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# Voluntary Experiences

2016–2023



It all began with the idea of taking old anonymous pornographic images and placing them in an erotic, yet nonpornographic context. I was passionate about coming up with ways to transform the original images so that they shifted from being intended for pornography to being seen as art pieces. I believed that fetishistic black-and-white images with no explicit signs of pornography (at least not in the way we think about it today) would look great in a new context. To achieve this, I enlarged the images several times, cropped them into squares, and invented retouching techniques to make the images look natural, while hiding defects that resulted from repeatedly saving low-quality jpg files and subsequent enlargement. This work turned out to be quite laborious. I spent a lot of time transforming matchbox-sized images into something that could be printed.

At that point, I started to feel like I remembered these images in such detail as if I myself had been involved in their creation. It was as if my memory had suddenly found new storage space for this new information, which could be recollected as an experience of image creation from scratch. This was the first project that made me realize that memory could be filled not only with what happened in reality but also with imaginary, fictional events that are experienced and processed similarly to real ones. This phenomenon is known in science as "false memory," and the renowned psychologist Elisabeth Loftus has done a lot of work on this topic. I named this project *Voluntary Experiences 1*, and the number arose when the second part came into being.

A similar experience happened to me with the photographs of Brenda North, which I've been working on since 2016. The difference with the *Voluntary Experiences 1* project is that at some point, methods for improving images based on neural networks appeared, and I used them to enhance some parts of the image. This project doesn't have a clearly defined endpoint. The photograph has been changing and will continue to change as technology evolves.

The original photograph was taken shortly before my birth, and its author is only presumed to be known. I don't believe any copies by the author have survived. The photo was shot for one of the men's pocket magazines of *Spick*, *Span*, and *Beautiful Britons* series. The name of the photographer (presumably J.B. Fullarton) is not mentioned in the magazines. I haven't come across it in any of the magazines I've seen.

The photo depicts an unknown girl under the fictional name Brenda North, who appeared in 14 issues of the listed magazines starting from January 1965. Like many girls who posed for these magazines, she wasn't a porn model. Most likely, she was married and participated in these shoots for adventure and personal enjoyment. I don't think her family would have approved of her behavior. The print quality in these magazines couldn't have been high, and this photo was similar to those I shot for other projects. So for me, it was the perfect find: something I could improve and something I could have shot myself if I were 25–30 years older.

Stylistically, Brenda North's photograph differs from those in the *Voluntary Experiences 1* series, but it shares three key ideas—appropriation, time-consuming enhancement, and enlargement of the image to printable quality, which leads to the emergence of false memories.

After these two projects, I wanted to try something similar on the same themes and compare how I shoot in real life and in my imagined memories. That's how the *Voluntary Experiences 2* series came about. All of the photos in it were taken in 2016–2018.



# Voluntary Experiences 1

2016





































































































































# The Brenda North Project

2016–2023

















# Voluntary Experiences 2

2016–2018















































































































