ders occurred in the very recent past, the fact that each face depicted *should* be that of a living person is all the more profound.

Facing Death: Portraits from Cambodia's Killing Fields is troubling on many levels, not only in terms of subject matter, but also in terms of presentation. The original method of dissemination for the discovered negatives was in passport-sized prints stapled to a case file; they were not conceived to be reproduced in large format and framed on a museum wall. Inasmuch as identification photographs are not supposed to be imbued with qualities that separate mere likenesses from portraits, these photographs nonetheless reverberate with the humanity of each individual, because the viewer knows that what *has* happened to them is what is *about* to happen to them – this is their last photograph, akin to a death mask.

Both exhibitions raise important questions not only about the medium of photography, but also about the role of the museum or archive as a space for social commentary. How a community bears witness and by what means this act be disseminated to a greater public is at the heart of the artists' and curators' work. In this way, the two exhibitions at the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography are not static things to be experienced in the gallery and left behind. These images permeate the mind and remain with the viewer.

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Virtual Exhibition. *Halifax and Its People/1749–1999: Images from Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management.* NOVA SCOTIA ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT and NIMBUS PUBLISHING LIMITED. Halifax, 1999. ISBN: 1-55109-292-1 <http://www.nsarm.ednet.ns.ca/virtualx/halifax>

In celebration of the 250th anniversary of Halifax as a community, the Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM) has produced, in collaboration with Nimbus Publishing Limited, an illustrated history of the city. "Halifax and Its People/1749–1999" is available in two formats: as a 174-page soft-cover catalogue with black-and-white reproductions and in electronic form, the very first virtual exhibition produced for the NSARM Web site. A recent study has shown that forty-eight per cent of Canada's households are connected to the Internet and that Canadians are the world's most enthusiastic surfers of Web-sourced information.[1] Archival institutions are striving to

1 This information was revealed in a new study by accounting and consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, cited in an article by Guy Dixon, "Canadian Internet Use Keeps Climbing," *The Globe and Mail* (17 November 2000).

share their holdings in response to growing user demand and are responsive to the federal impetus to reach all Canadians through the digitization of information and services. In view of these trends, the inventive "frames" of this project invite a closer look.

The illustrated urban history comprised of archival *bonbons* is about as tired a format as can be imagined, one which generally overlooks the rich interpretive possibilities of both images and the archival holdings from which they are drawn. NSARM archivists/project curators Garry Shutlak and Philip Hartling, and project coordinator Lois Yorke, are to be commended for bringing both depth and creativity to this project in three key areas. First, the selection of 140 images from the NSARM holdings draws from a broad range of pictorial traditions pointing to the uses of pictures in popular culture, past and present, to bear witness, persuade, commemorate, and instruct. The engaging selection of documentary photographs, scenic landscapes, newspaper illustrations, military maps, tourist souvenirs, composite photographic portraits, and printed ephemera aggregately create a "portrait" of a thriving, diverse community over three centuries, complemented by interpretive texts and excerpts from historical texts. The presentation of images as history is predicated on the analysis of pictures as containers of "seeing," indicative of memory, experience, and the technological means that have determined them over three centuries. As Suren Lalvani argues, the modernist privileging of sight, especially through the camera lens as a technology of social determinism, is embedded within particular social and cultural formations and, as a result, organizes specific relations between people, places, and time.[2]

As Witold Rybczynski reminds us in *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World,*[3] the city is a long-term collective work: the focus of the Halifax project takes as its central focus the public sphere in which citizens interact. This brings us to the second critical feature of the project: the human imprint on the city by the activities of its citizens. In this way, the selection avoids the aridity that can accompany selections of architectural photographs as static "portraits" of buildings. As Provincial Archivist W. Brian Speirs writes in the introduction to the project, "We recognized early that cities are shaped by their inhabitants, just as much as by their physical location and built environment; accordingly, we decided to focus on the people of Halifax, seen against the ever-changing backdrop of the city." The exhibition text continues this concept by emphasizing that it is only with the development of modern

2 Suren Lalvani, *Photography, Vision and the Production of Modern Bodies* (Albany, 1996). For further reading on vision and the production of social discourse, see also Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); and Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York, 1996).
3 Witold Rybczynski, *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World* (Toronto, 1995).

photography that the people of the city are – collectively and individually – brought clearly into focus, for they are both a part of the changing cityscape and its most distinctive, enduring feature.

The third interesting aspect of the project is the judicious avoidance of a chronological arrangement of the archival images. This evades the boosterist narrative trap of Halifax (now the new Halifax Regional Municipality) as a linear, progressive development from garrison city to maritime metropolis, punctuated by references to leading citizens and famous fires. (Although, it should be noted, two sections do serve as urban planning histories as sections of Halifax are in turn developed or demolished.) The thematic arrangement of the images is a strategic move that serves at once to invite more curiosity about each image's own "story" (the pageantry of a Royal Tour; residents of Africville in the wake of the 1917 Halifax Harbour munitions explosion; women workers wrapping boxes of Moir's chocolates) and helps us to make connections to parallel subjects and access points to be found when conducting research within the archival institution.

The same thematic structure, pictures, and texts are shared by both publication and virtual exhibition versions of "Halifax and Its People/1749–1999." In producing its first ever virtual exhibition, NSARM has produced an electronic "twin" that serves as an on-line illustrated book. Designed for fast load up using Netscape 3.0 or Internet Explorer 3.0 or later versions, the site design consists of clean white "pages" with large *sans serif* font, and marine blue logos, headers, and navigation buttons. The site architecture is simple, leading the visitor from welcome and introduction texts to the eleven thematic sections (occupations, life cycle, education and institutions, etc.). Layers of detail unfold hierarchically as the visitor moves through the site on a "want to know" basis. Within each thematic section, an interpretive text is surrounded by a cluster of small (but mercifully not "thumbnail") images. From there, visitors can proceed to the next level of detail by clicking on a specific image to get an enlarged image and its accompanying "wall label." A still further layer provides basic identification data, including archival reference information to facilitate further study or citation.

It is at the level of visitor experience that the virtual exhibition fails to carry through the general excellence of the project. Conceived as an on-line book, the Web design is static. The visitor experience adheres to the strict division of its thematic structure and does not invite exploration of the relational possibilities of hyperlinks to discover connections between the archival images themselves, between the virtual exhibition and the on-line archival database *BosaNova*, or between related fonds/images and external sites. Furthermore, the site is not animated to make use of cyberspace syntax such as rollover effects that produce images, texts or sounds, interactive Web (Flash) movies that could feature the curators discussing the project or working in storage, or Gif animations that provide a filmic experience of the

pages. Finally, the site could have been enriched by activities that are found in the real space reference rooms, such as the study of certain documents in detail by virtual reality magnification or handling, or by encouraging oral history through inviting visitors' personal or family experiences of the locations and events depicted in the images.

The computer's monitor screen is "flat," like a printed book page, yet its pixelated apparitions are fluid and flexible rather than fixed. Virtual exhibitions offer an exciting opportunity to share archival holdings with far greater numbers of visitors and researchers, particularly younger users for whom the Internet is becoming the most relevant "frame" for learning anything about the world. The virtual exhibition overcomes the limiting one-way (monologic) communication of real space exhibitions, in which the curator "addresses" the audience with information, by inviting a two-way (dialogic) interaction. In this model, visitors to a site direct their own tour according to individual curiosities and preferences. The potential of digitization extends far beyond sharing treasures from archives: it can do what most promotional campaigns fail to do, which is to reveal (at last!) to its public what it is precisely that archival institutions do, how their manifold collections are structured, and how we can find pathways into relevant research and interpretation.

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Virtual Exhibitions. *Real Stories: A Past in Miniatures; Canada and the First World War; Tracing a History in New France*. NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA. Ottawa, Ontario. <http://www.archives.ca/00/00_e.html#top>

Click on "exhibitions" on the menu page at the National Archives of Canada Web site, and you will come to a list of fourteen exhibitions. In the following review, we look at three: *Real Stories: A Past in Miniatures*, *Canada and the First World War*, and *Tracing a History in New France*, all developed and appearing on-line in the past two years. Adopting the position of the user, we examine these virtual exhibitions and their links to historical documents and objects. We ask: who is speaking, and in what tone of voice? Is this intended to be an interactive experience, or a passive consumption of "knowledge," or facts? We develop categories to evaluate design and the structuring of information, the scope and voice of content, and the perceived purpose, or meaning, of the information. We look at images reproduced from the archive's holdings, graphics created to support the content, the colours, and varying degrees of text. We look at how formal choices have an impact on our perception of information. With the National Archives launching into large-scale virtual exhibitions, it is a time to reflect on how the technology of the Web can best be used.