressing room.

As a photographer soon to be in my late 50s, I found enquiring into a subject with links to retirement both fascinating and personally revealing. My connection to the group I was working with was the result of a shared desire to keep playing football despite our advancing age and, often, physical impairment. I decided that the mode of research and photographic practice appropriate for this subject would be at odds with the very fleeting 'shoot and leave' interactions that had characterised my work as a professional photographer (Liam Bailey, 1991). I could see that an extensive and immersive project would allow me to develop treatments better able to help me formulate and enhance (even transform) my ideas. The critical direction of the work being accessed by a very specific audience helped serve the creative journey, and allowed me to evaluate the outcomes of this study in light of what Patricia Townsend calls the 'inner' and 'outer' world of the artist (Shirley Read and Mike Simmons, 2017).

For Townsend, an artist has an internal subjective narrative that is conditioned by how their work will be externally perceived by others, and reactions to the work in general. In the case of this project, the work is subject to this kind of tension, as well as the added complexity of my immediate audience also being the subjects pictured, and the men I then go and play Walking Football with. I am confident that the push/pull of this process has created works that embody a more rounded and informed conversation between myself and the subject group.



Fig. 1: Example of a 'shoot and leave' image; commissioned visit to Tbilisi during a civil uprising – Liam Bailey (1992)

The intimacy and connections allowable in taking a reportage approach to this subject would help me to explore feelings about what it means to be part of a cohesive and supportive but also challenging and competitive male tribe. Playing on the Soca Seniors team, and thus involving myself directly in an intense and shared experience, was what underpinned my rationale. I undertook a knowing leap into the development of a set of standalone portraits that relied on establishing trust with my subjects. This kind of image is something I have worked on as a commercial photographer for many years, but have never previously explored formally in a non-commissioned context (Liam Bailey, 2020).



Fig. 2: Portrait of Al Gore – Liam Bailey (2002)

After invited appraisal from both the Soca seniors and from my peers and tutors, and further creative maturation, I focused my new approach around constructed portraiture. I was able to explore further in my research, producing ideas that fed back into the development of the project.

3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

It is an established cultural norm that white, middle-class and middle-aged heterosexual men are seen as the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity (Cheng, 2008). Michael Kimmel notes that early hegemonic masculinity was contingent on two core components: privileging men with whiteness, and heterosexuality through the subordination of women, minorities and LGBTQ+ people (Kimmel, 2020).

Since Raewyn Connell's writings in 1987 on hegemonic masculinity, nearly all representative surveys are evidencing declines in sexual prejudice (Diefendorf and Bridges, 2020), with some contending that liberalisation is facilitating a genuine reconfiguration of gender norms and a restructuring of the gender hierarchy (Anderson and McCormack, 2018). Inclusive masculinity theory offers an alternative to Connell's theorising, suggesting that in an environment of decreasing homophobia, men are freer to express their masculinity in ways that were once stigmatised as feminine, such as communicating their emotions to other men (Anderson and McCormack, 2018) (Stick, 2021).

For this ethnocentric practice in non-commissioned photography, I wanted to undertake an artistic study of assumptions about the kind of progressive social change identified by Anderson and McCormack (Anderson and McCormack, 2018). Building on this rationale, and on my previous work practice, I first approached the subject using a reportage style, although I was fully involved with the events I was photographing – I was part of the cohort (not only playing Walking Football but also going along to Soca Seniors' socials) and saw myself as such.

3a. Reportage

I created a visual record of my involvement with the group, but with an aesthetic value beyond that of a 'pure' documentary. The reportage approach is defined by Nathalie Herschdorfer as a '*documentary intent with deliberate style, both eyewitness and personal acts of expression*' (Nathalie Herschdorfer, 2017). For this particular photographic enquiry, I would look to define what Robert Frank calls '*the humanity of the moment*', describing

how 'realism is not enough – there has to be a vision and the two together can make a good photograph. It is difficult to describe this thin line where matter ends and the mind begins.' (Aaron Siskind, 1972)

I used this reportage-driven practice at tournaments, training sessions and international competitions, with work including images not only of the Soca Seniors players but also of their supporters and facilitators (Appendix 1 – reportage shots of Walking Football players).



Fig. 3: Members of the Over 60s team getting ready in the changing room (2018)



Fig. 4: An Over 60s' goalkeeper at a Walking Football competition, Aubeterre, France (2018)



Fig. 5: Over 60s players at a Walking Football competition, Saint Pouchaire, France (2021)



Fig. 6: An Over 60s' goalkeeper at a Walking Football competition, Cabrills, Spain (2019)



Fig. 7: After the game in Cabrills, Spain (2019)

3b. The snapshot

Further research then led to looking at how certain other styles could be adapted for photographing the subject group, and how this might sit within general photographic practice. Some of the group of men I got to know and understand (both through direct engagement and participation in events) have opaque yet well-developed psychological strategies to deflect emotional turbulence; I was interested in exploring these in the form of staged portraits.

For examples of male footballers in photographic culture, I looked specifically at the formation, creation and dissemination of photographic football cards and stickers. These items were introduced as a means for fans being able to recognise players, with the tradition started in the US with baseball cards produced by the Goudey Gum company in the 1930s (various, n.d.).



Fig. 9: Examples of various picture cards from the UK, 1930s

From the 1930s to the present, collectable and tradeable cards and stickers (and sticker books) have dominated the indexical visual culture of male footballers, with cards first added to cigarette packets in the 1950s to encourage brand loyalty and connect with younger smokers. This means of creating 'personalities' and icons using players' images peaked in popularity in the 1970s. In the images, these snapshots of players, with obvious signifiers of age, status, identity and fashion became the known touchpoint for the fans to collect and own an icon of their team. The cards were often framed and displayed in sets, and found adorning male working-class establishments, such as barbers, snooker halls and pubs.



Fig. 10: Examples of picture cards from the UK, 1950s



Fig. 11: Examples of picture cards from the US, 1960s

In reviewing a 150-year-old tradition in photography, the snapshot seemed an appropriate means of helping refine the direction of the project. Often linked to amateur photography, the snapshot aesthetic is used to signify a kind of authentic version of intimacy and innocence, as ‘truth’ in seeing (David Bate, 2016): *‘I am a passionate lover of the snapshot, because of all the photographic images it comes closest to the truth’* – photographer and teacher Lisette Model.



Fig. 12: Untitled – August Sander (courtesy of J. Paul Getty Trust)

The snapshot tradition has been explored in the work of many artists, including the blank, expressionless portraits of August Sander (see above) and the pictorially balanced and neutral images of Thomas Ruff. Ruff said he decided to portray,

A mode of representation that would be as neutral as possible for the foreground attention to be of the sitter's face, whilst at the same time avoiding any psychological interpretation. (Thomas Ruff, 2006)



Fig. 13: Portraits – Thomas Ruff, 1987

In my work, I wanted there to be little or no obvious feeling and no flirting with the camera. Although I used lighting to eliminate shadows, my set up was still subtle enough to enable me to easily capture the natural post-game mood of the Walking Footballers. In this phase of the project, I referenced Rineke Dijkstra's 'Bullfighters' series (1994): portraits of young matadors photographed straight after dangerous early-career exchanges in the bullring.



Fig. 14: Evora, Portugal – Rineke Dijkstra (1994)

Dijkstra's subversive source of subject and approach worked by establishing a clinical snapshot approach to the subject – reviewing young men's masculinity in a detached, objective style – and bears reference to August Sander's conceptual approach (Erin Dunn, n.d.).

Another artist who documented his subjects without significant intervention was Roland Fischer. In his 1984 series 'Nuns and Monks', Fischer's subject is not so much the people themselves but the authenticity of the lives they have consecrated in the Catholic faith. In these utilitarian images the nuns and monks are divested of any material context, almost turned into depersonalised tabula rasa by a very flat shooting style.



Fig. 15: *Untitled* – Roland Fischer (1984)

Ruff's, Dijkstra's and Fischer's work brought to mind the stylistic approach of the standard police photograph: the 'mugshot'. All these references fed into the creation of deliberately 'momentary' images in the next phase of the project's development, ones shot just after the men left the pitch at the end of the game. In these portraits, the framing and colour treatment deliberately create the feel of a 'high street' print that encloses the subject. These snapshots were caught in a familiar environment with little technical preparation. (Appendix 2– snapshot images of the Walking Football players, Feb 2022)



Fig. 16: snapshot images of Walking Footballers from Soca Seniors

3c. Constructed portraits

Some people believe football is a matter of life and death, I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that.

– Bill Shankly, European Cup-winning manager at Liverpool FC

(Bill Shankley, n.d.)

Football is like a religion to me. I worship the ball, and I treat it like a god.

– Pele, Brazilian footballer (Pele/Brazilian footballer, n.d.)

Moving forwards from the icon status of the footballer in the genre of the football card, elements of my research began to overlap with my personal experience as a youth, when Saturdays were for football and Sundays for religion. Conflating these two subjects to think about football as a form of religion, I saw an opportunity to create new work in the context of staged meaning, of seeing the subject through a quasi-religious lens.

The next stage of my research looked at artists who have created complex constructions of images, a sort of photographic *mise-en-scène*. Andre Bazin compared the photographic process to *'Embalming the dead, warding off death by keeping the body present.'* (Andre Bazin, 1980) For others, it is not a question of survival after death, but of the creation of an ideal world in the likeness of the real. Examining increasingly fluid notions of masculinity, I referenced David LaChapelle's work, particularly this quote:

If you want to shock people in the art world, talk about Jesus or God; Eastern religions like Buddhism are cool – anything foreign or exotic like that is acceptable, but Christianity has a horrible reputation because of fundamentalists and evangelicals. (William A. Ewing, 2006a)

This led to research on other artists who develop constructed and manufactured work that plays with the traditions of art history and contemporary pop culture to create hyper-saturated, super-stylised images. I also worked in dialogue with images created by artists Pierre et Gilles, looking in particular at a layered work from 2016 that honours Dijkstra, *En plein coeur (Choi Seung-hyun T.O.P.)*, which features South Korean rapper, singer and songwriter Choi Seung-hyun.

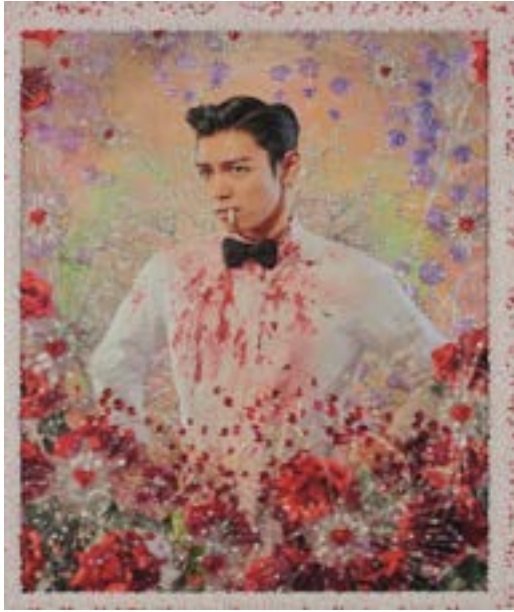


Fig. 17: *En plein coeur* (Choi Seung-hyun T.O.P.)
– Pierre et Giles (2016)



Fig. 18: *Troubled Waters* – Pierre et Giles (2022)

I decided to design new work around the staged photograph. I wanted to take my practice into the realm of digital manipulation and infinite iteration possibilities, and in doing so, I also referred to the analogue work of Calum Colvin from his 1987 work, *Narcissus*. The resultant works, and the methodologies and processes I used to make them are discussed in 'Project Development'.



Fig. 19: *Narcissus*, Calum Colvin (1987)

4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The only reality which counts in the end is the profound interpretation. It does not matter whether that interpretation comes by the way of the studio, by the way of documentary or for that matter by the way of the music hall. The important thing is the profundity of the interpretation. (Ian Aiken, 1988)

The project was scoped out using the principles of the TENK ethical practice around human subjects, which included explaining the project to participants, and following certain protocols. (Appendix i) For the reportage approach in the early phase, I aimed to blur the boundaries between observer and participant. Reportage is a more subjective and expressive form of documentary and is classified as derived from the snapshot. (Nathalie Herschdorfer, 2017).

The project was constructed around different touchpoints within the subject matter. These included being a team member, attending training all year round, and going to social events that were organised by the Soca Seniors team, as well as playing in two international tournaments. During these events, I was present both as a participant and as a photographer. The resulting content was presented to the group as an online gallery and I received verbal feedback and requests for physical and digital versions of the images. This was the first of three phases of the project's practical execution. As presented in the research section, in the second phase I was able, over a series of weeks, to photograph the SOCA Seniors Walking Football players as they came off the pitch after training. It is important to note that in these sessions I had just taken part in the match that had been played, and was therefore creating a space to work in that did not have a conventional photographer/sitter dynamic. I created a very discreet lighting model in advance with no background and undertook the shoots using a snapshot aesthetic. Using no heroic props, and with subjects tightly framed in an enclosed space, I wanted to achieve a neutral expression in the sitter, allowing the work to be stylistically uniform and utilitarian; the outcomes were ambiguously indistinct, almost morose.

I aimed to create and capture not joy nor even awkwardness, but a child-like innocence. The work was captured with a 35mm Nikon D850 camera with a 105mm lens. These RAW files had a colour treatment applied to add a particular atmosphere: stale and withdrawn. This uniform treatment helped create homogenised outcomes. In this research-led practice, both the shooting style and how the men presented themselves were heavily negotiated, with a regular feedback loop (see Fig. 16).

I then looked to increase the ambition of the work, evolving it into a multisensory project that could immerse the audience in an aural experience, creating deeper engagement. I worked on capturing field recordings of the Walking Footballers playing. Using audio software, I created a field soundscape of the in-play shouts and commands from behind the goals, etc., which will accompany the final works.

4a. The composite images

The neutral, honest portraits brought varied reactions from the audience, so I had the confidence to go deeper into the production process. I wished to build on the expression of Thomas Ruff when he described his work as '*not images of reality, but show[ing] some kind of second reality, the image of the image*' (David Bate, 2019).

I wanted to embellish the work, using something of the style of the football cards I had encountered in the early research phase to create a new set of constructed and personalised works for the contemporary art photography market. I saw a way to bring the football cards into the gallery environment, together with the composite soundscape of the men playing football and constructed images with elements based on the individuals' stories and the visual experiences I had had on this learning journey so far.

Referencing the religious imaging of my childhood (I was brought up a Catholic), I began to work with the halo (*Halo – Definition, Meaning & Synonyms | Vocabulary.Com, n.d.*). From the Greek *halos*, meaning the ring of light around the Sun or Moon, the halo can also denote glory or majesty, and is traditionally used to indicate special status within an image. I wanted to recreate this effect in my work and to use images from my archives of abandoned footballs and other sporting ball objects to act as haloes. (See Appendix 3. – The halo and religious imagery)



Fig. 20: Examples of the halo from work in the National Museum of Iceland (Liam Bailey, 2022)

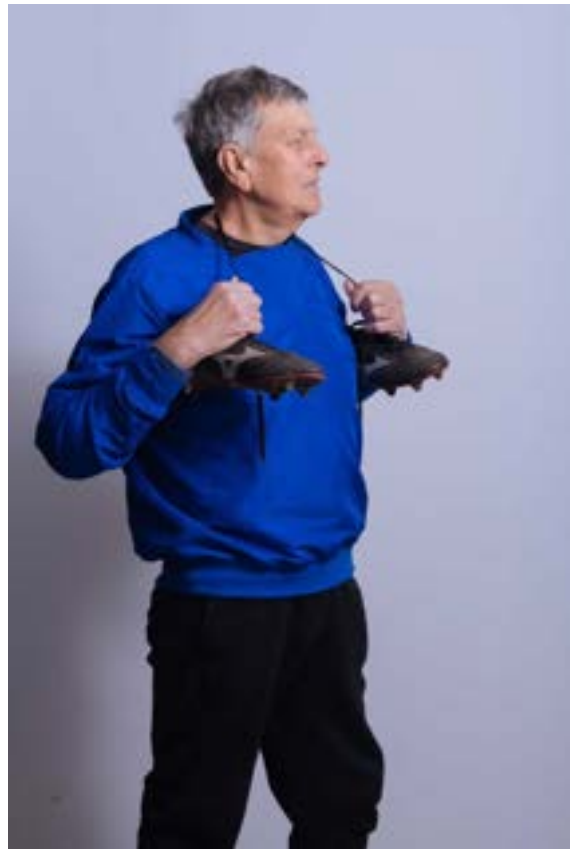
I also wanted to build on a point psychologist Carl Rogers made in Grayson Perry's book, *The Descent of Man* (2017):

Rogers used the word 'congruence' when describing this relationship between the idealized self and the real self. Congruence is when the two selves fit harmoniously when a person's idealised self is congruent with their actual behaviour. However, the idealized self is an often-unreachable version of ourselves that we and society create while the real self is the messy, imperfect inner truth. We want to be the idealised version because we believe that society will then regard us positively, so we struggle to maintain a version that does not fit. (Grayson Perry, 2017)

In my collection and creation of research assets, I exploited the readiness of my mobile phone to record my experiences and discoveries, together with reflected encounters with the sitters and on the research trips we covered as part of the practice. During the digital construction of the works, the setting, lighting, décor and props were discussed with the sitters, with constructed decorative elements often referencing small but significant events or aspects in their lives, such as a pair of much-loved football boots; see below.

(Appendix 4 – Image assets for final works)

(Appendix 5 – Walking Football players with objects, Feb 2022)



Figs. 22. and 23: sketches of composite image ideas and props for composite images – Liam Bailey 2022

In the work *Priest*, the sitter, Danny, is holding a programme from a game at Norwich City Football Club in 1971, which he attended as a younger man. The subject of *Heart*, Steve, was proud of his new 12-cm operation scar, the result of recent open-heart surgery; he wanted the image to express his joy and his feelings about being ‘saved’ to play again. This engagement and reflection are further developed in the research. The picture seems to judge the mood of the figure, whereas the signifier is ambiguous, and the projection is varied (John Berger, 1968).

Ruff observed that *‘Photography pretends to show reality. With your technique, you have to go as near to reality as possible to imitate reality. And when you come so close then you recognize that, at the same time, it is not.’* (William A. Ewing, 2006b)

5. PROJECT EVALUATION

As part of the iterative process of production and learning, I showed early versions of the constructed portraits to three reviewers in Helsinki. It was out of discussions with one of these reviewers, Elina Heikka, director of The Finnish Museum of Photography, that the idea of creating my own set of collectable football cards for the Soca Seniors team evolved. After completing the final portraits, I then manufactured 100 sets of ten cards to accompany any future exhibition, as a physical (and free) take-away and, potentially, a collectable item. The cards were intended to prolong the audience's experience of the work and to help lend importance and validity to the sitters.

(Appendix 6, Mid-project – Walking Football players)



Fig .24: Mid-project design for the football card – Liam Bailey 2022

I wanted to be able to model the audience experience and thus worked with design assistant Ruth Phillips to create a more immersive, 3D version of the show, both for digital consumption and as a guide for how the work might be presented in a commercial gallery. This created a blend of my works as backlit lightboxes, a soundscape activated by the viewers passing an IR detector in the gallery, and the football cards as the physical takeaway from the show.

To reveal the gallery <https://www.artsteps.com/view/62a096a431976c28b20e0fe2>
(Liam Bailey and Ruth Phillips, 2021)

5a. Sold Out Gallery

This presentation built on developments made during the creation of reference images for the Sold Out Gallery show, which I and other students on the MA initiated in Gallery White Box, Jakobstad in 2021. Here people invited to the private view were encouraged to 'buy' the work on show based on the relative strength of their desire to own it, and to take that piece away with them the same night (they were not charged anything for the work).



Fig. 25: Sold Out Gallery staff portraits, White Box Gallery, Jakobstad, 2021 – Liam Bailey



Fig. 26: Aja as the character of 'gallery owner', Sold Out Gallery – Liam Bailey 2021



Fig. 27: Image showing show preparation, Sold Out Gallery – Liam Bailey 2021

(Appendix 7 – Sold Out Gallery images)

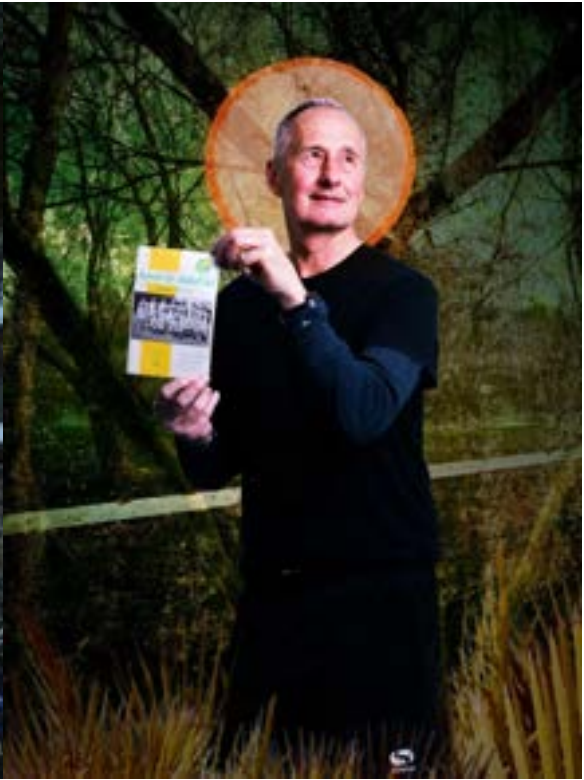
By placing an iterative and practice-led review of the subject I was able to have increased stakeholder feedback and research appraisal that facilitated a dialogue between the work and its placement within contemporary photographic structures. By employing a deep-dive engagement, with a longer timespan than in previous bodies of work, I was able to gain more traction with a group of older men who, generally, were probably wary of exploitative practices.

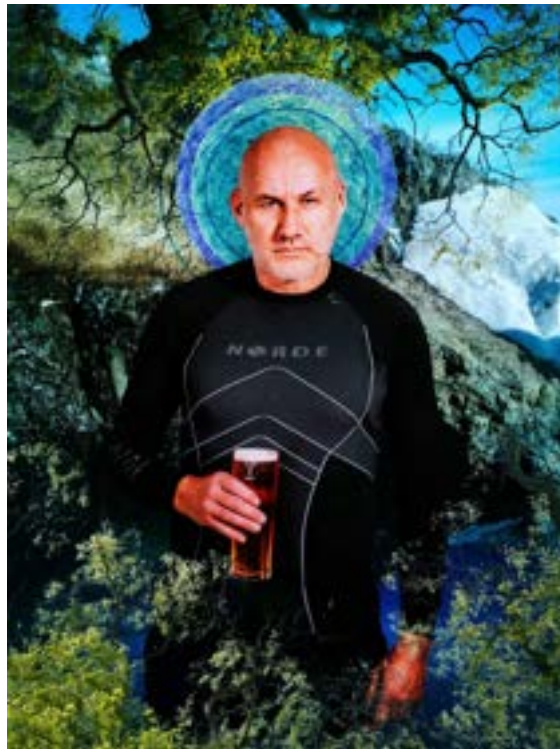
Ongoing, I anticipate that a range of groups and audiences will engage with this project. There will be the immediate relations of the men who are the subjects of the constructed portraits, who will be drawn from a range of local communities/businesses/institutions and members of Soca Seniors in the Norfolk area of the UK. The reach of the project to a general audience (both in the immediate area and Norwich more widely) will be explored through a participatory relationship with the Norfolk Football Association; the work in print form is intended to be shown at Norwich's Football Development Centre, with invited connections coming along to view the work when exhibited. I will also run a display of the final works in Norwich, to which a general local audience will be invited, as well as members of Norwich's visual arts community.

5b. External reviews and amplification

In attempting to extend the conversation and to get critical reviews of *Still in the Game*, I have submitted the works below to several festivals, competitions, and review events:







(Appendix 8 – Final images for review at Rencontres Arles festival of photography 2022)

Submitted to:

- Rotterdam Photo 23, Subject – Freedom re-defined, Holland (in progress)
- Portraits Hellerau Photography Award 2023, Germany (in progress)
- Leica – Become a Witness Prize, US 2022 (in progress)
- Format 23, Derby, UK (rejected)

- Emergentes 2022 – International Photography Award, Encontros da Imagem, Portugal (in progress)
- Helsinki Photo Festival – Fearless 2022, Finland (rejected)
- 2022 UK Association of Photographers Awards: Finalist (Series)
- Rencontres Arles festival of photography 2022; reviewed by Alberto Prina (Artistic Director for the Festivals et Foires, Italy), Peterson and Hjelmén (Sunnhordland Museum /AiR, Norway), Agasta Stoinska (Blow photo agency, Poland), Dejan Sluga (Photon, Romania) and Celeste Bonera (DBA Agency, Italy).

Moving forward, I imagine the project forming part of a larger one with the overarching topic, The Third Age (Liam Bailey, n.d.). As of March 2019, 10 per cent of the world population was over 65 years old (mixed, 2019), accounting for some 600 million people globally (Ayalon, 2014). Given I believe this demographic is still an underdeveloped subject in practical research, I would in the future like to place a spotlight on its identity.

The evaluation and impacts of this and other amplification practices will be an ongoing process involving other project partners as well as myself. I am currently preparing a presentation slide deck and template for exhibition proposals. At present, the work has been included along with others in a group show to be held at a new exhibition site at the Old Bank in Jakobstad (November 2022), under the curatorship of Juan Pedro Fabra Guemberena.

An exhibition appraisal will be the one of most valuable feedback mechanisms from this first public showing, to be added to my comments on a feedback form on my website. At all times I have identified the potential obstacles and weaknesses within and around the project and have taken steps to mitigate the threats. For example, I offered to take commercial photographs for the sponsorship of the team shirts, showing a level of desire to be part of the organisation. I have also made it a particular feature of the project structure to try and increase artistic awareness in the immediate (in the form of the subjects themselves) and wider audience, as well as make practice outcomes as visible as possible – for example, submitting work to photography contests and festivals, both locally and internationally.

I will soon be working with another project partner who will help facilitate the creation of a new audience at the around of Norwich City Football Club (Carrow Road), with the potential to show the work during the half-time break of one of the team's Championship matches, and at an accompanying print show in the public areas of the ground. I will also use social media (Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn) to disseminate the image project

and increase its visibility to a non-art audience. I have also submitted a summary of the project to the publisher, Dewi Lewis, who published my book *Forever England* in 2006 (Liam Bailey, 2006a), and I also intend to explore funding through crowd-funding or the Football Association.

As part of the ongoing project evolution, I have designed presentations in which the work could be exhibited as a show in spaces dedicated to art-based photography.

Fabrication treatment one:

I have designed and costed a lightbox installation of the 11 final images, which could deliver a backlit/lightbox version; the images would be printed as a Duratran (*Metro Imaging*, n.d.) on a lightbox substrate.

Lightboxes at image size (35 x 28cm), max 11

Lightboxes at image size (70 x 56cm), max 11

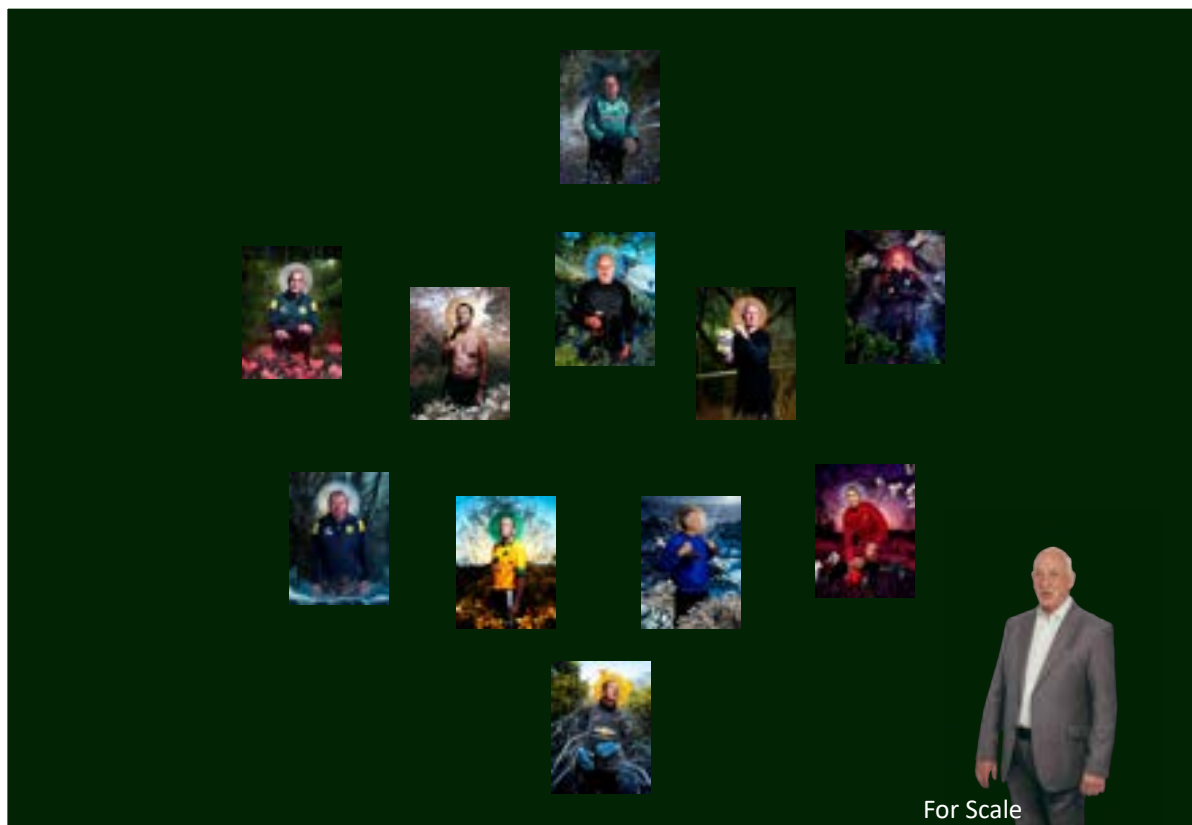


Fig. 28: Presentation format for *Still in the Game* lightboxes/prints (arranged in player formation)

For printing onto paper stock if required for local showing in Norwich: max print size max is 118cm x 81cm (image without degradation); A0 for an image printed on paper stock.

Fabrication treatment two:

In this treatment, I have designed a 3D version of the exhibition fabrication, including a branded entrance into a contained space, with backlit enclosed works in the style of the Stations of the Cross, with the floor and walls covered in a 3G pitch material. The audio soundscape would be activated by audience movement. At the end of the presentation, a wall would be plinths holding found footballs, and viewers would be offered a set of collectable cards that could be taken from the show.



Fig. 29: The two sides of the football cards produced to accompany the show

Link to the audio soundscape:

<https://www.artsteps.com/view/62a096a431976c28b20e0fe2>

6. PROJECT APPRAISAL AND OUTCOMES

In reviewing the project, I have drawn the following conclusions. It has been observed that my intense and immediate involvement with the subjects has significantly increased the depth of the works, and enabled me to take significant strides forward as an artist, and to extend my critical awareness. My methodology of creating regular feedback loops (showing work to the subjects to elicit responses and using those to develop work at the next stage) helped facilitate greater trust in the process. My creative direction has also facilitated the men of this project in expressing their masculinity in a more performative and inclusive way. This softening of their perceptions is evident in the final works, which involve considerable use of colour, subject pose and floral and nature-inspired layering.

I believe these heteronormal older white men have, in discordance with their belief systems and historical views on the male in sport, engaged to a level that indicates substantive behavioural change, and supports the arguments around sociological evolution detailed in Anderson and McCormack's research on male entrenchment – these men are now freer to express less masculine traits (Anderson and McCormack, 2018).

The support offered to the project by the Soca Seniors as a group has evolved from friendly disinterest to an enthusiasm for seeing the latest iteration of the work. I would argue that in this way I have enriched and widened the team's interest as an audience. This raises further questions about the work. Is it merely supporting their egos (i.e. the reason that they're interested is the work shows them, and offers them attention)? Could I further explore this dissolved masculinity? These questions could form the basis of research that collaborates with sociological practitioners, and a practice-based intervention over the longer term.

Ongoing, I see the critical direction of the work being accessed by a wider audience than just the team and their affiliates, in particular commercial galleries or any space interested in better understanding the evolution of the modern male. I intend to continue working with this subject matter as part of the wider project 'The Third Age', and will look for feedback from the international art market, as well as the critical community that is attached to it.