What is so striking about Jonathan Miller’s ‘negligible’ images is how aesthetically resolved, how right to the eye, they seem.

They are compelling as a collection, but many stand up as separate pictures. Miller and his designers have taken a number of decisions that intensify their impact. The majority are shown at the same size as the original prints and, except a few full-bleed pages, most are surrounded by white space. There are no page numbers or captions and Miller makes no attempt to give their origins in time and location (hence the title: Nowhere in Particular), although there are sometimes internal clues. The unanticipated colour changes produced by a cheap developing process – Miller, like Carson, used an ordinary snapshot service – introduce a further element of chance and level of disassociation from the original scene. ‘In the final outcome,’ says Miller, ‘I preferred what I got to the picture I thought I was taking.’

but even at their most abstract they are still artificial constructions readable as races of the people who made them and viewed them, an unseen but persistent presence. That they offer documentary evidence of things no longer working or wanted, or demolition and undoing, of entropy at large in the world of matter, only adds to their poignancy (Spencer’s ‘sad ribbons’). Where fragments of people are glimpsed – an arm, an eye, a pair of lips – this sensation is even more acute. In one picture, a man’s face has been neatly excised, leaving only an immaculately combed head of hair. Among the torn edges of his new face is the sharp form of an uppercase ‘A’, a visual rhyme with the triangular shape of his hairline and brow. Whoever he was, whatever he was trying to tell us, he has become ‘Exhibit A’ in a case that will never be solved.

For Miller, these images are ‘abstract designs’ drawn from the wreckage of real surface, is merely the traced left behind by the disappearance of all the rest.

Every photographed object, writes Jean Baudrillard, is an almost perfect crime, an almost total resolution of the world, which merely leaves the illusion of a particular object shining forth, the image of which becomes an impenetrable enigma.

Discontinuity and fragmentation are inescapable conditions of photography, and if this is always a factor drawing us to a photograph – any photograph – then the torn poster photograph carries a double charge. In its ravaged paper surface, an inherently discontinuous medium finds a perfect photographic detail, and on the world’s refusal to yield up its meaning in photographs.

In characteristically ecstatic language, Baudrillard come closest, perhaps, to capturing the magnetic lure of the torn poster image. In an essay prompted by his own activities as a photographer,