

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Wendy McMurdo / The Digital Mirror

2018

5:14

Narrator:

Photography has always grown and developed, and been inextricably linked to technology. In that respect, it's very much a mirror of our time.

When I first started working with a computer in the mid-90s, there just seemed to be endless possibilities. It was a very kind of nascent time for digital technologies, and similarly of course all of these ideas were starting to really interest artists. There were lots and lots of interesting, quite prophetic texts about the impact that digital culture might have in all of our lives, and later in the lives of children.

So, these are some of the hundreds of transparency sheets that were shot at the museum. There's something very lovely about containing yourself just to 12 or 24 exposures, I mean now you can shoot until you have what is technically a perfect image.

I started trailing school parties as they worked their way around the museum. For me it's an interesting space, because when I was young the museum was a place where everything was held that was important. Absolutely everything. But now of course, the museum's really changed, it's almost like the glass screen of the vitrines became like the computer screen.

I was very interested in the way that my own children actually at that point were using these computer games like Nintendo skater, extreme sport type games. I worked with a young figure skater in Dundee actually, and on one screen she was shown moving through her routine, and then on the other screen a young girl was shown copying the moves on screen, very much looking at the culture of digital gaming.

I began to think about how childhood was constructing; there was two major institutions that dominated: one was the family, and the other was school. It did strike me when you're in a classroom in a school; it's a very traditional sort of Victorian space that hasn't changed since the school was built. I think that children's' world now is so different, and I wanted to somehow work with that.

In the 'Indeterminate Objects' work, (the 'Classrooms' work) which is moving image, crystalline, clear type forms can just be seen rotating or hovering in a space very much like the classroom we're sitting in now.

Using a combination of traditional lens-based technologies and digital techniques can really inject an element of not only surprise, but also an uncomfortable sort of feeling, or this feeling you get when you look at something that's new.

'Let's go to a place' which was a series of composite portraits based on one class, a group of children who were moving really in a way from childhood to adolescence. I set up a photo booth and photographed all of the children in front of a very neutral backdrop, very similar to the way that school photographers work.

I think that the way we photograph ourselves, and photograph our children does tell us quite a lot about attitudes towards photography and reproduction of childhood, so that all feeds in.

But I knew I wanted to do something very very different with these images that was much more to do with both gaming and the way that I saw children using images of themselves, exchanging images of themselves.

I do think that especially when you're young, you are very much using, or can be using, social media as a kind of mirror, so you're constantly seeking validation. I mean there is actually something in your body that is produced every time you get positive affirmation, so I think you can become really quite dependent on that. It really affects the way that you move in the world. That there is this kind of almost apocalyptic view of the relationship between childhood and technology, and that's not new. But I think rather than getting too anxious about these, we should rather try and document it in a slightly more measured way.

I consider myself very very fortunate because I did find a subject that I found very very interesting, and it's continued to be endlessly fascinating and continues to be so.