

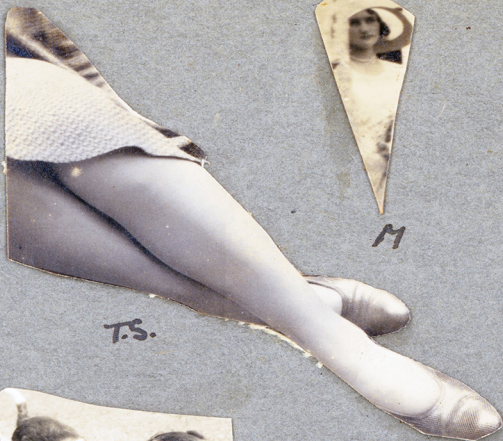
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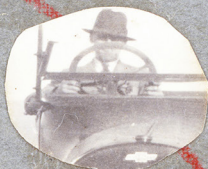
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THE CURLY TWINS

Famzine



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1:
WINTER
2019

**‘TO COLLECT
PHOTOGRAPHS IS TO
COLLECT
THE WORLD’**

— SUSAN SONTAG, 1977



‘DINKY DALE’

OUR LAUNCH EXHIBITION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN
POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF
KATHLEEN SHEPHARD (NÉE DALE)
1924–2017



FAMZINE: ISSUE 1, WINTER 2019

In the late 19th century, cameras became cheap and simple enough to tempt the amateur. The trillions of photographs taken by amateurs since then, carefully curated to create family albums, tucked inside negative wallets or pinned on fridge doors, tell the stories of all our lives.

Over time, a huge number of these photos and albums have become separated from their original owners. The albums, originally intended solely for private consumption, only became readily available on the open market in the latter decades of the 20th century, representing a new and exciting historical cache that shed further light on our shared humanity. These personal, or 'family', images have also proved a rich seam to tap for artists and academics interested in the development and history of photography.

The inspiration for The Family Museum was filmmaker Nigel Shephard's archive of more than 25,000 family photographs, all taken by amateurs and collected over 30 years. A chance meeting through Lily Cole's Impossible project, and a shared love of photography, brought Nigel and Rachael Moloney to co-found The Family Museum in 2017. Rachael's inspiration to explore the world of the amateur snapshot was her grandmother's talent for photography and the beautifully laid out albums she created.

In this first edition of *Famzine*, published to coincide with our launch exhibition, *Auto-Memento*, Nigel talks about his early instinct for collecting, while Rachael considers the allure of imperfection. We also feature contributions by American artist Barbara Levine and Anglo-Russian family historian Ben Haslam. →

Our debut show, *Auto-Memento*, at Swindon Museum & Art Gallery, focuses on a group of Edwardian 'Stickyback' photographs acquired by Nigel as a job lot in 2016. A series of seemingly unrelated portraits, the 72 photos were taken in a studio on Regent Street in Swindon and probably kept for the photographer's reference.

Deriving their name from their gummed back, Stickybacks were a cheap and popular form of portrait often taken by itinerant photographers who opened 'pop-up' studios across the country. For us, the candid and intimate style of these photographs gives them a distinctly modern feel that echoes later coin-op photo-booth shots, and in certain cases the self-possession seen in contemporary self-portraits taken with smartphones.

Nigel Martin Shephard

NIGEL MARTIN SHEPHARD
CO-FOUNDER
THE FAMILY MUSEUM

Rachael Moloney

RACHAEL MOLONEY
CO-FOUNDER
THE FAMILY MUSEUM

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OUR THANKS TO OUR **FAMILY AND FRIENDS** WHO HAVE SUPPORTED
AND ENCOURAGED US ON **THE FAMILY MUSEUM** JOURNEY SO FAR.
NIGEL: GEORGIE, LOUISE, SHANE, CHARLOTTE, GRACE, CLAIRE,
HANNAH, ZEKE AND SCARLET AT HUB, STOKE NEWINGTON.
SPECIAL THANKS TO BILLY MOWBRAY AND JIMMY ADEM. **RACHAEL:**
MURIEL, MARY, KEVIN, PAUL, JOACHIM AND BENJAMIN.
WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK SOPHIE CUMMINGS AT SWINDON
MUSEUM & ART GALLERY FOR HOSTING OUR LAUNCH EXHIBITION.
EXHIBITION DESIGN: **NIGEL MARTIN SHEPHARD**



CONTRIBUTORS



BARBARA LEVINE is a collage artist, found photo collector, curator and author. Her extensive collection is dedicated to sharing and preserving vintage vernacular photography and is the basis for artwork, exhibitions and publications. Barbara is the author of several books on photography, including *People Kissing: A Century of Photographs* (2018, Princeton Architectural Press).
projectb.com



NIGEL MARTIN SHEPHARD is an independent filmmaker, artist and composer. His short film *Father Figure* was screened at the London Film Festival in 2011 and he is currently completing a feature-length project, *Banners and Broad Arrows*, narrated by leading actors and telling the story of the Suffragette Movement through still images, taken mostly by Suffragettes. Nigel gave a paper, *Kodak Girls*, on the subject at the University of Oxford in 2013.



BEN HASLAM is from Norfolk and has been a devoted family historian since 2013, when he inherited his grandparent's extensive family research and hundreds of photographs. Aside from working on his family tree, he enjoys making contact with living relatives all over the world. Ben shares his family photos and ephemera on Instagram [@william_gerhardie_scrapbook](https://www.instagram.com/william_gerhardie_scrapbook)



RACHAEL MOLONEY is an editor and curator. She has held numerous senior positions in publishing and curated art and design projects focused on ethical issues. Publications she has worked on and contributed to include *Departures*, *Financial Times*, *Nowness*, *Time Out*, *Vogue* and *Wallpaper**. Rachael is currently Special Projects and Research Assistant to Sir John Sorrell CBE. Following in the footsteps of her grandmother, a proud Brownie owner, Rachael has a passion for photography, both amateur and professional.
www.rachaelmoloney.com

ON BEING AN ARTIST AND A COLLECTOR: BARBARA LEVINE



Like many people, I've always enjoyed looking at other people's pictures. When I was a kid, I would tag along with my mother and grandmother to antique shops and sit for hours looking at vintage photograph albums. I was bit early by the collecting bug and have been a collector of vintage vernacular photography ever since.

It was in art school that I began to relate to the albums as objects, as visual explorations, as storytelling and as visual concepts. The way people in untutored ways used sticky-back photos, candid snapshots, sequencing and witty captions to tell their life stories in the space of a photo album inspired me as an artist. With my growing collection of vintage photos, I worked in what I would call artist-as-editor mode. In addition to authoring books about the idea of the photo album as the first generation of photographic

storytelling (*Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*; *Around The World: The Grand Tour in Photo Albums*), I also started to use anonymous photos in my collection as building blocks to create photo collages.

To make the collages, I slice apart found photos and details from my personal photos, placing them side by side, combining and recombining to create unexpected juxtapositions. When I discover connections and form relationships, the overwhelming anonymity of any one image gives way to mystery. The collages are like confounding time travels that together form pages from a fictional album.

As an artist who is also a collector and author, my work tends to cross traditional boundaries. I am simultaneously dedicated to preserving (often rescuing) the original work – honoring it as a reflection of a specific time and place – but also fascinated by mixing anonymous photos with contemporary artistic methods, technologies and imagery to create a fresh encounter with the past and new ways of experiencing the photographic image.



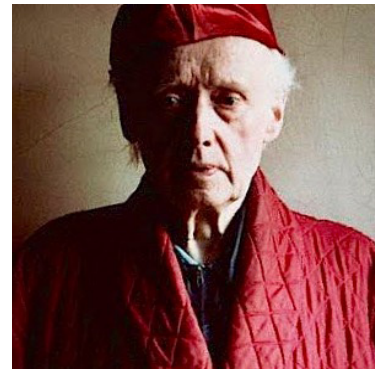
EMPATHY FOR THE DEAD: BEN HASLAM

Stephen Fry once posed the question, “Is there such a thing as history or are there only histories?”.

As I see it, how can we understand history other than through the millions of individual stories, or histories, told by the people who were there? Family history, in particular, has become a mass pastime. Many are at last able to see the links between facts and historical narratives brought wholly to life through named and depicted families. Colossal events can be hard to comprehend, but a family photo can move us beyond words. Imagination is the key to understanding the lives of our forebears. If we can't feel what our ancestors felt or imagine the desires that led to their actions, then we tend to judge them by our own standards and denounce them, or else we glorify and idolise them.

Family history was kindled in me at an early age. In my ordinary English family, there was one figure who glowed with a distinct foreignness. She was my great grandmother, born in Russia as Dolly Gerhardi but in my childhood known always as Grandma Small. The Gerhardis were a polyglot Anglo-Russian family of prosperous cotton-mill owners in St Petersburg. Dolly's eccentric brother, William, became one of the most well-known and praised writers of the 1920s and 1930s, although he died largely forgotten

I remember at family gatherings there would first be a hush, then all talk stopped as Grandma Small entered the room. Her face white as chalk, eyes blue as ice, she seemed impossibly ancient, yet despite her shuffling gait she was



imposingly regal. It seemed to me she had just alighted from a troika from Petrograd, a dusting of snow still on her clothes. She spoke with a strong Russian accent, in deep tones that enhanced her exoticness. She fascinated me.

Long before I'd read a history book, I had a vivid sense of the Imperial Russia of Grandma Small's childhood. She seemed to embody all the stories I later discovered. Stories of sleigh rides across the countryside in the dead of winter, pursued by wolves; of visits from Russian princesses; a palatial house on the River Neva, where the mob rioted. Stories of escape, jewels sewn into dresses; stories of loss, separation, hunger and tragic death. The stuff of fairytales, yet all true.

I feel attached to my Anglo-Russian ancestors but claim nothing from them. Their achievements and heroics are their own to take pride in, not mine, just as the shame of their sins remain their own. We are fortunate to live in a time when the background of our families no longer defines us. We can choose our own sense of belonging, and rather than being rooted in the past we can make our own roots. The lives of our ancestors often give us inspiration and comfort. By keeping their stories alive we keep the road behind us marked and lighted. By remembering them, we can travel more surely into the darkness ahead.

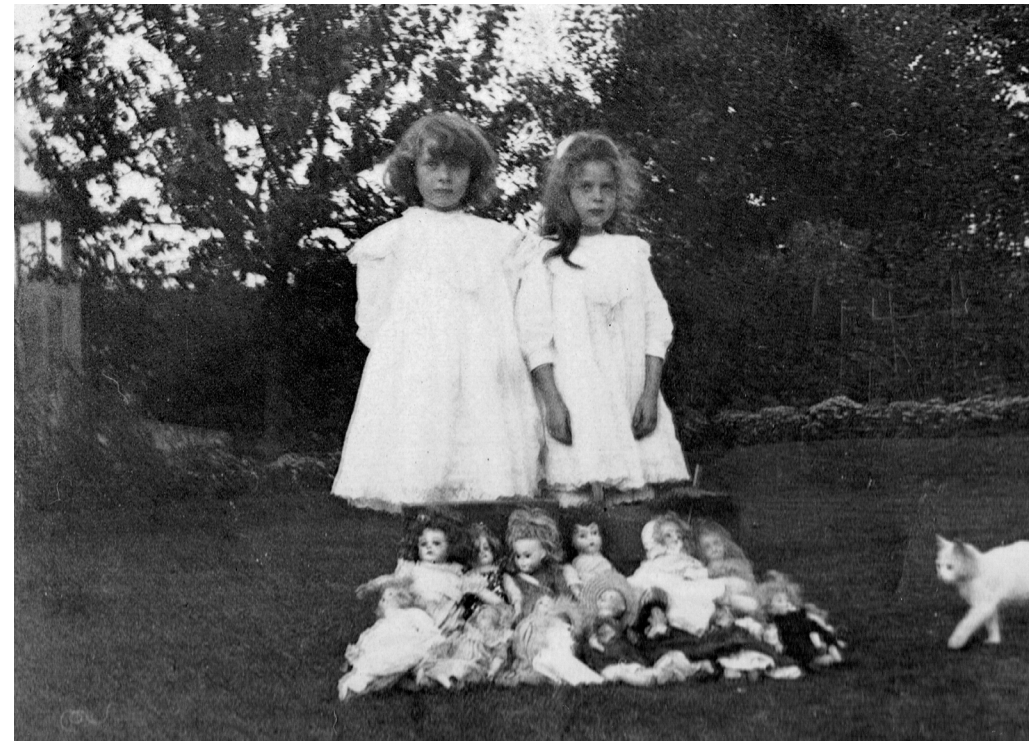
MAGIC AND ENLIGHTENMENT: NIGEL MARTIN SHEPHARD

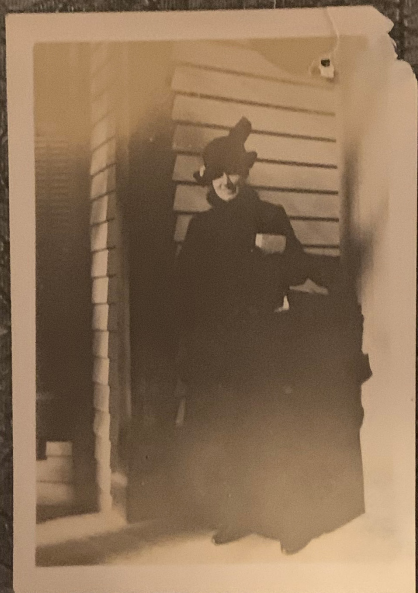
The first collector was, perhaps, Noah. In the *Book of Genesis*, God charges Noah with the task of collecting together two of each animal species, by sex. Only through his diligent archiving would life on earth be saved. Every collector in his or her own way is conserving the world.

I grew up in a small terraced house, 3 New Road, the third and last house on our street. When we moved in, at the end of the back garden there was a patch of unused land, soil, about 15ft by 10ft. When I was three or four, trying to copy the adults cultivating the garden, I would dig on this land. I retrieved from this 'dig' several fragments of colourful crockery – a cup handle, pieces of willow-pattern plate – some rusty nails and broken shards of thick glass from old pop bottles. This is how I spent my time, digging for treasure, which, for safekeeping, I collected in one of Dad's old tobacco tins.

The things that people collect vary wildly: backscratchers, confetti, erasers, gnomes and pixies, napkins, sugar packets, miniature chairs, and postcards. There are many reasons why people collect: to make money; curiosity; the desire for completion; the thrill of the chase; prestige; nostalgia. Regardless of the quarry or the motive, the urge to collect is nested in our innate human capacity for spotting patterns; it rules our lives from language to astronomy.

Renaissance collectors of religious artefacts believed these objects were embodied with both magic *and* enlightenment – the same reason I collect family photographs.





ON IMPERFECTION: RACHAEL MOLONEY

I've spent much of my career working as an editor, for glossy lifestyle magazines and websites. Editing for these media is about ordering words and images so they appear artfully arranged and meaningful, in the context of the publication. Perfected. At its best, editing is a fine art, a kind of alchemy that transforms rough-around-the-edges raw materials into gold, forming new and enlightening connections for the reader.

Most family photo albums are just as thoughtfully edited, but while the layout is often carefully planned the photographs themselves are more spontaneous. The Family Museum archive is full of images with wonky composition, out-of-focus scenes and seemingly mundane subject matter, as well as photos that show a mastery of the medium. The imperfection of the majority is though, for me, wherein lies their beauty,

Never intended for mass public viewing, most photographs in this collection capture unedited and unvarnished moments. Taken by amateurs with no ulterior motive other than to create an intimate personal record, they have a free-spirited quality that draws you to look, and look again, at their glitches and quirks, and unexpected perspectives.



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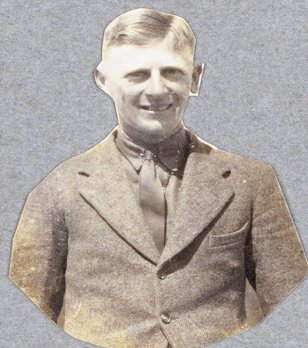
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