



Sally Mann's Background (B.1951, Lexington, named "America's Best Photographer" by Time magazine in 2001)

- Highlights of findings :**
- ◆ **Family:** growing up in rural countryside like feral child, interest in photography was promoted by his father, His 5*7 camera became the basis of her use of large format cameras today.
 - ◆ **Education:** graduated from The Putney School in 1969(where she took photography), made her photographic debut with an image of a nude classmate
 - ◆ **Publications:** <Immediate Family>,<At Twelve>,<Still Time>,<What Remains>

Controversions:

The images from Immediate Family involves child pornography.

Her role of mother is challenged with the uncomfortable pictures taken for her three young children.

Emmet, Jessie & Virginia 1989, Sally Mann



SALLY MANN IMMEDIATE FAMILY

Q1, Who are the children on the image(background of them)?

Q2, How are they influenced after taking in part in the images?

Emmet: born in 1979, joined a volunteer program Peace Corps for a time.

Jessie: had later become a writer, photographer, model and artist

Virginia: was born in 1985 and later attended a law school

Immediate Family

To expand the research, I have to find out more about the story of the photo. It is taken from series of Immediate Family, one of the most recognisable work of Sally Mann. She began photographing them every summer from the time they were infants in the mid-1980s. The book consists of 65 black and white photographs of her three children, all under the age of 10. The book titled as Immediate Family (1985-92) captures the children's childhood in the rural countryside of Virginia. Yet distinguishly, the children appeared in nude in most occasions.

Jessie talks about how the images changed their life:

Each of us is dealing with that pressure in a very different way. Emmett is completely daunted by it. He doesn't know what he wants, so he backs away from the whole thing; he's sometimes afraid to have any goals or any aspirations, doesn't want to get too involved or too intense. Ginna wants to be like everybody else, and these pictures have made that difficult.

Q: What does Sally Mann say about the collaboration with children?

And any parent knows that you can't force a child to make art they have to cooperate, they have to want to be part of the process. When we made these pictures, the kids knew exactly what to do to make an image work: how to look, how to project degrees of intensely or defiance or pliancy, or shyness, or defiance. Large dejection. I didn't pry these pictures from them — they gave them to me. Remember that and the images take on a wholly different meaning — no deep psychological manipulations or machinations, just the straightforward, everyday telling of a story. From: <http://www.com.qc.ca/benoit/psocia/main.html>



Q: Why do the children appear in nude? Controversion: Child Pornography

Naked

Her background reveals how she was brought up(cultural background), and she raised her children in same way.

Out of the 65 photos in the book, only 13 show the children naked. There was no internet in those days. I'd never seen child pornography. It wasn't in people's consciousness. Showing my children's bodies didn't seem unusual to me.

http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Model_Family.html

Q: Why that kind of look?

The image of three topless children was obviously staged by Sally Mann. Although she had mentioned that the children gave the pictures to them. There are still signs of composition by her as the photographer.

Q: Why is that and how was the image produced?

Gender Issue: Why does Emmet stand in the middle of the image and wears short pants and lucky chains.



Left: Kiss by the Hotel de Ville, Paris, 1950 by Robert Doisneau, image: <http://blogs.photopreneur.com/worlds-most-infamous-staged-photos>

Right: (V-J Day Kiss, Times Square, 1945, by Alfred Eisenstaedt, image: <http://photos.codlib.com/2007/07/26/the-v-j-day-kiss-times-square/>)

The photo Kiss by the Hotel de Ville was staged after V-J Day Kiss. It is a good example of staged photo and bring out the whole subject for the research of similar photos made by Sally Mann.



Image: <http://sh.silichina.com/2008-11-19/2231817.htm>

Reference: Jiao Bo(2005), My Mom and Dad, Hua Yi Publication Company, ISBN: 9787801426970

Similar family photo work by a award winning famous Chinese photographer Jiao Bo gives me more idea about photo staging. In the book of <My Mom and Dad> which contains more than 100 photos of domestic life of two old people who had lived together for more than 70 years.

The photos are chose from 12,000 photos he took for over last 30 years from 1974. The whole series is more like documentary photographs, less staged. It shows a real scene of the old couples' life.

Q: How it differs from photos Sally Mann took for her children.

Black and White

Her black-and-white photographs are made with a large-format view camera, and thoughtfully and skillfully printed. Her interest of photography promoted by his father whose 5*7 camera become her basis use of today.

Her father, a physician, a civil rights supporter and, she lovingly says, an "oddball," gave her a camera when she was 17 and told her the only subjects worthy of art were love, death and whimsy.

(Sourced from: http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Model_Family.html)

Origins of photography

Left: Six-pounder Ward Gun at the Washington Arsenal, 1862, by Mathew Brady, http://www.lemnispedia.com/mathew-brady_1.html

Middle: Vietnam Inc. Phillip Jones Griffiths <http://filmotion.magnumpotos.com/essay/waragsq/films>

Right: Open Wound, Stanley Greene, Screenshot: <http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=4073>

Through looking at the history of photography, I found that:

Black and white: first used for documentary, mainly war.

Classic, timeless, subtle and interpretive

Color: More realistic, vibrant

Moral Issue

The private picture brings up moral issues as some think private should stay in the way.

Q: Why does Sally Mann decide to show the public these photos of her children in nude?

The Wet Bed, 1987, Online Image From: <http://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/8485>

Immediate Family' needs to be considered within the cultural and social climate that produced it; an America which was busy legislating to prevent Federal Funds being used to promote, disseminate or produce material depicting sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the exploitation of children or individuals engaged in sex acts" (Fletcher). Source from: <http://www.americansuburb.com/2009/11/theory-sally-manns-immmediate-family.html>

Gender Issue

Left: Last time Emmet modeled nude, 1987, image: <http://www.com.qc.ca/benoit/mann/mann2.htm>

Right: Sunday Funnies, 1991, image: <http://philipdeparry.com/auctions/lot-detail.aspx?au=UK040108&search=&p=3&order=&lotnum=235>

The two photos clearly brought up gender issue. It involves not only the attitudes of the children, but also how Sally Mann composed the photo including the focus of photo.

Q: How Emmet cope with his two sisters totally naked around him?

The image's meaning changes when the artist is a woman, and the subject is male. It has the tendency to become distinctly more sexual, and in turn, comes more under fire than the female/female exchange.

sourced from: <http://www.americansuburb.com/2009/11/theory-sally-manns-immmediate-family.html>

DAD ON BED, 1985, LARRY SULTON

Set up photo (left) DAD ON BED by Larry Sulton in which his father was told to stop smile. He explained:

"Photography is instrumental in creating family not only as a memento, a souvenir, but also a kind of mythology."

Barthes analyzed in the book of Mythologies(1993), the unifying theme is the idea of "myth" is basically, a type of signification which projects an additional meaning onto an existing concept so as to make it carry a second, ideological meaning.

Reference: Barthes, R. (1993), Mythologies, Vintage

Q: What is the commons between Larry Sulton and Sally Mann's work?

"Art is a Tool to set up new questions"

Supported by The World Collections Programme

Screenshot: <http://www.lale.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/universseries2010/room3.shtml>

From the porcelain sunflower seeds by contemporary Chinese artist Ai Weiwei to Sally Mann's photos, both artists had their different ways of showing their art. More importantly, they both use different "tools" to set up new questions and make people who see them think.

Q: What is Sally Mann trying to tell us?

Nudity in Photographs

The Web Cave / Four Beauties, 1997, Liu Zheng <http://throughimpressedeyes.blogspot.com/2007/06/liu-zheng.html>

Nude photographs by Chinese photographer Liu Zheng combines traditional art with naked women. It brings up the question of whether or not nudity changed the sensation of a photo.

Q: How nudity affect the sensation of a photo?

A nude is not just study of the body without the camouflage of clothes, but also a flashpoint for debate about body image, culture, sexuality, and very personal interpretations of beauty. For some photographers, the nude means elegant and sculptural studies of curves, light and shadows; for others, it means sexy, colorful, and sometimes voyeuristic photographs that entertain or provoke.

Reference: Anthony LaSala(2007), The world's top photographers:Nudes, Rotovision, ISBN-13: 978-2940378272

Children as Subjects

Virginia at 6, 1989, Online Image from: <http://www.moreeuv.com/histoire-art/sally-mann.htm>

By looking at the topic of children as subjects, brings up the history of nudity in art. From early nude children applied in earlier religious paintings to contemporary art.

Also a brief history of nude children photos' caused controversial opinions.

Q: Is Sally Mann influenced by traditional art?

Monochrome in Media

Ashes and Snows, Gregory Colbert, www.ashesandsnows.org

Looking at monochrome photos that applied in media. I used two documentary films:

Schindler's List (1993), Steven Spielberg, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7TK-EJwLRI4>,

Ashes and Snows(2005), Gregory Colbert, <http://www.ashesandsnows.org/>

Finally, I used two color photos of Sally Mann's to conclude how color affect photos. Using PS to make black and white photos, it gives me clear understanding of the differences between two.

A total of nearly 8 weeks into the research of the image, I found not only about Sally Mann but at the meantime expanded my knowledge of few specific area. Through analysing Sally Mann's image of a few controversions such as child pornography and her role as mother, I have a better understanding of myself with the research findings as reference.

Although I didn't make any specific judgement, instead I listed and researched all possible elements that could be involved in the production of Sally Mann's photos. Comparing and relating with artists who have similar works opened my eyes to the photography art world. I now know more about the history of photography and how colors work in photography.

Most importantly, I come to a better understanding of how Sally Mann works her art at the end of the research.