
IPFL x FPS
essays on the IPFL 2018 selection of photographers
by students of Film and Photographic studies

Introduction

This booklet of essays is the product of a first-time collaboration of the International Photo Festival Leiden with the master's program Film and Photographic Studies of Leiden University.
Each semester the students follow a course on theoretical debates in photography, where they are invited to read seminal texts by well-known authors in the field such as Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag and Allan Sekula and apply those theories to a specific, often contemporary, photographic project. For the spring semester of the academic year 2017-2018, the students have been asked to situate the twenty series of the selected photographers for IPFL 2018 in these theoretical debates.
The themes of the twenty series featured in the festival are varied, from a focus on the Dutch identity (carnival, the city of Almere and typically Dutch products) to one's own identity, from mythology to reflections on the "mythology" of the medium of photography itself. Similarly, the focus and approach of the seventeen essays in this booklet are as diverse as the themes of the series. Some authors have made comparisons between two series featured in the festival, comparing the approaches of the photographers to their subjects and evaluating the similarities and differences. Others relate the work of these recently graduated photographers to established names in the field, such as Rineke Dijkstra. Important concepts in photography theory are also addressed, such as space and place, identity and temporality, but also more general concepts such as liminality and memory.

The authors and photographers featured in this booklet are in a very similar situation: all of them are at the start of their professional careers. The photographers have to get used to the fact that others will write about their work, scrutinizing their ideas. On the other hand, these budding academics have to become aware that they are writing about the efforts of an individual, which might be very personal. We hope that this collaboration has been a good opportunity for both sides to have a taste of what their professional lives will be like.
The essays have been written by: Maarten Bezem, Melissa Blandino, Elisa Daniel, Ish Doney, Zeynep Erol, Carles Hidalgo Gomez, Valerie-Anne Houppermans, Zipporah Nyaruri, Dominique Princen, Benjamin Schoonenberg, Roozbeh Seyedi, Sara Sallam Sherif, Lauren Spencer, Daniela Matute Vargas, Boudewijn van den Broek, Andrew van der Ven and Francesca Warley.

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Enjoy the read!

The IPFL team

A Dialog Between Roland Barthes and Samuel Otte - Maarten Bezem

This essay creates a dialog between French philosopher Roland Barthes and Dutch photographer Samuel Otte. This dialog is driven by the question: is Barthes's idea of the 'Death of the Author' feasible in relation to his concept of the *punctum*? We shall see that language plays a role for both Barthes and Otte and that the latter, through photography, poses question marks at his 'death' assumed by the former.

Two days after his mother's death, Barthes started writing a diary. This diary is published in 2009 as *Mourning Diary*, thirty years after he wrote his famous book Camera Lucida. The latter is partly a quest for the essence of photography, and partly a eulogy to his deceased mother. The former contains diary notes written before and after he wrote *Camera Lucida*. On March 23, 1978 he writes: "My haste (...) to regain the freedom (...) of getting to work on the book about photography, in other words, to integrate my suffering with my writing. Belief and, apparently, verification that writing transforms for me the various 'stases' of affect, dialectizes my 'crises'" (Barthes 2010, p. 125). These 'crises' being, as we learn later, "love and grief" (Barthes 2010, p. 157). Barthes, in other words, needs to write to come to terms with his grief for his deceased mother.

Otte's photobook *The Fall* (2016) also deals with the loss of a loved one. The book is guided by Otte's question how he can come in contact with his father who is fighting a religious struggle on his deathbed with the prospect of heaven, while Otte has already lost his faith. Through photography and writing he explores this division between him and his father, and the ambivalent role of the orthodox protestant faith. The book comes in the form of a genealogy, that begins by telling the story of Otte's great grandfather, who was an important figure in the Reformed Community, all the way through his grandfather, his father, and finally himself. Albeit on their very own terms, both Otte and Barthes deal with somewhat similar crises.

At the beginning of May 1978, Barthes notes: "(Readying for the day when I can finally write)" (Barthes 2010, p. 145). It seems that Barthes had some difficulty starting the project. In June, however, he notes that "it is necessary for me (I feel this strongly) to write this book around *maman*" (Barthes 2010, p. 159). A few days after this moment he writes of an "instinctive 'prayer': that I finish the Photo-Maman book" (Barthes 2010, p. 162). A little over a year after that first remark on the book about photography, Barthes finally starts writing. *Camera Lucida* was written between the 15th of April and the 3rd of June 1979 (Barthes 1980, p. 184). His diary tells us what foregoes a book that seems to have been fastly written, is an over a year long struggle of finding the words to finally start writing.

This struggle does not stop when Barthes indeed starts writing. It becomes part of his book in different forms. At the beginning of the book, he writes that he feels "the uneasiness of being a subject torn

between two languages, one expressive, the other critical; and at the heart of this critical language, between several discourses, those of sociology, of semiology, and of psychoanalysis - but that, by ultimate dissatisfaction with all of them, I was bearing witness to the only sure thing that was in me (however naïve it might be): a desperate resistance to any reductive system" (Barthes 1981, p. 8). His struggle thus continuous in his book as a struggle between the very personal language that expresses feelings and the distanced and reductive language of science/critical analysis. He decides for the personal approach as he takes himself "as mediator for all Photography" (Barthes 1981, p. 8). Somewhat later he writes that "I have determined to be guided by the consciousness of my feelings" (Barthes 1981, p. 10). Barthes feels in between languages. He feels that in writing about photography, critical language does not suffice. As he already notes in *Image-Music-Text* , photographs have a purely denotative status and therefore is "description of a photograph literally impossible" (Barthes 1977, p. 18). Barthes's loses faith in the language of critical analysis; it is his fall to the language of expression.

Otte also finds himself in between languages: that of faith (his father's) and that of secularity (himself). In *The Fall* this feeling of being in between languages is depicted/described/symbolized in different manners. On page 52 of the book, Otte places for instance a photograph of a poster called 'The broad and narrow way,' which "decorates the walls of many Dutch households" (Otte 2016, p. 52 and 137). He tells us that he could look at it for hours on end, when he was a young boy. What it depicts is a choice between two gates. The first being the wide gate wherethrough many enter the 'broad way' that eventually leads to destruction. The second being the 'strait gate' through which only few enter the 'narrow way' that eventually leads to life and a place in heaven. Walking on that 'narrow way' for a large part of his life, Otte eventually loses faith. When, a few years after, Otte's father is dying the only thing he has to hold on to is his faith. Otte wants to know "how he looked back on his life, (...) if he was afraid," but talking to his son about his "fears and grief would weaken his faith in life," it would mean a "lack of faith" to him (Otte 2016, p. 118 and 139).

In his quest for the essence of photography, Barthes comes to name two elements that seemed to establish his interest in photographs: the *studium* and the *punctum*. The first is somewhat in line with the language of critical analysis, for it is that part in a photograph that is culturally coded, it refers to "a classical body of information" (Barthes 1981, p. 25-26). For Barthes this means that in these photographs he can show only a general interest: "it is by the *studium* that I am interested in so many photographs" (Barthes 1981, p. 26). He can like these photos, but he cannot love them. The second element, the *punctum* is that which breaks, or punctuates the *studium*. The *punctum* is the element "which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (Barthes 1981, p. 26). It is that touching "accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (Barthes 1981, p. 27). The *punctum* is therefore in line with the language of expression. It is usually a detail in a photo that pricks him, says Barthes. It is the utmost personal or subjective when 'feeling' a photograph: "ultimately - or at the limit - in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes" (Barthes 1981, p. 53). Because Barthes places so much weight on the subjective interpretation by the viewer, or *Spectator* in his words, his idea of the punctum is in line with his idea of the 'Death of the Author.' This idea entails that a text's unity does not lie in its origin but in it's destination. We should not take in biographical information of the author in the interpretation of texts, and so, according to Barthes, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author (Barthes 1977, p. 148).

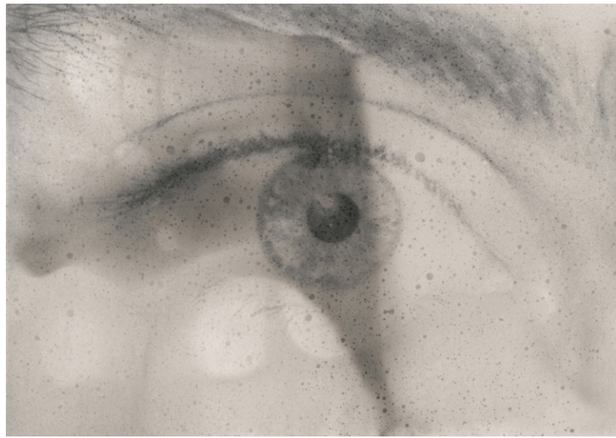
If the *punctum* is indeed that which is personal for the spectator, then what would be the *punctum* for me in *The Fall*? In the last pages of the book, Otte photographs his father on his deathbed. He lies in a hospital bed, presumably at home. Suddenly there is a shift in Otte's presentation of the photographs, nowhere else seen in the book. The photographs are printed in negative, and around them Otte filled the rest of the page with paint. The first one with red paint, the second blue, and the last yellow. After these three images follows a somewhat blurred photo, in it the reflection of his father in a window, lying with his back to the viewer. It is almost as if Barthes's idea of closing your eyes to see a photograph well is carried out here. But what then do I feel when I shut my eyes. Do these photographs remind me of my uncle who spend his last days in a similar bed in the family living room some years ago? Do I think about my grandfather who is in the hospital at the moment I am writing this essay? Do the undersides of Otte's father's feet photographed in the reflection of a window make me think about my uncle's skin? In these last pages I feel touched, wounded so to say, and overwhelmed by feelings of grief. But my grief is not for in the first place for Otte's father's death. Although these feelings are nonetheless there, it does not seem fair to the author of the book. Depicted are not 'my' deaths after all, but Otte's deaths. The feeling arises that Barthes' *punctum* is not always applicable.

At the end of *Camera Lucida's* part one (the book consists of two parts), Barthes writes that he "had not discovered the nature of Photography" yet, and that he had to descend deeper in himself to find the universal in photography, "that thing which is seen by anyone looking at a photograph" (Barthes 1981, p. 60). In part two Barthes finds a photo of his mother when she was young standing in a winter garden at the house she was born. He then discovers that "every photograph is somehow co-natural with its referent" (Barthes 1981, p. 76). His mother necessarily has been there when she was photographed. Seeing that this restriction exists for photography exclusively, Barthes argues, this "That-has-been" has to be the essence of photography (Barthes 1981, p. 77). In other words, Barthes says that what you see in a photograph necessarily has to have been there.

Although Barthes holds on to the 'Death of the Author,' also because he is not a photographer and therefore does not assume the role of what he calls the *Operator* (Barthes 1981, p. 10), it feels deliberately wrong to project only the viewers (or my) subjective interpretation on Otte's photographs. As Otte is both the photographer and the subject of *The Fall*, it seems impossible to declare him dead. Maybe this is what his photobook shows us with respect to Barthes second *punctum*: Otte 'has been there.' His father 'was there.' And we, as viewers, who were not there but see the photographs only in their anterior 'has been' can impossibly say that what we see are only 'our deaths' and deny Otte's. In this way, Otte shows us that in such a personal project as *The Fall*, Barthes's 'Death of the Author' is false and that the author is very much alive.

To summarize: because a photograph has such a clear link to its referent in the idea of Barthes's second *punctum*, Otte's role as both photographer and subject undermines Barthes's idea of the "death of the Author."

Time and Memory - Melissa Blandino



Time and memories, two important aspects of being human that spark different emotions in us: nostalgia, happiness, sadness, fear... Etc. Time is both a fear and blessing in disguise. We do not know how much time we have left and it is always changing. We can recollect our time and

memories going through old pictures and videos. “Memory encompasses neither the entire spatial appearance nor the entire temporal course of an event, compared to photography memory records are full of gaps.”[1] Memories play a part in this because our brain retains the memories that are important to us. Our attention and memories play into photography because we choose what we want to focus on. It engages the viewer to question, is this what the photographer wants you to see or what you want to see? In this essay, I will analyze how two different photographers produce series of photographs expressing how they view time and memories. In addition, the techniques they used portray what they wish to convey to the observer.

Photography has become one of the most remarkable tools for creating images and using them as means to look back on time and memories. It captures a moment in time, which has different relevance to the photographer, to the person or subject that is being used and to the viewer. In the interest of the photographer, it can be a way to forge what they are imaging, on the part of the person or object can be a keepsake of that period in their life. For the viewer, it conveys different memories and emotions, depending on their attachment to the photograph. For photographer Emma Smids and Julie van der Vaart photography is their life work and it is no wonder that both of them did series of their perspective of time and memories. At first impression looking at these photographers’ works you would think that their photographs have nothing in common, but indeed, they do. They both created a series of different photographs expressing how they view time and memories.

In her series of work titled Untitled, Smids combined different techniques of photography to create a series that represent memories from the time she spent in her grandmother's farm during her childhood. In her series, she uses double exposures to create a montage of different photographs overlapping each other. In one of her photograph at first glance, we just see multiple buildings, all with different architectural design, satellite dishes on top of some building, outside views and images of plants on top of scrapes from Smids’ grandmother's farm. It contains elements of an abstract cubist aesthetics which at first glance prevent the viewer from seeing all the different layer this

photo has. The use of the cubist element in this photograph can be used as a way to represent different memories piled up together. Our memories are sometimes distorted. Either they come to us all at once or we just see brief images pop up. We know from Smids herself that the scrapes in the background are from Smids’ grandmother’s farm, this represents the time she spent at her grandmother’s farm during her childhood. However, we have no information about the different building we see. These buildings can represent an array of things such as important memories or events to the photographer. As a viewer, we are not sure what they exactly represent, but we can most likely infer that they are from places she might have traveled. Another observation can be that the building represents chaos, memories that she does not fully remember and only catches a glimpse of.

What is interesting are the images of the satellite dishes and the plants. It can be a representation of time: past and future, such as the plants represent the past, a time of innocence her childhood playing on her grandmother's farm. The satellite dishes could be a representation of the future, having multiple responsibilities, always being on the move. The reduction to black and white further draws the images from a perceived outside reality to an internal one, making the viewer feel lost as he or she is trying to reassemble the layer of memories that the brain is trying to recollect. Memories do not always come to us when we try to remember them; sometimes they just emerge in our brains.

Smids' series can be view as a form of expressing memory-image. “Memory-image are embedded in a reality that has long since disappeared.”[2] They are connected to truth; the more visible the essence more the meaning is present. They are only a portion of what they seem because photography does not take in the context of the message the photograph is intended to illustrate. Photography cannot capture what is fully important and capable to fully explain the importance of the moment.

Contrary to Smids' series, Van der Vaart has no abstract, cubist, or double exposure in her series. She uses chemicals in a darkroom, to create images of human bodies disappearing into the cosmos. In one of her pictures of a woman's eye (eyes already looking like little galaxies) dissolving, not completely sure what it will become, but create a feeling of a dream-like state. The use of chemical creates the dissolving effect that makes the eye diffuse into a space-like effect. That, in the end, will become nothing. Van der Vaart work is more of a flow like a feel, with green-like monochrome coloring. The green-like monochrome coloring gives it a surreal feel that makes you feel lost in time. The impression you get from the overall series is that human bodies are in a flow like state dissolving into the nothingness. That our bodies after dying are floating in a different direction like time.

Van der Vaart wants to show a way of capturing time in photography, but photography cannot capture time. Time is related to space always moving in different direction, never moving in a straight line. What photography does capture is a moment in time. It stops time, we can compare photography to death. We can also see Van der Vaart series as a representation of death. When we die, our bodies begin to deteriorate. The eye dissolving can be a representation of the body decaying into dust. Just like a photograph, once it begins to decay the memory of the moment capture is gone.

Photography is enslaved with time; it serves as a movement with time. The meaning of the photograph changes based on whether the viewer sees it as part of the present or as a re-collation of the past. Photography demonstrates time as “spatial continuum”[3] Photography can be used as an assistance to memory, but then the brain would have to decide what memory is valuable. According to the French theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes, he does not see a photography as a form of memory but instead as a destroyer of memories. That photograph does not attribute an assistance in helping the viewer remember, but instead obstructs the brain to remember memories. Just as tweaking a photograph in a different position or adding color, it changes our perception and alters our memories. Memories do not follow a straight line, they move like time and in a nonlinear line. Memories are remembered because of the importance to the person. They are different from the memories captured by photography because photography captures memories in an organized way. Such as this event, happen first, then this and lastly this. Memories do not follow a sequence they are organized in how important they are to the person.

A photograph is a contradiction of events. It has two contrasting mode time exposure and snapshot. Time exposure sets the object referred to and symbolize it gone. The snapshot indicates the array of time beyond revealing it. The contradictions of these two are in a time exposure photograph (portrait) display the image as a frame of time. Contrast to a snapshot (instantaneous) photograph represents an event capture in time. A photograph is both subjective and objective, “seen either as a natural evidence and a live fitness (figure) of a vanished past or as an abrupt artifact (event) a devilish device designed to capture life but unable to convey it.”[4] It combines past, present, and future. The past because of what was such as time. The exposure of time

in photography serves as an indication that time has died. What was taken is no longer alive. The presence of what is being taken a view as the act that is happening or has happened because the moment has been captured. In the future for what it will convey to the viewer. What it conveys to the viewer can be examined in different ways. It can be view as a time of remembrance, for instance, if the person was the subject matter, or the event was related to them. The other way it can be view is as frivolous. The viewer has no connection to the photograph and exhibits different memories the photograph intend.

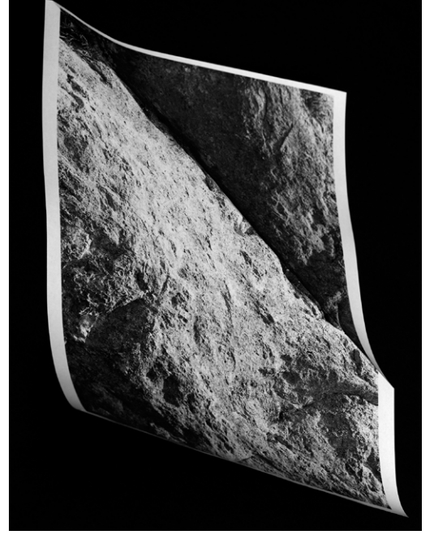
It contains the person's history. In Smids' series, she captures her memories of events that took places such as time spent at her grandmother's farm during her childhood a pivotal time in anyone life and places of different places she must have traveled. Sometimes our memories come to use all at once or we cannot distinguish the memory we are trying to remember so they overlap over each other and it is portrayed in an interesting way combining different aspects. That make photography a mixture of different mediums that bring time and memories in a way that everyone can understand how he or she want to view it.

The photograph is a symbol that it existed. That the event happens, it took place, frozen in time and that it will hold memories until it is destroyed. That a photograph is a death, a "flat death"[5] because once a picture is taken "that-has-been"[6] this already happen, it will not happen again and the moment is dead. The moment is captured, the time it has stopped; the event will be remembered until the photograph is no longer in existence until it becomes nothing. Like the series of Van de Vaart human bodies disappearing until they become cosmos that eventually become nothing at the end of time. It conveys that life carries on, it goes by and that the imaged has disappeared. "The role of the photograph as a unique object that is both limited to and transcendent of time."[7]

To conclude with, Smids and Van der Vaart photography series show how different photographers can convey the theme of time and memories using different techniques of photography, such as chemicals that were used to represent time and existence, double exposure that overlaps layers that represent different layers of memories. In addition to different techniques of painting such as abstract and cubist that was used as another form of representation of distorted memories. Time and memories can never truly be captured by photography but can be a tool to convey time and memory in the way we want it. Thus, it is important to us because it is part of life, it gives us nostalgia from looking at an old picture that shows us our past, and it conveys emotions in the present and remembrance of life in the future.

1 KRACAUER, 1927, 425
2 KRACAUER, 1927, 431
3 KRACAUER, 1927, 425
4 DUVE, 1978,113
5 BARTHES, 1980,92
6 BARTHES, 1980, 79
7 ANWANDTER, 2006, 5

Encounters: Myth propagation through photography - Elisa Daniel



En counter is a series created by German photographers Anne Müchler and Nico Schmitz. It focuses on the role of images in creating and sustaining myths. The series is composed of black and white images, encompassed in the form of a booklet including texts, as well as photographs of photographic prints folded into three dimensional objects. The series draws a parallel between the existence of myths, the process of myth creation, and images. It focuses on how variable and fragile myths are, and on the ways in which images can support a myth. The two photographers indeed staged photographs themselves, challenging the truth claim of photography. Thus, this project intends to be as much a research on myth creation as a reflection on the medium of photography itself. This essay will look into the relationship between myths and photography, and aim at finding out whether the fading indexicality of digital photography has had an impact on the way myths are propagated.

In order to address this topic, Müchler and Schmitz chose the case study of Bugarach. Bugarach is a small village in the South of France, which has motivated various myths and beliefs. The village is built near an unusually shaped mountain. In terms of geology, the mountain is constructed as though it had been flipped upside down by an unknown force. Indeed, the oldest geological layers of the mountain are located towards the peak, and the most recent ones are located at the bottom of the mountain. Various cultures and beliefs throughout the ages and across the globe have considered Bugarach to be a mythical place. It was mythical at the time of the crusades, and was described in the Mayan legends as a place that would be safe during the 2012 Apocalypse. It is linked to the Da Vinci Code and Spielberg supposedly took it as an inspiration for his storytelling. In recent years, people have associated the area with UFOs and extra-terrestrial life. The geography of the region is reflected in the sky, as though a celestial temple was located below the mountain. The legend differs from person to person, some even say that planes lose direction when they fly above Bugarach.[1] This makes Bugarach an ideal location to investigate on the role of photography in myth creation.

To better understand the influence of photography in myth creation, one must study the works of the semiotician Roland Barthes. Barthes addresses the ways meaning begins to exist in an image.[2] He argues that images are very often linked to text, as especially since the appearance of books, we have lived in a society of writing. In order to find images "without words" one must go back to societies that are at least in some sense illiterate.[3] The myth of Bugarach began centuries ago, and was communicated from person to person long before the invention of photography. However our era of interest is the modern

era. More specifically, it is the eras of analog and digital photography. With photography, the relationship connecting signified and signifier is created by capturing an object at a certain moment in time. According to Barthes "the image is re-presentatiory which is to say ultimately a resurrection".[1] This naturally leads to the common assumption that by taking a photograph, one captures the truth of an object at a certain point in time. "The types of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing [...] but an awareness of its having-been-there."[4] This assumption has been named "the truth claim" of photography. The term "truth claim" was initially used by Tom Gunning to refer to the idea that pictures accurately show reality. This, however, is not a certainty. As its name indicates, it is only a "claim", and therefore implies the possibility of being contested.

A photograph can indeed seem to capture a certain aspect of the myth, but that photograph could be misleading. The fact that an object seems to exist in a photograph can reassure people in their beliefs in a certain entity, but that does not make it true. In order to better illustrate the problem of representation questioned in the work of Müchler and Schimtz, the third picture of the series can be observed. It represents a close up of a rock strata, which has been photographed, printed and folded. This print has then been placed in front of a black background, and photographed again. This highlights the distinction between the signifier (the print as material object in space) and the signified (material structure in terms of rock strata). This illustrates the idea that the history of photography is tied to the manipulation of images.[5] It helps to understand how the myth of photographic transparence can be dismantled in this series, by pointing to the "construction" aspect of the photographic representation. This picture also recreates the mythical rock as a photographic sculpture, which can remind the viewer of the way other art forms served in the propagation of myths, before the invention of photography.

There are many ways to interpret myths. Sigmund Freud saw myths as projections of human struggles. Jung on the other hand, believed myths could be interpreted as a reflection of people's collective consciousness and fears. That reflection could naturally vary from culture to culture and evolve with time. Barthes relates myths to photography, and talks of "the myth of photographic naturalness". He says that while observing a photograph, we witness a relationship between a signified and a signifier. He interprets that relationship not as a "transformation" but rather as a "recording". According to him, the idea that a scene is captured through a machine's mechanism rather than humanly, reinforces the idea of photographic naturalness. This gives the illusion of objectivity, without paying any regards to the various modifications that are humanly imposed on the image. These modifications include choosing the angle of a picture, the distance to the subject, the focus and shutter speed, and sometimes even the lighting.[6] What Barthes essentially attempts to do in *Rhetoric of the Image*, is to explain that the messages present in images can be a way of creating an ideological worldview. This is done through an analysis of how image transmit certain educational messages to society. In this text, he focuses on advertising and describes an image of a spaghetti package. Although the brand is not Italian, it portrays itself as so through the use of colors that are associated to Italy in the viewer's mind. This shows that images cannot always be trusted. This fact is true for photography, and maybe increasingly so since the development of digital photography.

Indeed, the evolution to digital photography indeed seems to have allowed photographers to modify their work to the point where it can be impossible to draw the line between a photoshopped image and a non-photoshopped one. This causes a problem with what is called the indexicality of photography. "Indexicality" is a term invented by semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce in the late 19th century. Since the 1960s, this term has been repeatedly referred to the truth claim of photography. Indexicality depends on the relation between the depicted object in the photograph and the final image.[7] It points to the resemblance of a photograph to the object photographed. As previously mentioned, the assumption with analog photography is that a scene was recorded mechanically, as opposed to "humanly".[8] The transition to digital implies two main problems according to Lister. First, the way a photograph is registered allows a very high degree of digital manipulation. Second, some images can be created directly on a computer and have no actual relationship to the "real world". These two aspects seem to deeply affect documentary photography, journalism and any other type of photography where a representation of the truth is greatly valued.[8] Thus, this is also valid for photographs that are used as "evidence", such as the ones that are used as evidence to support a myth.

The realist photographer and critic André Bazin stated that a photograph is never a sign of something, but rather the presence of something.[9] A photograph shows one subject at a specific moment in time, and thus it is always different from the subject itself. In painting, there is no indexicality. One can paint a mystical forest on the side of a van, as one of the photographs of the series shows it, without having ever seen that mystical forest in the real world. In photography, we pre-suppose that in order to take a picture, the object must have existed at some point in time. This supports the idea that photography influences people's likelihood to believe in myths that seem to be supported by photographs. The digitalization of photography, arguably makes it more difficult to distinguish the real from the imaginary. If a photograph is the presence of something, then a photograph of a mythical element could be seen as the presence of that myth. Before photography became a way of communicating myths, other types of images had a similar impact. These images might have been paintings or prints, and in these cases there was no problem of indexicality as people were aware that they were not an actual depiction of reality. The emphasis was instead placed on an artistic representation unique existence in time and space. This was part of its authenticity and aura, "its specialness, its roots in myth and ritual, its fetish characteristic."[11] Despite not being sufficient proof for the existence of myth, photographs are strong enough proof to increase people's likelihood of believing in myths.

Myths are stories that are communicated from generation to generation. They are based on mystical elements, which means that there is not enough evidence to scientifically prove they could be true. Photography could, to a certain extent, fill the role of the missing "evidence". However, knowing that images are sometimes optical illusions, and understanding the problem of indexicality provides an argument to claim that they are not sufficient proof for the existence of myth. Whether one can believe photographs or not is thus a topic that reflect the uncertainty of myths. The problem of indexicality adds thus another layer of mystery to the pre-existing myth. The idea of photography as "the truth" has been opposed by many scholars and critics over the years. Nevertheless, it seems that in the public eye this concept is still unclear, which leaves some space to debate over it. An important remark from Lunenfeld is that the source of an image, or its context, is now where the viewers of a photograph have to place their trust.[10] Both analog and digital photographs carry a meaning that is not entirely a consequence of the tool that was used to create that photograph. Rather, what gives them the most meaning are the beliefs that are created around them.[12] The questioning around the indexicality of photography would delegitimize photographs, which do not necessarily aim at showing the truth.[11] Rather, they serve to add doubt to a certain mystery. Indeed, if a myth was proved, would it still be a myth?

Myths are as old as humanity. The fascination people experience for these paranormal stories pushes them to want to prove them to be true. Photography, with its truth claim, seems to be the perfect medium to do so. Nevertheless, the emergence of digital photography has amplified the debate on this truth claim as well as on the indexicality of photography. The series Encounter is as much a research on myths as it is a research on the medium of photography. To some extent, the fading indexicality of digital photography can raise questions on the extent to which photography can influence the evolution of a myth. Myths are known for being mysteries, and the recent debate on the fading indexicality of photography might amplify the uncertainty surrounding those myths. Myths can only remain mythical if they conserve their mystery, and digital photography might have the power to increase the questions around this mystery. If myths were to be proven as true, they would lose the core of what makes them myths. Thus, digital photography has had an impact on the way myths are propagated while keeping the core of myths, which is mystery itself.

1 BAKER, 2014
2 BARTHES, 1964, P.152
3 BARTHES, 1964, P.155
4 BARTHES, 1964, P.159
5 LISTER, 2009, P.311
6 BARTHES, 1964, P.158
7 GUNNING, 2008, P.3
8 LISTER, 2009, P. 297
9 BAZIN, 1960, P. 4
10 LUNENFELD, 2000, P.60
11 LUNENFELD, 2000, P.63
12 LUNENFELD, 2000, P.314

Inside/Out Upside/Down
Towards a practical distinction in the ethics of photography - Ish Doney

Much of the discussion surrounding the ethics of photography has centred around the relationship between photographer and subject. The power imbalance present in this relationship is well established. A distinction is often made as to whether the photographer can be considered an 'insider' or an 'outsider', with allowances made for those working from an 'insider' position. However, the insider/outsider distinction has been revealed to be less binary than it may appear, complicating matters for photographers seeking to work in an ethical manner, especially when photographing vulnerable subjects. Peggy Ickenroth and Kiki Groot, two of the photographers presenting work in the 4th edition of International Photo Festival Leiden, create intimate portraits of disabled children. These children are vulnerable subjects in the sense of their age and the difficulties they face in an inaccessible society. This essay will discuss the photographers' attempts to work in an ethical manner. I propose that rather than making a distinction between insider and outsider in assessing photographic approaches, we can instead divide these approaches into two stages: photo-taking and photo-editing, in order to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Kiki Groot's *Searching Eyes* introduces the viewer to Mikey, now nine years old. The project began when Mikey was four, and Groot intends to continue until he is eighteen.[1] The colour photographs follow Mikey through his ups and downs, providing at times a sense that Groot (and by extension the viewer) has been invited into his games, and at others the feeling that spectator and photographer may somehow be intruding. Groot's artist statement informs us of Mikey's diagnosis of ADHD, Autism, Tourette's, and developmental delay.

Peggy Ickenroth's series *Suzanne, Living with Prader-Willi Syndrome* also introduces us to a child and a diagnosis. Ickenroth spent two weeks photographing Suzanne, her routine, and her family.[2] The result is a series of black-and-white images that attempt to bring to light the rare condition[3], while preferencing the child and her family who are living with it.

Photographers and theorists alike have been struggling with how to represent vulnerable people for at least forty years. In 1981 Martha Rosler, both photographer and theorist, argued that often social documentary photography, a genre which frequently depicts vulnerable subjects, works as a kind of "'victim photography"[4] that denies the societal roots of problems and instead blames 'the human condition', natural disasters, or some inherent lack in the subjects themselves[5]. In Rosler's own work, *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, 1974-75, she omits the inhabitants of 'skid row' entirely, instead depicting the scenes from the Bowery[6] beside adjectives for drunkenness. Despite the emphasis on the diagnoses in Groot and Ickenroth's statements, it is the individual children, their make-believe worlds and routines that are depicted first and foremost. Rosler's decision to exclude human subjects rather than risk exploiting them is admirable, but does not provide an answer for photographers at large.

For critic Susan Sontag, the photographer is a voyeur, a "supertourist"[7] who visits the subject and returns with souvenirs, inherently an outsider[8]. This rhetoric has been complicated by photographers like Nan Goldin, who documents herself, her friends, and her lovers with an intimate snapshot aesthetic. Goldin's relationships with her subjects have lead her to be characterised as an 'insider' [9] [10]. While discussing photographers in terms of this insider/outsider position can be convenient, it is not without problems [11]. Theorists Allison Dean and Abigail Solomon-Godeau have both critiqued this distinction as being less binary than it appears - the intimacy of the insider does not preclude the voyeurism of the outsider, especially once the viewer enters the equation.[12] Privileged access to interior spaces such as bedrooms and bathrooms has become a kind of shorthand for an 'insider' photographer/subject relationship [13]. Ickenroth and Groot both bring the viewer into these spaces. However, Goldin is considered an insider because she is photographing herself and her peers. In *Searching Eyes* and *Suzanne, Living with Prader-Willi Syndrome*, the photographers remain invisible, and while it would have been necessary to build trust with the children and their families in order produce these bodies of work,

neither Ickenroth nor Groot can be considered as photographing her peers. Based on this observation and the writings of Dean and Solomon-Godeau, I posit that a more elucidatory distinction can be made by discussing ethics in terms of the photo-taking, and photo-editing processes [14].

For Sontag, Diane Arbus was the ultimate outsider, depicting her subjects (often disabled people) entirely without compassion[15]. For photographer and disabilities movement activist David Hevey it is not the lack of compassion which is at issue in Arbus's work, it is her active exploitation of her subjects trust[16]. Hevey provides an in depth discussion of Arbus's image *A Jewish Giant at Home with his Parents in the Bronx, N.Y. 1970* which depicts Eddie Carmel, lit by harsh flash, towering over his parents. Hevey points out that Arbus photographed Carmel for ten years before she selected this particular image[17]. Arbus' extended relationship with Carmel suggests that she dedicated time establishing a trust. Understanding Carmel as an individual could have provided the insider knowledge she needed to portray him in a way that appealed to his sense of self. It was in her photo-editing, by selecting an image that disregarded this relationship and Carmel's rights as a subject, that Arbus became exploitative.

With photo-editing in mind, we can discuss two of the images Groot submitted for the photo festival. In the first, Mikey is lit by a harsh flash, his eyes closed and shoulders raised, he seems to be pinned against the magnolia bush, whose branches enclose him. In the second Mikey is hunched over on a bed with his face buried in a pile of soft-toys. The second image has some uncomfortable parallels with Mary Ellen Mark's 1976 *Ward 81, Catalogue # 300B-027-030,* an image which depicts a mental patient in the same position, taken as part of a series created in Oregon State Hospital's high security ward[18]. Both Groot's and Mark's images speak a kind of frustration and despair that is beyond language. On the other hand, Groot's images could both be explained in the context of play. Groot's statement highlights Mikey's fascination with flash photography[19]. Perhaps his closed eyes and hunched position are a natural reaction to the bright light he has begged Groot to set off. Equally, with his face buried from view, Mikey is just as likely to be counting down in a game of hide-and-seek as he is to be screaming or

crying. What viewers lack is the context necessary to distinguish between a child at play or in distress. Groot's initial output for *Searching Eyes* was a book. In this format the relationship between words and images is vital to the creation of meaning, and relies on images being read in series rather than isolated from the narrative.

Ickenroth's editing recreates something of the structure which is so important to Suzanne's health and emotional stability. In Ickenroth's festival submission we see Suzanne at Taekwondo, swept up in the activity. Next is Suzanne's carefully prepared meal, served on a child's plate to make the necessarily small portions appear larger[20]. Following this are two images of Suzanne in the bathroom: her mother helps her shower in the first and brush her hair in the second. This final image, where Suzanne gazes into the mirror, is very striking, and suggests a depth of thought beyond her immediate surroundings. The photograph of Suzanne being helped in the shower indicates a difference between her and other girls her age. Ickenroth did not involve Suzanne and her family in the initial editing process. She did, however, seek their consent for the images she wanted to reproduce, giving them the option to veto any images they felt were misrepresentative or too personal [21].

If Rosler circumvents the issue of misrepresentation by avoiding the depiction of people altogether, photographer and professor Anne Noble has a different strategy. Noble's young daughter, Ruby, informed her mother that she needed Ruby's consent before she could photograph her [22]. Ruby's engagement with the photo-making as an active subject lead to the project *Ruby's Room* 1998-2007, which can be understood as a collaboration between mother and daughter[23]. While Noble is not working in the vein of documentary photography, it is interesting to consider this project in terms of the ethics of photo-taking. As Ruby's mother, Noble holds what could be considered the ultimate 'insider' position – yet creating images that Ruby finds acceptable is still a negotiation, and only by working collaboratively can the requirements of both subject and photographer be met.

Searching Eyes also has a collaborative aspect. Over the extended period of the project Mikey became interested in the photo-taking process. Groot encouraged this by answering his questions and giving him disposable cameras[24]. Through this act, Groot brings Mikey's vision into the work, often displaying his images alongside her own. This collaborative aspect and the extended relationship that makes the project possible suggest that Groot's photo-taking process relies on the give and take of mutual respect.

David Hevey's 1992 book *The Creatures Time Forgot* is something of a manifesto for a change in disability representation. Hevey is part of the disabilities movement that defines disablement not as located within the body, but rather as a result of an inaccessible society[25]. Charity advertising imagery comes under particular scrutiny from Hevey and he uses it to identify ways in which imagery works to position disabled people as victims, in order to create strategies for radical new disabled imagery that counteracts this trend. Particular attributes of the charity photographs include the use of black-and-white, a lack of acknowledgement of the camera, and the passivity and isolation of the subject[26]. Hevey's imagery does not always exclude each of these things. Instead, Hevey establishes a way of working that actively involves the subject in the picture making process. His strategies vary depending on the project, but to give a general outline, Hevey often begins with interviews to understand how the subject wishes to be portrayed. This scene is then tested and reviewed through Polaroid so that the subject can make adjustments before the final image is shot [27]. In this way Hevey is concerned with giving as much power as possible to the sitter, in both the photo-taking and the photo-editing process. Hevey provides a roadmap for photographers to work more ethically, however, for him the empowerment of vulnerable subjects relies in part on the photographer being able to relate authentically to the sitter's experience. In this regard, it is doubtful that he would consider a non-disabled photographer as capable of photographing a disabled person in an ethical way. As non-disabled photographers, Groot and Ickenroth are unable to meet all of Hevey's requirements, but we can still consider how their imagery fits into his criteria.

Groot's decision to inform the viewer of Mikey's diagnosis colours reading of the images, positioning her work within disability imagery. Antics which might have been attributed to Mikey's age, can instead be blamed on his diagnosis. By shooting in colour and recording Mikey's often highly energetic activities, Groot depicts an active and generally contextualised subject. Hevey's work puts emphasis on sitters acknowledging the camera[29], while there is only occasionally direct eye-contact in Groot's work, there is often a sense that the camera is part of Mikey's play. The work offers an insight into an individual childhood, even reading the text before the images, we see the child before the diagnosis.

Ickenroth deviates further from Hevey's method as there is almost no acknowledgement of the camera. However, depictions of Suzanne's life and family work against the charity imagery which Hevey critiques. The diagnosis is key for Ickenroth, as she seeks to raise awareness through her work [30]. Just as Suzanne's routine was intended to structure the subject matter, Ickenroth attempts to use Suzanne's view point to inform aesthetic concerns. Ickenroth chose to shoot in black-and-white after she perceived that it is through this binary that Suzanne understands the world [31]. Trying to understand Suzanne and incorporate this understanding into the work is important to an accurate and ethical portrayal. However, the average viewer will not be aware of the rationale for working in black-and-white and, even with such knowledge, it is difficult to ignore the baggage that black-and-white photography carries, both in victim positioning charity imagery and exploitative documentary work. Ickenroth does, however, succeed in showing an active child in a loving family. Ickenroth seeks to shine a spotlight on the Prader-Willi syndrome, but in doing this, she does not obscure the individuality of the child who is living with this diagnosis.

Even for photographers endeavouring to represent their subjects in an ethical way, the issue is by no means straight forward. Martha Rosler's choice not to feature people at all, and David Hevey's attempt to give his subjects absolute control are proof enough of this. Although opting out, or encouraging self-representations are admirable responses to the issues at hand, they are individual attempts and are not necessarily employable by photographers at large. The issues of representing vulnerable subjects complicate the already difficult terrain of representation in general. Considering the ethics of photography as separated between the photo-taking process and the photo-editing process can give photographers and theorists a practical way to create and critique an ethical photographic practice.

1 GROOT'S ARTIST STATEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PHOTO FESTIVAL LEIDEN.
2 GUMBRECHT, 2016.
3 PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME IS A RARE GENETIC CONDITION THAT INCLUDES SYMPTOMS SUCH AS REDUCED MUSCLE TONE, LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY, INCREASED APPETITE, BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS, LACK OF SENSITIVITY TO PAIN, AND ABNORMAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE, WHICH PUTS PRESSURE ON THE LUNGS. (NHS, 2018)
4 ROSLER, 1990 [1981], 306
5 ROSLER, 1990 [1981]
6 THE BOWERY IS A STREET IN NEW YORK, ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOLICS AND HOMELESSNESS. ROSLER DEFINES IT AS "AN ARCHETYPAL SKID-ROW" P.303.
7 SONTAG, 1977, 38
8 SONTAG,1977
9 DEAN, 2015; KOTZ, 1998; SOLOMON-GODEAU, 1994;
10 IN HER PHD DISSERTATION, HYEWON YI DISCUSSES THE WORK OF NAN GOLDIN AND A NUMBER OF HER CONTEMPORARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PARTICIPANT OBSERVER, AN APPROACH WHICH WAS DEVELOPED IN ANTHROPOLOGY, WHERE EITHER INSIDER BECOMES RESEARCHER OR, MORE OFTEN, RESEARCHER BECOMES INSIDER. (YI, 2013, 41-42.)
11 DEAN, 2015; KOTZ, 1998; SOLOMON-GODEAU, 1994; YI, 2013
12 DEAN, 2015; SOLOMON-GODEAU, 1994
13 DEAN, 2015; GALASSI, 1991; KOTZ, 1998; SOLOMON-GODEAU, 1994
14 HERE PHOTO-EDITING REFERS TO THE PROCESS OF SELECTING IMAGES FROM THOSE WHICH HAVE BEEN SHOT, IT DOES NOT REFER TO ANY FORM OF MANIPULATION OF THE IMAGE CONTENT.
15 SONTAG, 1977
16 HEVEY, 1992, 57-65
17 HEVEY, 1992, 61
18 IMAGE CAN BE FOUND ON MARK'S WEBSITE: HTTP://WWW.MARYELLENMARK.COM/BOOKS/TITLES/WARD_81/300B-027-030_WARD81_520.HTML
19 GROOT'S ARTIST STATEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PHOTO FESTIVAL LEIDEN
20 ICKENROTH, 2013
21 P. ICKENROTH, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, MARCH 1, 2018
22 WATSON, 2017
23 WATSON, 2017
24 SEE GROOT'S ARTIST STATEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PHOTO FESTIVAL LEIDEN. RECENTLY, MIKEY'S INTEREST IN TAKING HIS OWN PHOTOGRAPHS HAS WANED (K. GROOT, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, MARCH 13, 2018). HOWEVER, GROOT'S OPENNESS TO AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS INDICATES THAT SHE IS INTERESTED IN GIVING MIKEY A VOICE, RATHER THAN FRAMING HIM WITH A PRESUPPOSED IDEA OF WHO HE IS AND HOW HE SHOULD BE PORTRAYED.
25 HEVEY, 1992, 9. THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY IS CENTRAL TO HEVEY'S BOOK AND APPROACH TO PHOTOGRAPHY.
26 HEVEY,1992, SEE ESPECIALLY 30-52.
27 HEVEY, 1992, SEE ESPECIALLY 75-93.
28 HEVEY, 1992
29 HEVEY, 1992, 82
30 P. ICKENROTH, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, MARCH 1, 2018
31 GUMBRECHT, 2016

Capturing What's With(in) - Zeynep Erol

Photography has been an influential tool in communications and in visual arts, to say the least. With the potentially wide horizons, portrait photography has its own historical process. In the canon of documentary, there are many examples of portrait photography. Earliest recorded portraits date back to 1800s, and to names such as Louis Daguerre, who is known as a pioneer in the field, and Robert Cornelius, known as the creator of the first self-portrait. When Allan Pinkerton, the photographer, started using this technique to photograph criminals in 1870, a new branch of the field with a focus on documentation, appeared. Technological advancements and pragmatic approaches caused the portraiture paintings to be quickly replaced by photographic portraits. As the 1900s approached, modernity and fast paced urban living introduced accessible cameras, under the leadership of Kodak. Among many firsts, these changes helped in the development of a sense of morality and ethical representation in culture. Should there be limitations to the documentary photography based on ethics, cultures or any other social contexts? Or should photography, independent of its purpose, be viewed as an open form of communication, art or a documenting tool?

Today, we have a complex approach to documentary. Every detail and process from the moment a finger hit the shutter release, to the moment a picture is published can be analyzed and also, manipulated. The tools of a photographer take on brand new emphasis and duty, in changing the meaning of a picture. A filmmaker, an anthropologist and a professor, Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan, focuses on topics such as human migration and refugee issues of today. A recent project of his called Waiting Subjects gives new meaning to what can be at first disregarded as the fast-food of media, a smartphone trend; self-portraits. Dattatreyan collects the images taken during an ethnographic film about the racialization of African nationals in Delhi, India. The series is composed of "accidental" self-portraits taken by the subjects unbeknownst to them. The images are used for a way "to evoke what it means for these young Somalis to wait for asylum in Europe or North America while they make their lives in India." While this opens up a discussion about the importance of spontaneity, it is also a great reminder to give space to sub-products of artworks and productions. Within the field of documentary photography, it is certainly common to question and analyze the artistic and ethical purposes of the genre with regards to its era, and sometimes the lines can be blurred, meanings can be interchanged.

Graphic, or even vulgar photographs of the devastating current issues like war, refugee crisis, terrorism have all been adding up to the unattainable meaning of 'documentary'. The picture of Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian kid, whose body was found on a beach in Turkey, can be questioned with respect to ethical dilemmas surrounding it and also as a strong documentary evidence demanding action on the humanitarian front. Hugh Pinney, the vice president of Getty images speaks about the picture in Times Magazine, he states that the reason behind this picture's popularity is "because it breaks a social taboo that has been in place in the press for decades: a picture of a dead child is one of the golden rules of what you never published." Breaking society's norms or a profession's ethical limits is not a new concept in photography. While it is easy to discard this image as artistically poor and vacant, its impact on society cannot be denied or erased. As the editor of Polka Magazine, Dimitri Beck says "It's a simple photograph that deals with an essential truth." Interestingly, when analyzing the genre of documentary photography, Martha Rosler questions our approach and the ways we can "deal with" it as a photographic practice. Through all the definitions and attributions "What remains of it?" she wonders.

In her series named *Ontheemden* or *The Displaced*, Patricia Nauta's subjects are in a blurry setting. The main focus is mostly on the facial figures, as the children gaze into the observer's eyes. Accompanying a close look, the sense of *displacement* is quickly established which mirrors the feelings of the observer. But what is more evident is the basic aspects of being a child. The kids are situated in what Domitilla Olivieri calls *local spaces* which were reconstructed, as immigration offices, as neutral areas, as public transports. Nauta especially focused on a *transitional* period, capturing these kids while they wait for their residence permits. By doing so, she avoided any type of external factors. The relevance of these children's situation is shadowed by their internal thought patterns, as we witness it. Because the essence of a kid is not enclosed in a façade of adulthood yet. Nauta aims to capture the resilient and innocent spirit of this unyielding character within a child.

Another great Dutch photographer, Rineke Dijkstra, is known for her transitional portraits where she manages to capture the entrancing sincerity in her subjects. Her main drive is surfacing the essential reality in her subjects by waiting for the right moment. Much like Nauta, her composition is simple. What she does differently is to use a similar but organic background as she is aiming to reduce the differential make-up of the context to keep the figure under the spotlight. In her series *The Almerisa*, which started in 1994, Dijkstra photographed a refugee girl named Almerisa who was seeking asylum. They kept in touch and she took eleven photographs of her over the course of fourteen years, to show the transitions her subject has been through in time. All pictures have similarly minimal backgrounds and the changing constant is Almerisa herself.

Nauta's composition in *The Displaced*, is more diverse. While she uses a black and white approach and gives minimum focus in the background, there are several different frames, and even one group photograph of children on the bus, which gives a lot more detail into the context and splits the focus into several points. Although Nauta doesn't use a stable one-size framing, or one perspective, the monochromatic aspect encourages a fluid and timeless feeling.

In examining Sebastian Salgado's work, Saskia Sassen delves into the theory that "black and white photography creates distance and thereby unsettles meaning." Supporting this argument, he continues "In contrast, color photography of actual settings overwhelms with its specificity and leaves little room for distance and thereby for theory." In this manner, while inspecting the main focus on Nauta's *The Displaced*, this artistic inclination towards black and white photography in capturing refugee children directs our path deeper into finding meaning in these pictures. Thus, as we follow the patterns of facial structure, we are affected by this immediacy of being in contact with the sole subject; a kid. Diane Arbus says that a photograph "…is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know."

Besides the photographer's choice to highlight certain properties of their work, it is important to acknowledge the historical meaning. Since the early 18th century the documentary tradition which developed in a paced manner and developed its own culture with photographers such as Robert Flaherty, Eugene Atget, Walker Evans, Dorothy Lange, gave a retrospective characteristic to this. Now, there is even

more space for a work to be called a 'documentary', more reason to assume a text, a picture, a film as such. So, to answer Rosler's rhetorical question in a way, what remains of documentary photography, is actually much more than before.

A certain image of impact, whatever its process can function as a catalyst in many areas. Empowered and more reachable than ever, media can depict one story in hundreds, and can focus the majority on that one issue, while avoiding the other aspects of the situation. A topic such as "the refugee crisis" has a certain connotation in our minds, a certain ring of familiarity which is getting more popular by the minute. The purposeful implications of the media can use photography as more than a visual document, the power of one photograph can go above and beyond the words.

There is no background, no color lighting; it's solely him and us. In case of the portraits in Nauta's project, this simplistic approach not only separates the child from the backdrops of culturally learned or conditioned prejudices, it also gives the work an easy-viewing experience. This way, even though, it is not possible to forget all learned prejudicial behaviors and thought patterns, we, as the beholder, can somewhat get a distance from the media-induced aggression, sadness, suffering and pity. These pictures of children are certainly not graphic or emotionally exploitative. They are as close to normal as Nauta has managed to get.

We can think of this approach in a more historical context and consider what would have happened if colored photography was of no reach, and in this idealistic approach, I will turn to Dziga Vertov, who conveyed the atmosphere of his era, through his experimental and controversial, yet from today's point of view, simplistic way. In the early 20th century, much like today, rapid developments were achieved in many areas of life, and in conjunction with these, artistic abilities, visions, and critiques advanced towards new horizons. It was an era of many pivotal events, and many to come with regards to war, science, politics, and art, specifically of film and photography. When talking about migration and photography Joan Schwartz says "If Alfred Stieglitz's 1907 photograph The Steerage has come to epitomize immigration to the New World, then Dorothea Lange's 1936 Migrant (or Prairie) Mother has become the icon of migrant farmworkers in Depression America." These photographs were subjected to controversial discussions, mainly because, the purpose was to capture a dramatic moment, to open up what was on the surface of a tragic situation; what was without, not within. It is usually an artistic and political choice for a photographer under similar conditions, the perspective to reflect or capture.

In in this regard, one point in time depends on many variables, one of which is the artist's approach in telling a story. As the perspective of the artist is key in establishing the relationship between her and her object and creating a collaborative atmosphere that makes the portrait see-through for the observer. Nauta's *The Displaced* turns the lens within and leads the discussion to us, our children and the children of those like us. Therefore, it wouldn't be unfortunate if her pictures are taken at face values, her subjects as of mere children; strong, innocent and perhaps a bit restless. And the support of a text underlying the difficult conditions would be the extra dimensionality for anyone who seeks it.

Photographs carry the potential of creating new paths of moralities and new aspects of humanity. They can be seen as more than evidence, a document of history; with the advancements in international communications, they can be part of a bigger, universal culture. Of course, a photograph cannot be limited to one of those aspects; nor a photographer can claim one aspect as a certain aim. What Patricia Nauta accomplishes in her series is to capture the common, yet just as much private side of a situation reflected through the eyes, figures and compositions of children. An adult in a similar situation might have reflected a more tragic or a more composite stance, whereas the simplicity of these photographs takes a peek behind that veil of secrecy, fear, and humiliation.

De-objectifying things through photography - Carles Hidalgo

Photographing objects has been a thread within the history of photography since its very beginning. No matter if the objects have been staged in front of the camera or not, they are made extraordinary things by the simple act of framing them inside a photograph. As the literary scholar Marina Warner points out: "Since its invention, photography has become the principal of working the enchanting transformation when a mere object becomes a thing with soul."[1] Therefore, we could ask ourselves: what is the role of the medium of photography in the embodying process of objects becoming things?

In order to answer the above stated question of this essay, I will examine the series of photographs produced by the photographer Annabel Miedema named *The Weather is for Free*. Miedema's pictures portray ordinary Dutch outdated products. These products have been depicted in a new environment highlighting one specific bright colour in each image that matches a colour within the represented object. Dutch herring, Delft Blue pottery, oranges, Dutch gables or a glass of milk; these are some of the things that invite us to appreciate Dutch everyday culture in an alternative manner. Two terms will gain special focus throughout the essay; firstly, the concept of "realogy"; and secondly, the idea of "theatricality". Subsequently, the inherent relation between language and reality and its unavoidable paradoxical nature will be examined in relation to photography.

Let me start by introducing the idea of "object" and "thing" and how they interact. To begin with, it is worth to consider the term "realogy" coined by the critical theorist Mikhail Epstein. This "hypothetical concept" wants to establish itself as the "science of things" and be recognized as a new genre in spiritual-material culture. To discern how "realogy" works, it is necessary to elucidate why an object appears so distant from a thing, as Epstein states: "An object only becomes a thing when it is spiritually incorporated into someone's life, just as an

individual becomes a personality through the process of self-awareness, self-definition, and intensive self-development."[2] We could think of insignificant objects like a stone, collected at a river on a sunny or rainy day and placed again somewhere safe for someone's gaze. This stone now will have gained a personal, almost lyrical value. In Epstein's words: "The ordinariness of things bears witness to their particular importance, their capacity to enter into the order of life, to grow as one with the qualities of human beings to the point that they become a fixed and meaningful part of human existence"[3] In order to reveal the profound significance of things, we need to focus on their figurative and conceptual meaning. Mikhail Epstein proposed the metaphorical

term of “lyrical museum” as the one in charge to exhibit and express the meaning embodied on these things.

Similarly, photography may serve as a good vehicle and exhibitor of these meanings and therefore, a good medium to function as the already mentioned “lyrical museum”. Photography has two powers that make it ideal for this enterprise: firstly, the commonly accepted aids to vision as a quality of the medium, and secondly, its way to delimitate and emphasize one particular object that because of a chain of events has been brought into focus. As artist and theoretician Allan Sekula stresses in his oft-quoted essay ‘On the invention of photographic meaning’, by understanding photographs, “we can separate a level of report, of empirically grounded rhetoric, and a level of “spiritual” rhetoric.”[4] Even if Sekula’s article focuses mostly on photographs containing people, the same idea can be translated into photography documenting things. There is an idea of affection or sympathy in the very act of photographing things that has to do with the spiritual rhetoric level found in photographs, as the photographer Minor White points out: “he [the photographer] recognized an object or a series of forms that when photographed, would yield an image with specific suggestive powers that can direct the viewer into a specific and known feeling, state or place within himself.”[5] However, finding these suggestive powers in objects that appear insignificant at the first sight can be less obvious.

At this point, it could be stated that the series under discussion here, is a good example of this idea of rescuing objects from the landfill attaching and embodying them with a meaning that is far away from any utilitarian interpretation of the thing represented. The landfill could symbolize the way our society works: too focused on possessing but too occupied to appreciate the simplicity of the domestic. It is in this contradiction where lies part of Annabel Miedema’s project. If so many words are wasted on unused things, (we could think of the way advertisement uses language) why can’t we find words of understanding and sympathy for old things that have been always there for us? A common ground is needed, as Epstein states, “where used things could find shelter, and where appropriate descriptions and attestations could be attached to them—not of the advertising type, of course, but rather a lyrical, memorial kind of meditation.”[6] He terms this place an “anti-display window” and we could reflect upon what is a most suitable medium to simulate this sort of window than a still and silent photograph? The pictures belonging to *The Weather is for Free* contribute to this very idea. They have a connotative power that enables us to find in them some sort of lyrical discourse lost for years. Average people do not find a glass of milk inspiring neither do they consider it as a memorable part of someone’s life. The photographer has build up with delicacy anti-display windows that warn us how we should stop for a second and find a moment to consider how beauty can be found in our closest proximity if we are up to find it. I believe, even if the series deals with typical Dutch products, the same concept could be translated universally.

Another feature important to consider from the series is its “theatricality”. The art historian David Green has written about this issue in relation with documentary photography. In a sense, Green makes us aware how theatricality has been commonly associated with the idea of fakery or artifice. However, what is at stake is “the evolution of radically different kinds of documentary photographic practices that are specific to the domain of art.”[7] We should, therefore, consider photo-conceptualism as falling inside this category and see how it initiated its own critique of photographic representation and of notions of realism. Thus, conceptual photographers started using their cameras in an introverted and parodistic manner that brought a new relationship with the problem of the staged or posed, through new concepts of performance.

To make this issue more clear, it is my intention to compare Miedema’s staged photographs of objects with a specific photograph taken by another artist. The picture is titled *Socks on Radiator, 1997* and was taken by the German photographer Wolfgang Tillmans. In the picture we obviously see some black socks hanging on a radiator organically next to a red unidentified item. The clothes are surrounded by bright white. Tillmans wanted to make these socks the protagonists of his artwork, the same way Miedema does with her Dutch products. Both photographers are conceptually altering the meaning of the things in the pictures depicted. By capturing the objects in this way, they are nothing else than de-objectifying them. The objects become things that deserve full contemplation. They are losing their metonymic qualities to enter in a more complicated level where, as Epstein points out, “the personal importance and the everyday presence of things, to show, as far as possible, how these attributes are intertwined.”[8] Instead of reproducing the real as we passively perceive it, photography enables the photographer to construct the real, finding a new authenticity in it. Let us consider Tillmans’ words about it: “The true authenticity of photographs for me is that they usually manipulate and lie about what is in front of the camera but never lie about the intentions behind the camera.”[9] In this sense, a new realism is staged in front of us holding a new variety of small nuances that enrich it. Identifying what are the nuances can be an impossible task, but the curator and photography critic Charlotte Cotton give us a hint on how to deal with this sort of photography: “It is for us to determine a subject’s significance, knowing that it must have one, for the artist has photographed it and thereby designated it as significant.”[10] Thus, in the case of object staged photography, we deal with a triple layer of meaning that adds polysemy into the photograph: firstly, we have the photographer choosing a concrete object; secondly, finding a new milieu for it; and thirdly, imprisoning it in the photograph. All three acts have meaning since they have been premeditated and orchestrated by the photographer. With this in mind I return to Annabel Miedema’s series *The Weather is for Free*. The picture under analysis here is the one depicting a Dutch herring lying down in a blue and white Delftware tray positioned on a blue surface that could be a tablecloth. In the background, a hand can be seen holding what looks like a piece of white paper, covered by the person’s blue shirt. The abundance of aggressive bright blue inside the picture serves to destabilize the notion of the object aesthetically. Again a remark from Epstein: “Here the thing is neither used as an object nor interpreted as a sign, but fulfills itself as being, in all the fullness of meanings enclosed and dissolved in its objectness.”[11] Epstein talks in this passage about the impossibility of comprehending reality without language, but how language does not correspond with reality. Realism does not believe anymore in the transparency of signs, or in signifieds, but functions by questioning and doubting the correspondence between language and reality. Equivalently, the object in our photograph is taken away from reality, transferred to a constructed one only comprehensible through its radical difference with our preconceived but ungraspable notion of the real. Through words we try to describe the objects in the pictures, as I did myself above, making an effort to express the essence of these things. Unfortunately, in the final analysis of the picture, the essence lies beyond words. If photography is only comprehensible by means of language, maybe it is time to consider photography by means of self-negation of language, showing us a world fundamentally non-reproducible where the object of perception becomes a thing with a soul. This thing cannot be defined as an object anymore, but as an act of thought revolving around its own existence.

To conclude, this present theoretical digression applied to Miedema’s photographs indicates how the medium of photography has the power not only to be a collector and exhibitor of the meaningful but forgotten things out there, but rather it can also function as a new place where reality is questioned, neglected and reshaped indefinitely.

1 WARNER, 2004, 6.
2 EPSTEIN, 1995, 256.
3 IBID., 254.
4 SEKULA, 1984, 14.
5 WHITE, 1984, 16.
6 EPSTEIN, 1995, 261.
7 GREEN, 2009, 105.
8 EPSTEIN, 1995, 260.
9 TILLMANS, 2005, 117
10 COTTON, 2004, 115.
11 EPSTEIN, 1995, 274.

Digital manipulation and the perception of truth: how Du Floo's Red Landscape #3 challenges the spectator

Valérie-Anne Houppermans

At first glance Dutch photographer Sander du Floo's *Red Landscape* #3 (2012) seems an ordinary example of street photography. The photograph shows the intersection of two streets, cropped with multi-story buildings commonly seen in urban architecture. However, it takes only a split second to realise that this is not an example of traditional street photography. In this essay, I research the consequences of the production process for the spectator's perception of truth. In order to do so, I will examine the techniques used by the photographer in the production of the image. Taking this in mind, I will shed light on different aspects of the photograph that might challenge the spectator's perception of truth as a consequence of the technique used, such as the "iconically multiply indexical", the atmosphere and the composition created, the cinematographic character and the use of elements that might point in the direction of 'magical realism'.

Du Floo calls his works "photography collages". Although one could challenge whether the work qualifies as such, it is a clear indication of the working method that Du Floo used and the effect he envisaged. Du Floo gathered in his digital databank thousands of images of artefacts and textures, such as doors, cracks in walls, and rubbish on the street. His compositions are constructed out of models and sketches combined with between sixty to two hundred photographs per work[1]. He meticulously constructed his images from scratch, thereby calling the painterly tradition to mind. Although not working precisely in the same fashion or producing comparable photographs, the works of Canadian photographer Jeff Wall and American photographer Gregory Crewdson do bear similarities to the work of Du Floo when it comes to the 'constructedness' of the photographic image and its effect on indexicality. Both Wall and Crewdson made use of the so-called 'directional style', breaking with street photography and documentary photography and discovering how photographs can be both fictional and as convincing as real things.

Photographer Allan Sekula stated "The photograph is imagined to have, depending on its context, a power that is primarily affective or a power that is primarily informative. Both powers reside in the mythical truth-value of the photograph"[2]. He hereby clearly referred to the 'truth claim' in photography, or the prevailing belief that traditional photographs accurately depict reality, based primarily on their 'indexicality'. The term 'indexicality' first appeared in the writings of 19th-century philosopher and linguist Charles S. Peirce, who pointed at the physical relationship between the photographed object and the resulting image; more precisely the "photograph appears to be an icon, but its proper sign type is the index, i.e. sign causally related to its object"[3]. Du Floo's *Red Landscape* #3 being constructed out of tens or hundreds of snapshot of textures and details has broken with the single indexical origin. Consequently, the manipulation of the image by Du Floo inevitably leads to the truth claim being affected or even declared invalid.

However, following art historians Joel Snyder and Neil Walsch Allen should we perhaps question the actual importance of the connection between the photograph and its real life original for understanding photographs? What guarantees of truthfulness do we get from mechanically produced images? Or is the photographer's control over the production process, which is often more extensive in the case of manipulation or construction, a decisive factor?[4] And what 'truth' are we actually talking about? If we take for example the photographs by Gregory Crewdson: they depict no 'scenes from real life', but his 'staged' photographs document historically and culturally specific problems. They ask the viewer to recognise truths about gender and culture[5]. Should Du Floo's series *Red Landscape* – inspired by architecture from former Eastern Europe – perhaps be read as a recognition of the values of a communist society? Returning to indexicality, one could state that Du Floo's photographs have lost their indexicality – their causal relationship to the photographed object –, but at the same time they could be considered as 'icons with multiple indexes'. Consider that the viewer is not informed which indexes are included or excluded, what then is the relevance of indexicality?[6] In other words, in the digital era the thoughts about the importance of a single index are clearly shifting.

Returning to the details of the photograph, the only living creature in the photograph is a deer, standing still in the middle of the street. Although the deer looks at the viewer with a soft gaze, the photograph produces in some way an uncanny feeling. Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud explains in his essay "Das Unheimliche" (1919) his idea of "uncanny": "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar"[7]. It can be translated as feeling estranged and at home at the same time, or an atmosphere that has both something familiar and something unfamiliar. It causes an uncomfortable sensation in the viewer, or more precisely the feeling of something "uncanny". *Red Landscape* #3 reminds us of urban street scenes as we know them from daily life, the familiar: an ordinary intersection of two smaller streets with buildings along it in various styles from different time periods (this could easily be a neighbourhood in Brussels, Paris or Berlin). There are however certain elements that estrange the spectator, the unfamiliar. To begin with, the minimal lighting, which comes solely from a sort of panel attached to the facade, produces a cold white light that only illuminates the pavement, the garbage and part of the facade. Closer inspection reveals that these are not regular facades; they are in a state of decay and one of the windows of the closest building has been half filled in with bricks. The colour scheme used by Du Floo - a palette of greyish and brownish muddy pigments, interrupted by the light blue of the garbage bags - contributes to the uncanny feeling. While not immediately a factor, the lack of people in the photograph add to the uncanny feeling. It looks like a deserted city where all the people have fled for some reason. The garbage on the street suggests that they might not have left long ago. Emptiness and stillness are aspects that are appearing more and more in contemporary urban photography, with Jeff Wall's *Dawn* (2001) as an exponent of this subgenre. The vacant representation of the city contrasts with the growing population density modern urban areas are experiencing[8]. In case of Du Floo, who has expressed a particular interest in communism and its history, should the title of other pictures in the series - #1-3 - perhaps be seen as a (nostalgic) reference to the empty streets in times of communism in for example the DDR?[9] One picture – *Red Landscape* #1 – even features in the back what seems Berlin's famous TV tower? Whether an implicit or explicit critique to modern urban development, the empty streets constructed by Du Floo clearly challenge the spectator's sense of reality due to its contrast with the populated and dynamic cities we know.

Du Floo's creative process has led to a photograph that has the feel of a film still. Its cinematographic character, which we can recognise in the staged photographs by Jeff Wall such as 8056 *Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, 9 a.m., 24 September 1996* (1996) – gives the photo an air

of frozen stillness. The deer, frozen in time and space, looks the viewer straight in the eyes as. Wall has termed this approach 'near documentary', emphasizing that he wants his pictures 'to feel' as if they have a documentary character; however, in the end, although the pictures look 'straight' they are not[10]. That is also the case with *Red Landscape* #3 that due to its 'near documentary' character makes you wonder for a second in what city to situate the scene, after which you directly realise that there is no existing town depicted here. In the same vein, Du Floo's use of time and space, or rather 'non-time' and 'non-space', is comparable to Jeff Wall's dealing with these aspects, for example in *Dawn* (2001). Although some of Du Floo's photos in the series *Red Landscape* contain minor references to where the street scenes could be located (Berlin TV tower, graffiti with (imaginary) Cyrillic writing, a flag), generally speaking Du Floo constructed anonymous urban settings that cannot be traced. The same applies to time; time seems frozen or non-existent in his photos. Also the hour of the day is hard to identify as a result of Du Floo's use of a sort of undetermined lighting: it could equally be early evening, midnight or early morning.

Contributing to the spectator's awareness that *Red Landscape* #3 is not a 'straight scene' is the insertion of the deer. Du Floo himself calls the ordinary looking cityscapes with added animals (along with the deer, the photos in the series *Red Landscape* also contain a dog, a lion and a number of peacocks) a form of "magical realism", creating fairytale-like images[11]. The term "magical realism" was coined by German photographer and art historian Franz Roh in 1925 in his book *Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neusten europäischen Malerei*[12]. The artists calling themselves "Magical Realists" were known for their depiction of a scene that was considered supernormal in a way that it seemed totally normal. The reference to painting is clear, think of the works of the Giorgio de Chirico and Dutch painter Carel Willink. The empty (surreal) street scenes of De Floo also draw parallels to the work of American artist Edward Hopper. More references could be made, but what is most important is that, like Du Floo, all of these artists create fictional worlds that seem like normal daily scenes at first glance, but adopt elements that create strangeness, something abnormal. Evidently, the use of these magical elements – that Freud again relates to the occurrence of the "uncanny" – does not come without consequences for the viewer's perception of truth[13].

In conclusion, nothing is what it seems at first glance in Du Floo's *Red Landscape* #3. His photos challenge the spectator's experience of truth-value at various levels. On the one hand, he creates an image that has multiple indices or traces, whereby the origin is non-retrievable, but a new icon is established. On the other hand, by his use of light, his colour scheme and textures applied giving the buildings a feel of decay, he manages to imbue the viewer with an uncanny feeling one would rather not experience in real life. The magical elements inserted, such as the apparently sweet-looking deer, as well as the deserted street scene also contribute to some extent to the uncanny feeling. Lastly, the cinematographic character Du Floo was able to evoke has a similar effect on the viewer as Wall's 'near documentary' staged photographs: although the photographs look 'real', you quickly realise they are not.

1 FLOO, DU, "STATEMENT".
2 SEKULA, 1984, 10.
3 DE DUVE, 1978, 114, REFERRING TO CHARLES S. PEIRCE, COLLECTED PAPERS, VOL. II, BOOK II, PP. 129-187.
4 GELDER, VAN & WESTGEEST, 2011, 16 AND 31 REFERRING TO MARTHA ROSLER WHO REMINDS US THAT MANIPULATION FORMS IN FACT AN INTEGRAL PART OF PHOTOGRAPHY FROM ITS BEGINNINGS.
5 MCINNES, 2012, 89.
6 GELDER, VAN & WESTGEEST, 2011, 39.
7 FREUD, 1919, 220.
8 HAWKER, 2013, 341-342. HAWKER ASCRIBES THE PHENOMENON OF STARKLY DEPOPULATED URBAN SETTINGS IN CONTEMPORARY ART TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ART PHOTOGRAPHY DISTANCING ITSELF FROM VERNACULAR PHOTOGRAPHY.
9 DU FLOO HAS INDICATED THAT HIS INTEREST IN COMMUNISM, ITS HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE, DEVELOPED AFTER HAVING SEEN IMAGES FROM NORTH KOREA.
10 GELDER, VAN & WESTGEEST, 2011, 25.
11 FLOO, DU, "RED LANDSCAPE".
12 ROH, 1925.
13 FREUD, 1919, 396.

Self-portrait beyond the 'Self'

Zipporah Nyaruri

Self-portrait photographs in their abundance from historical times until now, demonstrate how this genre from a vantage point of women, once and again has managed to cross boundaries by employing very different approaches. In the early years of the women's movement, self- portraits often depicted women pensively looking into their mirrors. This not only served as a solution to the technical problems of photographic self-portrait but it also showed the effort the artists put to discern one's "true" self[1]. Now, contemporary photographers not only use self-portrait for identity, they question the value and the integrity of authorship and continue to embody a number of roles within their self-portraiture[2]. In this essay, I will look into two contemporary Dutch photographers to investigate the extent to which they use self-portrait as a social function to go beyond self and include the viewer.

Camille Renée Devid's series *Down to my bones (2017)* and Laura Hospes' *UCP (2015)* series use their personal lives as subject matter for their art. They further go beyond the artistic representation of self-portraiture as a mere likeness, to chronicle the tough periods of their lives as they battle with mental illness and medical procedures. At these moments, they invite viewers into their intimately private spaces as they experience and share their deepest emotions of a mental and physical life's struggles. With this gesture, their portraiture is not only used as a means to speak about themselves but also to explore and 'express larger concerns' that affects others[3]. Since photography that addresses social issues always faces the problematic power relation divide, it is important to note that Devid and Hospes are not depicting others from a secure and superior position to address these issues but they dare to expose themselves in their vulnerability to serve as encouragement and moral support to those in similar situations as them.
Devid and Hospes use different approaches to address different issues. Hospes series *UCP 2015*, named after the psychiatric hospital where she received treatment for depression and eating disorder[4], uses straight photography providing the viewer with a very direct first-person experience. This collection of black and white self-portraits could be likened to a literary work written in the first-person[5] as it is only natural as observed in our typical speech pattern, to tell personal experiences in the first-person. Hospes' images show the extreme emotions she was going through while dealing with severe depression and suicidal thoughts while in the hospital[6]. This specificity of a diaristic self-portraits allows Hospes to paint a vivid picture while casting light on an issue that she couldn't express in words[7].
It is undeniable that self-portraiture in its ubiquity makes it rare to find

an artist photographer who has never taken a picture of themselves which adds up to the number of non-artists who do the same. For Hospes, the ritual of taking photographs during this period served as a diary for her self-expression, self-discovery and personal documentation. But concerned by the 'perfect' life narrative images shared on social media depicted, she used these series to counter this framing of life. "I want to show that difficult stories are also "allowed" and inspire people to do so. I hope they also gain love and support back and feel less lonely again[8]. Hospes shifted from self-discovery and expression to self- reflection and that of the society. And just like Jo Spence, one of the first known 'photo-therapy photographer[s] who committed to creating 'visual illness diaries' albums[9], Hospes brought her private life into the public showing her self-portraits that evokes deep psychological messages as a supportive measure to viewers undergoing a similar situation.

Hospes series whether created with an artistic or with documentary intent, has notable style of straight photography. The absence of highly stylised or lack of evidence of manipulated photos illustrate the simple statement of what is in front of the camera. Her photographs, shot on a neutral background are of real moments showcasing real feelings. From image to image we see Hospes in different framing of shots and different expressions. On one photo, she is lying in bed looking directly into the lens, engaging with the camera and hence the viewer as if reaching out for help. The main exhibited image No.3 is a close-up of her arm, sharp and in focus detailing not only the tattoos on her arm, but also the state of her emotions. Here we are experiencing the fluctuating moments of this time in snapshot as an element of straight photography[10].

While Hospes uses straight photography, Devid's Down to my bones series is more stylised and could be categorised under the symbolic self-portrait. A category which is about the ability of the photographer to think about themselves abstractly, conceptually, or by association[11]. According to John Suler's article on *Photographic Psychology*, photographers using this approach use objects, scenes, or a person to create an image which is related to or stands for something about them. They visually project their feelings, ideas, interests, memories or personality traits into these objects and scenes because they see them as visually representing adding that "a photo is a symbolic self-portrait when the photographer can say, "This is me."[12]

Down to my bones (2017) series, chronicles Devid's mental and physical journey while undergoing years of fertility treatments to pursue her dream of having a child[13] The series encompasses black and white charcoal drawings, or sketches, that portrays Devid's physical process, personal thoughts, emotions and struggles of this period in her life. Also acting as a source of self-reflection, this series reflects on the process and construction of identity devoted to the subject of infertility. Devid explores the battles, hopes and her loss as a way of reaching out to other women undergoing the same process[14] .

Obtaining her images through both digital and analogue recording processes, Devid uses a photomontage technique where she mixes elements of two or three images, layering them to create a new image[15]. For example, in the case of the photo *'Who am I?* the resulting image of the photomontage creates two faces of the same, double, making one blurry as if caught in motion while the other parts of the photo seem paint brushed. In addition, Devid seems to be using Man Ray's solarisation[16] technique in her photo, *I am a woman,* which gives the photo a negative look with an overexposure effect as if showing her on the verge of disappearing. Almost fading away or as if almost entirely obscured by peeling, faded wallpaper, this image portrays Devid's comments on the restrains of cultural construction of individuals and the ability of 'self-portraits to conceal as much as they reveal[17]. Her photographs show both the woman's mental and physical vulnerability, almost fading within the image.

With this kind of solarisation style, Devid creates an experience which may reinforce a connotation of intensity that inversion seems to have[18]. Inverted images are mostly experienced as photographic negatives, as of snapshots or X-rays - as used in the medical world by dentists, physicians, surgeons. From this association of medical diagnostics comes connotations of the medical gaze. Devid explores this gaze with one image of IVF syringes (image 3 *Hope*) symbolizing her journey of trying to conceive. She terms the rawness of her body as being treated as an object, a "failing machine" and points to her losing her identity due to all the supplemented hormones[19]. Even though the image is without the presence of her as the subject, it is a trace or an indexical sign of the intense medical experience she goes through. That becomes one of the symbolic objects where she visually projects her feelings, ideas and memories.

As it has been illustrated in this paper, Hospes and Devid's used different means of self-portraiture to become representational figures, "poster child" for whatever they set out to represent. Susan Bright the author of claims that it is easy for one to pour out their soul to a mechanical instrument which can be cathartic as one is only accountable to oneself and the inanimate camera[20].

However, autobiographical work like Hospes' and Devid's is often read as a form of expressive therapy and it is common for photographers to create a visual record of a personal tragedy or difficult time in life[21]. This is also an expression of the social nature of the human being, wishing others to share one's experiences[22] and to empathize with their experiences. Artists mentioned earlier like Jo Spence, Hannah Villiger (1951-97) and the fashion photographer Helmut Newton (1920-2004) used self-portraiture to document their experiences with cancer and hospitalisation for heart problems respectively[23]. Marie Yates[24] also demonstrates a comparison of how photographs happen to be used in some therapeutic workshops.

In both of Devid's and Hopses' projects, one can find an alchemy that goes from hurting, to healing, to helping. Devid uses photographs in activating the female spectator to reflect on social positions and their own comparable experiences, the same with Hospes. Other artist like Ana Casasbroda who also documented her desire to have children in her project *Album 2000 - Kinderwunsch 2000* and Kerry Payne Stailey, *The Children (I Never Had),* both used the photographic testimony of their pain using different approaches in their projects devoted to exploring the battle of infertility, of hopes and loss, of women everywhere in their journey to become mothers. As it was in the case of Stailey, viewers wrote and thanked her for putting voices on what they were experiencing but not able to speak about it to somebody else[25].

As Susan Butler points out, "To photograph oneself is unavoidably something of a schizoid undertaking" meaning that when taking photos, one implicitly acknowledges the difference between one's own self-perception and an external self by others[26]. When a person photographed also controls the camera, converting it into an instrument of self-projection, there is the means of creating an image that presents the self in its own terms as it would be seen, as it would like to affect others -this implication of the relation through the camera of self to self and to the outside world is doubled if it is a woman[27] adding that self-portrait allows one to see themselves as others might see them or wished to be seen by them.

To conclude, a self-portrait is an attempt to place oneself into a more objective position towards oneself. By representing things like depression, anxiety, helplessness, infertility among other things,

self-portraiture helps to objectify emotions so the person can more clearly witness and control them, rather than be controlled BY them[28]. In psychology, the concept of the "looking glass self" suggests that our identities evolve from the perceptions other people have of us. Feedback from people affirms what we are and that what we do matters and therefore with these images viewers can see them as the artists see themselves or they can see them according to their own needs and expectations[29].

1 BONNEY, CLAIRE. "THE NUDE PHOTOGRAPH: SOME FEMALE PERSPECTIVES." PG 9
2 IBID
3 VAN GELDER, AND WESTGEEST, 2011, 212
4 HOSPES LAURA ARTISTIC STATEMENT
5 MESKIMMON 1996
6 IBID
7 HOSPES STATEMENT
8 HOSPES INTERVIEW WITH DAILY MAIL UK
9 DENNETT TERRY – JO SPENCE DOCUMENTED HER ILLNESS OF CANCER AND TURNED HER INTO AN ARTISTIC WORK WITH A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INTENT
10 CARBON 2017, 245
11 SULER 2011
12 IBID. SULER POINTS THAT "ARTISTS ARE CONSCIOUSLY AWARE OF THE FACT THAT AN OBJECT, PLACE, OR PERSON WILL VISUALLY REPRESENT SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR OWN IDENTITIES".
13 DEVID CAMILLE RENÉE STATEMENT
14 IBID
15 DEVID'S INTERVIEW WITH MONOSKOP MAGAZINE
16 IN HER INTERVIEW WITH MONOSKOP, DEVID MENTIONED MAN RAY AS ONE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHERS THAT INSPIRE HER.
17 BRIGHT 2010
18 UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON MAGAZINE.
19 DEVID 2017
20 BRIGHT
21 WILTSHIRE
22 CARBON 217
23 BRIGHT 2010, 12-19.
24 GELDER, VAN & WESTGEEST, 2011, 212
25 UNKNOWN
26 BUTLER 1986,51
27 BUTLER POINTS THIS OUT IS CUSTOMARILY THE OBJECT OF THE MALE GAZE, IN THE REALM OF PHOTOGRAPHIC LOOKING
28 CARBON 2017
29 SULER

Garzweiler II: a marriage between art and document. On Tim Meijer's Garzweiler II - Dominique Princen

In this essay, the series *Garzweiler II* by photographer Tim Meijer will be discussed from the angle of aesthetics and its supposedly troubling relationship with documentary photography. The series deals with a brown coal mine of the same name situated in Germany and consist of images of the coal mine and of the surrounding villages that become increasingly deserted as the excavation continues. Meijer himself states that he is fascinated by the transition and decay of the landscape and wants to revive memories of places that have been left behind[1]. Meijer's photographs have been described as being aesthetically pleasing without diminishing the loaded subject. This is an interesting remark, because it suggests that the aesthetics of a photograph are able to weaken its value as an informational document, or at least indicates that there is a conflict between the aesthetic and epistemic properties of a photograph. When I interviewed Meijer about his work, he shared with me that during his studies at the art academy, his teachers continued to push him that he had to choose between becoming either a documentary photographer or a fine art photographer. This stresses the fact that documentary photographs and art are still regarded as mutually exclusive by some and reveals the actuality of this conflict. In this essay, I will examine Meijer's series within the framework of the historical question whether photographs can simultaneously be both documents and works of art and argue that they indeed can. In addition, I will argue that a photograph's aesthetic properties can in fact add to its value as an informational document.

The first question that arises is about the origins of this opposition between the document and the work of art. As discussed by art historian Olivier Lugon in his essay *Congrès international de la documentation photographique,* the conflict between the aesthetic and informative nature of photographs is no recent invention. He mentions that during the first *Congrès international de la documentation photographique,* held in Marseilles in 1906, one of the fundamental topics of debate was the extremely complex relationship between the documentary project and art.[2] With the continuing industrialization and domestication of photography, the medium kept growing in popularity and appeared to have lost its legitimacy and esteem[3]. In his essay, he does not go into specific detail on what this industrialization and domestication of photography entails. One can imagine it alludes to the decrease in price and effort needed to produce a photograph, making photography available to the middle class, rather than being exclusively marketed towards fellow artists or the upper class – target audiences who had more appreciation for aesthetic qualities. As became apparent during the 1906 Congress, according to Lugon, this resulted in the emergence of documentary and photographic art as counterparts with the same aim of reinvigorating photography. On the one hand, art was used to legitimatize photographs as aesthetic objects and on the other hand, photographers reverted to the principles of early photography when it was seen as a vehicle to convey knowledge[4]. Lugon then continues to explain that after the 1930's the idea of a documentary 'genre' came about which replaced photographic art by substituting it rather than denying its existence[5].

Allan Sekula, photographer, writer, filmmaker and critic, also makes the distinction between 'art photography', and 'documentary photography'. He regards this distinction as the misleading but popular form of the opposition between the 'symbolist' folk-myth and the 'realist' folk-myth, as explained in his essay *On The Invention of Photographic Meaning*[6]. The 'symbolist' folk-myth (associated with metaphor) states that a photograph does not have meaning until it is interpreted, whereas the 'realist' folk-myth (associated with metonym) describes a photograph as a factual representation of reality. Although Sekula acknowledges the distinction between the two opposites, he is less rigid in dividing the two, explaining that *"every photograph tends, at any given moment of reading in any given context, towards one of the two poles of meaning."*[7] This suggests that photographic communication it not to be seen as either strictly 'art' or 'documentary' and that its meaning, as explained in the rest of Sekula's essay, is dependent on the discourse it's embedded in: *"the photograph is an "incomplete" utterance, a message that depends on some external matrix of conditions and presuppositions for its readability. That is, the meaning of any photographic message is necessarily context-determined."*[8] I would like to dispute Sekula's argument and argue that art photography and documentary photography are not polar opposites. Rather, any given photograph can have aesthetic and documentary qualities, without one aspect diminishing the other.

To support this claim, we first ought to define when a photograph

is considered a document. As stated by Joel Snyder in the introduction of his essay *Documentary without Ontology, "a document is etymologically and in the law an item of proof or evidence in support of a putative fact, and many photographs (…) certainly seem to be concerned with facts".*[9] If we consider documents to be proof or evidence of facts, then all photographs are documents because of the indexical relationship between the captured scene and the resulting image. As Susan Sontag stated in her essay *In Plato's Cave: "A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture."*[10] We have to take into account that Sontag wrote this before the invention of digital photography and that the indexical nature of the photograph has become more complicated because of the increased array of possibilities of manipulation that digital photography offers. Still, she problematizes the ontological status of photographs, referring to a presumption that something exists which closely resembles what is recorded in the picture, rather than saying that a photograph records the facts. Although a certain relationship between photography and information cannot be denied, in this essay we will leave the ontological debate out of the equation. As Snyder stresses: *"concluding that some or all photographs are documents because they contain special, privileged information about the "facts" of the "objective world," amounts to misunderstanding the variety of uses to which documentary photographs are put."*[11]

According to Snyder, the two popular assumptions used to classify photographs are both false.[12] A photograph does not become documentary based on its intrinsic characteristics nor because of the intentions of its maker. Instead, its classification stems from how it is used. He illustrates this point with a hypothetical photograph of Denver in the 1890s, which may have been produced with aesthetic intentions and used as a work of art. If a researcher were to use this photograph to learn about Denver during that time, the picture would now serve as a source of information, thus becoming a document *as well as* a work of art.[13]

In that same vein, Meijer's work can be classified as both art photography and documentary photography. As we will see, the photographs serve as a record of the area and the effects of the coal mine on its surroundings without sacrificing aesthetic qualities. Meijer's series as a whole consists mostly of images of the coal mine, deserted streets, empty backyards and the interior of abandoned houses. Most of his pictures are completely devoid of human activity, save for a small selection of portraits and found footage. For his graduation project at AKV|St. Joost in Breda in 2016, he published a newspaper with an edition of 2500 copies, containing pictures from the Garzweiler area taken during the many years that he visited it.

When we try to position Meijer's series and especially his graduation project on Sekula's model of opposite poles, it immediately becomes clear that this opposition is problematic. The discourse in which the pictures are embedded is the format of a newspaper, which immediately conjures up associations with documentary photographs or facts. It has also been printed in an edition of 2500 copies. Of course, this is not a very large edition for a paper, but it far exceeds the usual amount for a work of art. We must not forget that this was a graduation project for an art academy and was featured in the exhibition for that year's graduation projects. Thus, the discourse for this project was very much a mix between artistic and documentary. Meijer himself disclosed in my interview with him that his teacher pressured him to choose between art and documentary photography. As becomes apparent in his graduation project, he opted to ignore his teacher's instructions, as his intended work does not belong in either category but rather both. Behind his work were both realist and symbolist intentions and meaning. On the one hand, it is realist because it is a literal record of the deserted surroundings of the coal mine. On the other hand, it is symbolist in nature because the pictures form a metaphor for the effects the coal mine has had on the area around it, a topic that fascinates Meijer. The combination of both realist and symbolist intentions also becomes clear from the statement on the back page of his paper: *"The pictures I take in this area are about memories and places left behind that I try to revive. The fact that this area will be completely gone in 2045 seems unreal to me. The people, the landscape, the long history of this place. I'm stunned by the fact what people have to leave behind because of this project. As long as Garzweiler II keeps digging, so will I."*[14]

In Snyder's theoretical framework, as discussed in this essay, the classification depends on the manner in which photographs are used. Again, Meijer's work fits both categories. They are a record of the Garzweiler area with the purpose of preserving memories. Simultaneously, they are explicitly aesthetic pictures. To illustrate this point, one needs to look no further than the image on the front page. It shows a dug down mining area but this is not obvious at first glance. The first thing one notices is the composition of smooth patterns and various tones of brown of the dirt in the foreground of the photograph, bearing some resemblance to an abstract painting. Even though beauty is an inherently subjective concept, the use of the rule of thirds, contrast, depth of field and lighting makes the photograph pleasing to look at. After being drawn into the picture by these aspects, one will notice the mining equipment subtly placed in the background of the shot. Most of the images that follow are accompanied by a brief description or explanation, enhancing their informational value. Snyder's framework clearly applies to Meijer's work; the images are aesthetically pleasing, allowing them to be used as works of art. Viewing them in the context of the publication complements this with documentary value.

The use of a photograph with distinctive aesthetics on the front page of the paper also supports my claim of aesthetics being a potential means of increasing the informational value of a document. In this case the aesthetic charm of the photograph is used to grasp the attention of the viewer and lure him or her in to view the rest of the publication. On a smaller scale, looking at a single image instead of at the series as a whole, this mechanism operates the same way. Another photograph of Meijer's shows an outdated bathroom in one of the abandoned houses. In terms of aesthetics, the composition, color and amount of detail of the photograph can be considered pleasing to the eye. The photograph has an undeniably informative nature nonetheless. In the literal, realist sense, it tells us something about the time this house was built, through the decorative customs of that time and place. In the symbolist sense, it shows us what people had to leave behind because of the Garzweiler project. It may seem trivial to document a pink curtain in front of a bathroom wall with green tiles or even to look at it, but had Meijer not recorded this scene, it would be gone forever, buried underneath the dirt of the coal mine.

To summarize, we could say that a photograph has the most value as an informational document if it succeeds in transferring information from the image to the viewer – or from the photographer's mind to the viewer's, if the image contains a symbolist meaning. Because this information or meaning is not always immediately apparent and may require closer observation of the image, the aesthetic properties of an image can function as a means to grasp the viewers' attention. Instead of delegitimizing the informational or documentary value of the photograph, the aesthetic concern becomes a trigger for the viewer to get involved in the subject. The debate on the conflict between the aesthetic and epistemic properties of a photograph dates back to the early 1900's and seems to have never been fully resolved. However, a series like Meijer's shows us that the documentary and artistic approach of photography are not to be seen as competitors, but rather as two connected and potentially synergetic aspects.

1 AS MENTIONED IN MEIJER'S ARTIST STATEMENT ON HIS WEBSITE.
2 LUGON, 2008, 67-68.
3 IBID, 69.
4 IBID, 69.
5 IBID, 69.
6 SEKULA, 1982, 108.
7 IBID, 108.
8 IBID, 85.
9 SNYDER, 1984, 78.
10 SONTAG, 2008, 5-6.
11 SNYDER, 1984, 90-91.
12 IBID, 80.
13 IBID, 90.
14 MEIJER, 2016, BACK PAGE OF THE NEWSPAPER.

On the Invisibility of the Photographic Medium - Sara Sallam

The world that photographer Bastiaan van Aarle presents in his UN-TITLED photo series is one of an intriguing character. An eerie silence dominates his monochromatic portrayal of a European city. The visual language of his low-key nocturnal frames and the complete absence of a human presence, in what may appear as an abandoned world, contribute to the sensed emptiness which lies at the centre of his work. In this essay, I will contextualise Van Aarle's series within a larger discussion on the relationship be-tween the photograph and the notions of truth. First, I will address the nature of the photograph and its paradoxical inherent truth claim from a historical perspective. Then, the capacity of the photographic message for persuasion and its inseparability from subjective intention will be discussed. And finally, I will unpack how Van Aarle's visual approach responds to the invasiveness of photographic messages disseminated by use of billboards. In doing so, I will shed light on the implications of the invisibility of the photographic medium.

Between 1825 and 1839, several photographic processes were developed by a number of pioneers including Nicèphore Nièpce, Louis Daguerre, Henry Fox Talbot, and Hippolyte Bayard. Each presented their successful results of the same inquiry: how to retain an accurate replica of the visible world onto a graphic medium.[1] Their photographic plates promised a faithful representation of reality, and were immediately described as "nature drawing herself".[2] This proud distinction was the basis on which the superiority of the medium was set, separating itself from wood etchings and paintings by an accuracy of the highest fidelity, produced by nature, unmediated by an artist's pencil, and independent of illustrative skills. In his 1844-46 publication 'The Pencil of Nature', Talbot notes that the photographic plates included in his book are "impressed by the agency of light alone".[3] This inseparable connection between the photograph and the real world by means of natural light was not the only means of asserting the photographic superiority. Another factor played a major role in shaping the perceived nature of the photograph.

Interestingly, the invention of photography coincided with a time in history when the merit of the industrial age was discussed.[4] A vital result of this debate was the rapidly shared trust in the machine. Unlike its visual predecessors, the photograph was a product of a mechanical unmediated process; hence it was recognised as an objective trusted outcome of light dictating what the camera writes. The fact that the photographer was regarded not as an artist, but instead as an operator of an autonomous mechanical apparatus significantly amplified the singular perception of the photograph as a truthful copy of reality.

Among those who extensively reflected on the nature of the photograph in their writings and discussed its inherent claim for believability was French philosopher Roland Barthes. In his book 'Camera Lucida', Barthes notes the uniqueness of the photographic referent (that thing which the image as a sign refers to). He stresses how this referent is necessarily real in photography and with certainty had been placed at a specific moment before the lens.[5] The photograph cannot come to existence without the real presence of what is photographed, and this is exactly what separates it from other systems of representation. He argues that its truthfulness is not a result of exactitude, but of an inseparability from reality.[6] Even a blurred and unclear photograph is still a proof of the presence of whatever is perceived within its frame. Therefore, due to this property, the photograph is placed on the pedestal of an indisputable witness; an unbiased record of real events, and thus the camera becomes the ultimate instrument of persuasion.[7]

A painting drawn during the renaissance period with precision, skill, and minute care for realism can only inform its viewer of a multitude of specific details. The same exact scene portrayed in a photograph is not merely informative, but it is more importantly evidential. The photograph is able to convince us of the truthfulness of what we see, while omitting any doubt of misrepresentation: for it depicts a witnessed reality. It is even able to convince us of a specific way of reading it, one that has been decided upon even before the photographer releases the shutter. In order to understand how the reading of a photograph can be directed, one has to first recognise that a photograph "caries, or is, a message".[8] Similar to any other message, it is emitted from a source, transmitted in a channel, and then delivered to a specific audience.[9] American photographer and theorist Allan Sekula writes that the act of taking a photograph is in itself a result of an intention to communicate a message.[10] This photographic message, he adds, appears to not require any former knowledge for its deciphering; as if the photograph speaks a universal language. Sekula refuses this notion arguing that if the photograph can serve specific tasks –which is the case–, then its reading is not necessarily universally shared.[11] For a photograph is never isolated, and is always embedded in a concrete context, the understanding of which is needed to unpack its photographic meaning. Accordingly, the photographic message is inherently an argument formulated within a photographic discourse. This view refines our understanding of the photograph as a cultural historical artefact, one that not only requires former knowledge for its readability[12] but more importantly one that can communicate intentional arguments.

It is not necessary, however, to deny the inherent connection between the photographic referent and reality in order to admit that the photograph is also a result of an intention and that it operates to convey a goal and fulfil a task. Barthes describes this paradox by defining the photograph as an entanglement of two co-existing messages; "the one without a code (the photographic analogue) and the other with a code (the 'art', or the treatment, or 'the writing', or the rhetoric, of the photograph)".[13] In that sense, the photographic message is of a dual nature. The first pushes forward the photograph's claim of being an objective record, while the second pulls at the same time in the opposite direction towards the recognition of the photograph as a creative form of expression.

Many photographers have attempted to suppress the second inherent message in their photographs, in a form of a rebellion against what is called 'a photographic style'. An indirectly proportional relationship seems to emerge between a photographer's subjective style and the consideration of their photographs as objective documents. Yet, no matter how much neutrality a photographer seeks, the photograph remains an intentional utterance of a message. Moreover, the camera itself cannot repress the palette of choices it offers its operator as an apparatus of visual representation. There is al-ways a selection process; what to include in the frame and what to point away from. There is a choice of equipment; between lenses of varying perspectives, and between cameras with unique ways of operation. There are pictorial choices, such as: the usage of depth of field, long exposure, the angle of vision and light direction. There is the possibility of manipulations whether in a darkroom or with computer software, to name a few: changing exposure, increasing decreasing contrast, adjusting composition, and re-touching. These are some of the numerous inevitable choices affecting how reality is rendered through the lens of a

camera[14] and how it is later received by its viewer.

Back in the 19th century, the viewer was rather naïve to the existence of a large set of variables embedded within the process of creating a faithful representation of reality.[15] It was without a doubt difficult to perceive what may be intentionally distorted in a truthful, mechanical, unmediated photograph. Even though there is in the modern digital era a larger shared awareness of the inherent subjectivity and intentionality of the photographic message, the photograph still manages to push forward a seemingly-undisputed truth claim. Van Aarle's project is in itself a proof that this remains a relevant issue in the 21st century.

In the written statement accompanying his project[16], Van Aarle positions his series as a response to the spread of photographic billboards projecting in abundance what he calls a 'commercial light' in public space. He writes that the projected photo-graphic messages appear believable to the extent that reality itself does not seem as truthful in comparison. Our mental image of how the visible world looks is thus no longer associated with our actual perception of the world, rather with the way the world has been photographically portrayed and beamed directly down towards us. The amplified power of persuasion which these projected photographs uniquely exhibit is not the result of merely their photographic truth claim. The billboard as a channel of communication assumes authority over the public space: the high placement of screens is directed to address the large masses and enforces the subtle act of looking upwards from a lower position to receive information. The authority which the billboard claims is automatically transferred to the photographic message it contains. The unique premise of this channel of communication to disseminate in an imposing manner a likewise authoritative content is highly attractive for specifically invested advertisement and propaganda messages. Their singular task of persuasion is thus achieved by the employment of a truthful malleable photograph emitted through a uniquely dominant and authoritative projection channel. Looking at Van Aarle's series, our gaze is directly drawn towards the billboards emitting light in the midst of darkness. We are struck however with their emptiness, and even though we see no information, our gaze keeps being pulled back towards their imposing dominant light. What then, do we actually see?

Barthes contemplates in his writings whether we can speak of a photograph without referring to the photographed.[17] On the other hand, Sekula questions whether the photo-graph is a message or whether it contains a message.[18] A suggestion can thus be deduced from both reflections: there is an invisible aspect hidden behind what is visible in the photograph. For the photograph always appears as the photographed, and it can only be perceived as its message. However, it hides its nature as a medium, one which we are not able to separate from the visible content continuously being pointed at. Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan unpacks the complexity of an invisible medium by dis-cussing the example of electric light.[19] He argues how light usually escapes our attention unless it spells out a message –such as a brand name–, and only then are we able to perceive it however as being one with its own content. This is exactly how the photo-graphic medium camouflages as its photographic message, and the billboard light as its beamed photographic content.

What Van Aarle is doing in his series, is lifting the curtain on the medium: he is allowing us to see beyond the billboard's invasive photographic message. By absorbing all the light emitted, the saturated content within these empowered messages vanishes, revealing the vulnerable medium beyond. The silence sensed in Van Aarle's nocturnal scenes thus stems in fact from the inability of the medium to appear as the message. The projected photograph is no longer perceived in terms of its content, and the billboard light is no longer seen as the photograph it projects. Only when we see the empty light, are we able to finally perceive the hidden medium which is usually veiled behind an objective mechanical authoritative photographic message.

1 BREESE, 1992, IV
2 BREESE, 1992, 1
3 TALBOT, 2010, 1
4 BREESE, 1992, 1
5 BARTHES, 2000, 67
6 BARTHES, 2000, 80
7 COLLINS, 1985, 1
8 SEKULA, 1974
9 BARTHES, 1961, 15
10 SEKULA, 1974
11 SEKULA, 1974
12 BARTHES, 1964, 46
13 BARTHES, 1961, 19
14 COLLINS, 1985, 9
15 COLLINS, 1985, 9-10
16 VAN AARLE. < HTTP://WWW.BASTIAANVANAARLE.BE/#15> ACCESSED 14 MARCH 2018.
17 BARTHES, 2000, 7
18 SEKULA, 1974
19 MCLUHAN, 1964, 2

A temporal paradox in Gabrielle de Kroon's photo series Father

Benjamin Schoonenberg

How do you document something that has happened before you were born? This question, I would like to argue, is of vital importance for understanding Gabrielle de Kroon's photo series *Father*. To start answering this question, I will reflect on the inherently temporal nature of photography by reading the series in light of the concepts of trauma and postmemory.

Father consists of three pictures, hung on the wall, and a glass vitrine. Whereas the pictures on the wall depict, in a highly stylized and aestheticized manner, three different objects (German leather boots, an old typewriter and a prison guard's club) the pictures in the vitrine show, for example, an archival picture of De Kroon's grandfather in a German concentration camp and a portrait of her own son. Temporally, the series presents multiple different times next to each other and brings them into dialogue, suggesting they have a meaningful relation to each other. To be more specific, the pictures – through their apparent and initial hermeticism – present a formation of memory that is heavily characterized by some sort of displacement. As Marianne Hirsch puts it in her introduction to *Family Frames:*

(…) in lives shaped by exile, emigration and relocation (…) where relatives are dispersed and relationships shattered, photographs provide perhaps even more than usual some illusion of continuity over time and space. (xi)

Precisely because the family history presented in *Father* is troubled, because at the core of this history there is a trauma – a wound that defies any (textual) definition[1] – the indexical nature of the photograph is of vital importance. The archival photos are the foundation on which a somewhat firm and narrative account of the family history can be buil-

However, this can only be done retrospectively; by a later generation. Marianne Hirsch, in the first chapter of *Family Frames*, proposes the term 'postmemory' to describe this transgenerational dynamic. According to Hirsch postmemory is 'a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation' (22) The kind of memory that Hirsch describes with the term postmemory, is thus a memory that is closely linked to the idea of transgenerational transmission of trauma; or rather, secondary and

tertiary traumatization. She states:
Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (22)
This reference to transgenerational transmission of trauma, can be traced back to Freud's conception of the trauma. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* – one of Freud's key text on trauma, or repetition neurosis – Freud describes how trauma is bound to return in as unmediated and thus literal manner, if it is not worked trough. In all of the many examples Freud proceeds to give in his essay, ranging from a train accident to a fictional account of a killing, this becomes evident: in the former the victim relives the accident continuously through his dreams, in the latter the traumatized enacts his trauma in a literal manner for a second time. In other words: when trauma is not worked through, when it is not made accessible through language, it is bound to resurface, through action. And through this action, later generations become affected as well: it would perhaps not be too much to state that in these cases, the trauma that lies in history *remains*.
However, if we have established that trauma can be transmitted across generations, a second question arises: how can this be translated into pictures? The same manner in which a trauma in history can remain, the photograph is able to present a similar temporal paradox. For Roland Barthes, in his famous reflections on photography in Camera Lucida, an essential characteristic of the photographic image 'there and thenness'[2] of the photograph. In the introduction to *Family Frames*, Hirsch is in a dialog with Barthes when she writes: 'The referent is both present (implied in the photograph) and absent (it has been there but is not here now). The referent haunts the picture like a ghost: it is a revenant, a return of the lost and dead other.' (5) To paraphrase both Barthes[3] and Hirsch: what is depicted in the image, is both no longer there, already in history, and at the same time it is presented, made actual.
This way of looking at the photograph, to say that a photograph presents and refers, implies a conception of the photograph as indexical. As for example Thierry de Duve has argued in 'Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox' a photograph is an index – in Charles Pierce's terms – because it has a causal relation to its object. De Duve writes: 'in case of photography, the direct causal link between reality and the image is light and its proportionate physical action upon silver bromide.' (114) In the same manner in which a footprint in the sand would present an indexical relation to a specific moment in time (that is, the moment someone has been there), the photograph is both continuous and contiguous to the moment it captures. The there and thenness of the photograph, thus, is what makes the photograph into a document[4] of reality, a reality that is always already in the past.
This conception of the photographic medium and of indexicality, I would like to argue, is also very much present in *Father*. Indexicality is implied in two different ways. Firstly, a factual indexical relationship is presented through the use of the archival photograph. On one picture in the vitrine, a man – De Kroon's grandfather – is seen on his back, walking towards a gate in what looks to be a German concentration camp during the Second World War. By exhibiting an archival and family photograph, *Father* shows a relic of a time gone by, giving weight to the entire series because of the implied history within the photograph. Secondly, *Father* presents three different objects, clearly stemming from the same time as the archival photo: a typewriter, a pair of boots and a prison guard's club. In this case however, it is not so much the photograph that has an indexical relation to the temporality of the depicted object: rather it is the object that presents a continuous and contiguous relation to the time that is evoked in the other, archival, pictures. In De Kroon's portrayal of these objects – evenly lit and placed on a black background – it is not the indexicality of the photograph that is of concern. What is, however, is the (imagined[5]) historical, and thus indexical, status of the object itself. And it is this status that is established through the use of the indexical nature of the photograph.
The same can be argued for another picture in the series: the portrait of a young boy; De Kroon's son. This photo, not having an indexical relation in the same way as the archival picture has, works in the same manner as the photos of the objects: the boy himself has an indexical relationship with the history that is depicted in the other picture, a relationship that is there through descent. Just like with the other pictures, this relation of the boy to history is recognizable only through the use of the photographic medium
However, to only look at the indexicality of the picture or of what is depicted in the pictures would in this case not suffice: rather, the function of the photograph within the broader series, is to present something. Because what is presented, I would like to argue, is what Hirsch calls 'the perpetual present' (9) within the photographic medium. It is this paradoxical nature of the photograph that De Duve titles the difference between looking at the photograph as an 'event' (freezing life that goes on outside of the picture) or as a 'picture' (protracting life onstage that has already stopped offstage). (113) Rather than choosing between the two options *Father* shows how the there and thenness of the photograph is made present – in the same way that trauma can remain, can be inherited, throughout multiple generations. What is at stake in *Father* is very close to what Hirsch describes as the role of photographs in the comic book *Maus:*
These photographs connect (…) the past and the present, the story of the father and the story of the son, because these family photographs are documents both of memory (the survivor's) and of "post-memory" (that of the child of the survivor). (21/22)
The photographs, through both content and form, show how the past and present are intertwined, how history can be made present, and how the present depicted in the photograph is always already part of history. In particular, I have tried to show – by reading *Father* in connection to postmemory – that the temporality of trauma and the temporality of photographic indexicality are similarly paradoxical in nature. Where a trauma can remain for generations when not worked through, in a similar manner a photograph makes something that lies in the past perpetually present.
However, and this is a question that remains: what does it actually mean to stage a trauma, and who's responsibility is it to do so? The trauma that is central to *Father* 'belongs' not only to one generation, but has remained active for multiple generations thereafter. However, does this legitimize one to exhibit it, to present it to an audience? Perhaps then, and this is what *Father* does successfully, the trauma itself can and should only be exhibited precisely by *not* making the traumatic event itself present. Nonetheless – without arguing in favor or against any of the possible answers – the question remains: why present something that is in essence unrepresentable?

1 LITERARY SCHOLAR ERNST VAN ALPHEN, IN 'SYMPTOMS OF DISCURSIVITY' MAKES THE CASE THAT TRAUMA IS A 'NON-EXPERIENCE', ARGUING THAT EXPERIENCE COMES INTO BEING ONLY THROUGH LANGUAGE OR THROUGH DISCOURSE. IN CASE OF TRAUMA THEN, IT IS PRECISELY A LACK OF LINGUISTIC AND DISCURSIVE FRAMEWORK THAT CONSTITUTES THE TRAUMA. IN LINE WITH THIS DEFINITION OF TRAUMA, THIERRY DE DUVE WRITES ABOUT HOW PICTURES THEMSELVES CAN BE TRAUMATIC: 'SUCH A SHOCK, SUCH A BREAKDOWN IN THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTION, SUCH A FAILURE OF ANY SECONDARY PROCESS – AS FREUD PUTS IT – BEARS A NAME. IT IS TRAUMA.' (119)
2 I BORROW THIS WAY OF PARAPHRASING BARTHES FROM LAURA MULVEY'S BOOK 'DEATH 24 TIMES A SECOND', WHERE SHE PROPOSES A WAY TO FIND BARTHES' 'PUNCTUM' IN FILM AS WELL.
3 IN CAMERA LUCIDA, BARTHES WRITES THE FOLLOWING ON THIS TEMPORAL PARADOX, EMPHASIZING HOW THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE FORMS A RECORDING OF ABSENCE AND PRESENCE SIMULTANEOUSLY: 'WHAT I SEE HAS BEEN HERE, IN THIS PLACE WHICH EXTENDS BETWEEN INFINITY AND THE SUBJECT (OPERATOR AND SPECTATOR); IT HAS BEEN HERE AND IMMEDIATELY SEPARATED; IT HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY IRREFUTABLY PRESENT, AND YET ALREADY DEFERRED' (77)
4 JOEL SNYDER, IN 'DOCUMENTARY WITHOUT ONTOLOGY' ARGUES THAT THIS IS THE BASIS FOR ONE OF TWO CENTRAL WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING THE DOCUMENTARY NATURE OF PHOTOGRAPHY: TO SEE THE PHOTOGRAPH AS A DOCUMENT THROUGH ITS INDEXICAL NATURE.
5 WHETHER THE OBJECTS HAVE AN ACTUAL HISTORICAL AND INDEXICAL CONNECTION TO DE KROON'S GRANDFATHER REMAINS UNKNOWN FOR THE SPECTATOR; HOWEVER, THROUGH THE WAY FATHER IS STAGED - HAVING A HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE BY PLACING SOME PICTURES IN A VITRINE AND OTHERS ON THE WALL - THIS CONNECTION IS IMPLIED. THIS COULD BE INTERPRETED IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS. ONE COULD EITHER ARGUE THAT IT DOES NOT REALLY MATTER WHETHER THE OBJECTS HAVE BEEN IN POSSESSION OF DE KROON'S GRANDFATHER BECAUSE WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE SERIES IS RATHER THE (IMAGINED) PERCEPTION OF THE FAMILY HISTORY WITHIN THE PRESENT. OR ONE COULD ARGUE THAT THE SERIES USES THESE OBJECTS TO SIMULTANEOUSLY AESTHETICIZE AND HIDE A HISTORY THAT IS AND CANNOT BE FULLY KNOWN.

Silver Sounds: Time, Music, and Nostalgia - Roozbeh Seyedi

Looking at Matthijs Uivel's *Silver Sounds* is a stimulating experience. His images, produced through the elaborate collodion process, intrigues the viewer and makes him cast doubt on the fact that he is looking at a contemporary series. The experience becomes more interesting as one realizes that these are images of contemporary musicians, mostly alternative rock and jazz bands, music genres which flourished long after the collodion process was replaced by much more accessible techniques. This series thus draws the viewer in by invoking questions of time, memory and nostalgia. In the following pages I will elaborate on the ways which *Silver Sounds* configures time, restores the past and evokes a feeling of nostalgia.

Silver Sounds consists of images of Uivel's favorite musicians and bands, which are taken during their performances at music festivals and venues. Uivel takes the pictures with a large-format plate camera and prints them in a mobile darkroom. The result is not snapshots of the performances but rather individual and group portraits of the artists with a shallow depth of field which fixes the viewer's gaze on their faces. While Matthijs Uivel's *Silver Sounds* belongs to the larger genre of music performance photography, it departs from the traditional and its canonical photographers, such as Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander and Annie Leibovitz, in a significant way. While his images were produced during the music festivals there is no trace of performance in them. Photographing musical performances is dominated by a practice in which 'the decisive moment' is its imperative. Coined by Henry Cartier-Bresson in an article with the same title, 'the decisive moment' puts the immediacy of the moment at the center of attention and puts emphasis on "simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression".[1] 'The decisive moment' codified the practice of photojournalism on the ceaseless attempts to capture the most representative moment of the event in the most meaningful way.

This practice produces a form of images which we tend to read as "event-like" as opposed to "picture-like". This difference in approach arose from what Thierry de Duve, critic and theorist of art, called the inherent paradox of photography. He formulates the two opposite perceptions of time which are best exemplified in two genres of photography, time exposure and snapshot. As he elaborates, "[s]napshot refers to the fluency of time without conveying it, [while] the time exposure petrifies the time of the referent and denotes it as departed".[2] With the 'snapshot' we encounter a paradox; the picture represents a frozen posture, an act that has not yet occurred, whereas in reality the movement has indeed been performed. In a photo-portrait, as a concrete form of time exposure however, the paradox is reversed. In contrast to freezing the superficial time of the image, a photo-portrait "liberates an autonomous and recurrent temporality, which is the time of remembrance"[3] The snapshot of a musical performance steals the life from it: it is too early to see the event happening on the surface of the image and it is also too late to see it in reality as it has already ended. A snapshot then, presents the live event as death and appears artificial no matter how accurate it is in terms of realistic conventions. On the other hand, while the Uivel portraits as time exposures solidify time and isolate their reference, they also make it possible for the viewer to imagine the live event as a memory.

In this way, Uivel's project might liberate photography from being what Roland Barthes called a 'counter-memory'. For Barthes, who celebrated Marcel Proust's notion of involuntary memory as a sort of intuition or emotional response stirred by feelings, "a Photograph does not call up the past", there is nothing Proustian in it. The effect of photography for Barthes is not *restoration* of what has been abolished (by time or by distance) but an *arrest* of what indeed existed.[4] If photography wants to find the power to stimulate involuntary memory, photography historian Geoffrey Batchen argues that it needs to become "the visual equivalent of smell and taste, something you can feel as well see".[5] The collodion technique and large-format plate camera photography require more involvement in the chemical process of development and less in the technical process of taking pictures. Thus, in the tactile experience of developing the plate, the photographer would have a positive glass plate in her hands, a solid remnant of a passed event which may evoke the involuntary memory. For the viewer however, the relief-like sense of the portraits, their appearance as solid though indefinable entities, could make the images work as restorations of memories rather than arrested moments of time.

Uivel's portraits open a space of remembrance which corresponds well to his subject matter (his favorite bands) as well as the choice of medium. De Duve complicates the space-time category which Roland Barthes once suggested for understanding the configuration of time in photographs. In De Duve's model, the space-time of the time-exposure is best described as a conjunction of *now* and *there* rather than *here* and *formerly*. The temporality which is activated by the time exposure is described by the word now, not as a reference to the actual time but indicating a pause in time, a potential actualization, a space in which we fill our memories of the event, by imagining, remembering and reconstructing the event. To provide this space, Uivel's images follow the aesthetic ideal of time exposure, namely, being slightly blurry or out of focus.

This aesthetic is product of the distribution of preciseness and impreciseness in the photograph. As cultural historian Mirjam Brusius argues, the aesthetic of impreciseness, "the quality of inexact, ambiguous, nebulous [and] even out-of-focus" dates back to Julia Margaret Cameron's practice of photography in which a combination of error and deliberate impreciseness empowered her images by allowing space for imagination.[6] By using the same technique and by drawing upon the same aesthetic means, Uivel's portraits attain an autonomy in which the character of his subject could be imagined in various ways. In *Tame Impala (Kevin)* for instance, our gaze moves between the focused and unfocused areas of the photograph, in which Kevin's figure emerges in relief. We follow the sharpest parts of the picture, Kevin's face and left hand as they dissolve in the soft grays of background until the marks in the margin of the image bring us back to the center. The graphic potentials of the image enable us to travel through it, "choosing to stop here and there and in so doing, to amplify the monumentality of a detail, or to part from it".[7] In contrast to an image which depicts every detail and limits the possibility of imagination, Uivel's photographs present a "surface temporality" corresponding to flow of memory which does not limit their reference to the specific time when the photographs are taken but allows the viewer to reconstruct any moment of the subjects' life. The photographs are taken in different places and at different times but the homogenizing aesthetics of the collodion process grants them the same monumental value and makes them references to the *totality* of life of the portrayed persons.

Consequently, this makes the photo-portrait a consoling object. The two ways in which we perceive photographs, "event-like" and "picture-like"' respectively are linked to two psychological effects, namely "trauma effect and mourning process".[8] The traumatic effect of photographs comes from the paradoxical conjunction of the *here* and the *formerly*. This is best exemplified in snapshots in which it is always too

late to witness the real event while it is too early to witness it on the surface of the image. The mourning process on the other hand derives from the act of turning our affection from a lost beloved person to a substitutive object. Portrait photography, when it has the aesthetic ideal of being slightly out-of-focus, enables us to travel through the image, to animate a memory of a person, to summon and dismiss her/him again and again.[9] Uivel's portraits provides us with such an opportunity while adding another layer, since the effect of the collodion process conveys an impression of nostalgia though a confused and displaced one.

For Svetlana Boym, Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature, "nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy".[10] As Boym suggest in this formulation, nostalgia is more than "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed", it is an act of tying one to one's own fantasy to prevent the fragmentation, a "defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals".[11] In this vein, in Uivel's images, one can read a nostalgic desire to preserve a moment in music, as bands ceaselessly struggle to stay in favor in an ever-changing, contemporary music industry. By employing an 'outdated' technique, Uivel throws his subjects back in time and makes them the primordial inhabitants of his music world. As Boym notes, rather than being a yearning for another place, nostalgia is a yearning for another time, or more precisely, another sense of time. In reaction to the modern conception of time as being linear and progressive, nostalgia is the longing for contingency and the slow pace of dreams and childhood. While the technical impreciseness of Uivel's images makes them a site for the free flow of memory, they also resist the linear narratives of music history through the anachronistic imposition of medium.

In the end we might wonder whether this nostalgia is more critical or repressive, or in Boym's terms, reflective or restorative? For Boym, restorative nostalgia "dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity" while reflective nostalgia "thrives in algia, the longing itself and delays the homecoming wistfully, ironically, desperately" and while "restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, […] reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt".[12] From this view Uivel's images fit better into the category of reflective nostalgia since they not only express explicitly their nostalgic desire but also they also deny the universal truth-based claims of restorative nostalgia by translating the photographer's music taste into a visual history.

1 CARTIER-BRESSON, 1999, 42
2 DUVE, 1978, 116
3 IBID, 116
4 BARTHES, 1980, 82
5 BATCHEN, 2004, 15
6 BRUSIUS, 2010, 342 & 354
7 DE DUVE, 1978, 123
8 IBID, 124
9 IBID, 119-123
10 BOYM, 2001, XIII
11 IBID, XIV
12 IBID, XV

Analysis: From Fantasy to Reality

Lauren Spencer

The photo series *From Fantasy to Reality* by Ko Hage portrays the Dutch city of Almere. Hage in his artist statement explains that although the city is almost one of the largest in the Netherlands, for him and many others the city is seen as terra incognita. Also one of the largest artificial cities in the world, and made from scratch Almere as Hage states could be built as a Utopia or ideal city. After 40 years Hage explores the city to capture things that 'surprise' or amaze him' such as the street names; 'Fantasy', 'Reality', and 'Simplicity'. Hage describes his expedition as travelling through a time machine as the architectural style in each neighborhood resonates different decades. He concludes his expedition by stating that Almere is not the city that he expected but in all ways surprising, and describes Almere as an open air museum of the illusion of feasibility.[1] By analyzing a selected photograph of the series and the series in its entirety, I intend to demonstrate how photographic concepts of place, space, and time are applied in a meaningful way by the photographer, both in this photograph and as a part of this series.

When analyzing the selected photograph, we can see a brick house with a grass lawn in front of it, together with a few objects such as garden gnomes and trash disposals. The house is surrounded by a fence and in the background other buildings can be seen as well. Without Hage's artist statement or having visited or seen the place depicted on the photograph before, it is not easily identifiable for the viewer as Almere. The selected photograph also does not provide any indication of Almere through the title, as there is no title at all.

Hage's photograph calls forth Ian Walker's explanation in his essay "Deja vu: the rephotographic survey project" which explains how we feel as if we know places, but when seeing the places in actual life they can become almost "hallucinatory". He describes this experience as "standing there, one is aware of how much the experience of a place the photograph leaves out".[2] In the selected photograph and series this is quite apparent as Hage in his artist statement describes Almere as a place that people know, but have never visited. With or without having read the description the viewer will always have a certain expectation of a space or place. Yet, we must understand that Hage's experience of seeing Almere is very different from the experience that the viewer gains from the selected photograph that is merely a frame of a place in the city. For instance, the selected photograph does not show the people inhabiting the house who bring different meaning to the space. Hage's idea of Almere being a terra incognita also brings up the notion of imaginary geographies as proposed by geographers Joan M.Schwartz and James R.Ryan in Picturing Place. Schwartz and Ryan argue that photographic images have been an important way to engage with the physical and human world, and aside from its many functions such as showing places, spaces, and landscapes they also create "imaginative geographies" or perceptions of place. "A powerful means of picturing 'place', both literally and figuratively, they have participated actively in the making and dissemination of geographical knowledge".[3] It is only from Hage's description that the viewer can

actually feel as if they can understand or know the place, or in other words the description brings the viewer under the impression that they are invited into a somewhat truthful representation of a space. Yet, without actually being in Almere the viewer will never completely experience the place. Not only is the notion of imaginary geographies present within the position of the viewer, but also for Hage who's expectations of the place Almere where not exactly met.

According to Tim Cresswell's *In Place out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*, in human geography we are constantly occupied with boundary making, which opens up to transgressions. Cresswell explains this further by saying that places are "fundamental creators of indifference". The outsider needs the inside (and vice versa) to exist in the first place. Meaning, that you are always either an insider or outsider transgressing through these spaces. Cresswell quotes, "An outsider is not just someone literally from another location but someone who is existentially removed from the milieu of our "place"..."[4]

What is striking about the selected photograph and several others in the series is that Hage has chosen to present the outside of buildings, placing the viewer outside of a space. The place that we see on the selected photograph is what we can assume to be a home, thus a place that people live in. In the selected photograph a border is then created through the walls of the house, which therefore also removes the viewer from a milieu of our "place" in this case our "place" meaning those who inhabit the home. At the same time, the viewer is an insider in a less literal sense as the selected photograph attempts to invite the viewer into what Hage calls terra incognita. In general, photography itself occupies the maker with a form of boundary making as it limits us to work within a frame. With photography we then create a boundary of what we choose to capture within the frame/photograph, and what we leave out. Within the frame of the selected photograph the viewer is only able to see a small part of one space within the entire place Almere, as said before making it quite unidentifiable for the viewer. The series in a way is needed in its entirety to present Almere, but also to show the difference in architectural styles of the buildings. However, the photographs when shown on their own can project the idea of terra incognita as the viewer is not able to identify the place as Almere without prior-knowledge.

In his essay *The Photographic Message* French theorist Roland Barthes explored temporality in photography and explained that time is the most impressive aspect of photography by stating "The name of Photography's noeme [essence] will therefore be: 'that-has-been'".[5] Or in other words, photography cuts out a particular moment from its before and after. We can relate Barthes concept of time to the selected photograph as it only shows one moment in time within a series of photographs that is very much about different moments in time, or as described by Hage the experience of walking through a time-machine. However, it is interesting to see that although the photographs do not show the before and after moment, together as a series they present different moments in the form of the different decades that come forth in the different building styles. Hage's series is not necessarily made up of photographs with decisive moments, but is much more serial documentation showing different moments in time in both the sense that the photographs were taken at different times, but also as the buildings show different moments in time through their architecture. As Authors Hilde van Gelder and Helen Westgeest explain in their book *Photography Theory In Historical Perspective,* it is possible to experience a multiplicity of time in both a single photograph and as a result of a series.[6] When relating the photographic concepts of place, space, and time to the selected photograph by Hage and the contents of the series it can be concluded that the series as a whole inviting the viewer into the terra incognita of Almere and shows the city through different times, but simultaneously also leaves the viewer in an unknown territory or possibly even in the position of an outsider.

1 STATEMENT BY THE ARTIST ADDED TO THE PHOTO SERIES

2 WALKER, I. (1991 [1986]) DÉJÀ VU: THE REPHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY PROJECT. IN: BRITTAIN, D. (ED.) CREATIVE CAMERA. 30 YEARS OF WRITING. MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS, MANCHESTER, PP. 127-144

3 SCHWARTZ, J.M. AND RYAN, J.R. (EDS) (2003) PICTURING PLACE. PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION. I.B. TAURUS, LONDON.

4 CRESSWELL, T. (2004) PLACE: A SHORT INTRODUCTION. BLACKWELL, MALDEN, MA.

5 BARTHES, R. (1981 [1980]) CAMERA LUCIDA. REFLECTIONS ON PHOTOGRAPHY. TRANS. R. HOWARD. HILL AND WANG, NEW YORK, NY. FIRST PUBLISHED AS LA CHAMBRE CLAIRE.

6 VAN GELDER, HILDE AND HELEN WESTGEEST, (EDS) (2011). PHOTOGRAPHY THEORY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. CHICHESTER: WILEY-BLACKWELL.

Unveiling an otherwise veiled reality. Saskia Aukema's photographic series **Veiled** - Daniela Matute Vargas

"I want to be the one who decides how much of me people can see"[1] explains one niqab woman to Dutch photographer Saskia Aukema. Created in the year 2016, the photographic series *Veiled* took Saskia a period of two years and a half to complete. Throughout these years, the artist photographed women living in The Netherlands and Great Britain who were willing to wear a niqab; a piece of clothing in Western Europe that is currently giving rise to public debate.[2] The effects of her photography have a profound impact on how the niqab is understood in the life of a woman by exposing a unique and often overlooked perspective.

As the artist explains, all her portrayed subjects are women who are not forced in any way to wear this type of fabric that completely veils the face and leaves the eyes as the only visible part of their body. All the women pictured by the lens of the artist have the choice to voluntarily wear a niqab. Here, freedom of choice is a fundamental factor that allows us to begin understanding these women.

In the Western world, niqabis might be the subject of judgmental gazes by people who interpret this controversial piece of fabric as a defiance of women's right. In fact, the artist quotes in the series' catalogue, one of her niqab subjects who describes the following anecdote: "Recently, a lady got angry with me. She said I was making a mockery of the women's rights her ancestors had fought so hard for. I tried to explain that this is also an expression of freedom."[3] This is an example of how this simple garment of clothing holds varying levels of meaning depending on the perspective from which it is being judged–or misjudged.

As a result of this issue, several countries have created laws that currently prohibit this garment. The Netherlands, in fact, "is currently devising a law that will ban the niqab in certain sections of the Dutch society."[4] Taking into account the former information, Western societies are defending freedom by attempting to limit the freedom of a portion of people with beliefs, cultural, and religious practices different from the ones practiced in the Western World. In essence, these type of laws are defending freedom by limiting it, making these laws a clear contradiction with what they are trying to accomplish. While these laws stem from a predominantly Western idea, they are present elsewhere, outside of Western societies.

In the case of Muslims countries like Indonesia, niqab wearers are also subject to abuse and discrimination. One woman of the Niqab Squad explains that "Passers-by have reacted by shouting nasty names at her, calling her a ninja, terrorist, thief or ghost."[5] Faced with this abuse, one

would ask why a woman would willingly wear a piece of fabric that is capable of raising so much controversy and negative critique. This is one of the many questions that the artist tries to answer in this project. Saskia's photographs capture a perspective different from "the `black boxes´ many people see them as."[6] Today, it is not difficult to find images of *veiled* woman portrayed as these black boxes, in a process that entices the public to view the niqab negatively. In this regard, it is common to encounter a myriad of images that portray these women as human beings almost as if they were trapped beneath their niqabs. They convey a message as if niqabs were always a representation of imposition and captivity, leaving no gap for the viewer to question more about the individuality of the women hidden beneath this garment. These portraits end up revealing solely the perspective of the photographer and thus a judgement of the photographed subject. Saskia's photographs, on the other hand, have the opposite effect.

Colorful and strangely composed, the artist's portraits are both ingenious and playful. Without taking away the seriousness and thoughtfulness that this controversial theme demands, the photographer manages to create images that are far from being labeled as frivol, and tendentious. Saskia's work digs deeper into the reality of niqabis. She asks questions like: "Who are the women who choose to wear something that generates so much discussion? What do they find important, beautiful, and funny?"[7]

The closeness that she manages to develop with her female subjects is sensed in each photograph. The portraits show the women "in their own homes wearing their niqab, holding their favorite dresses, shoes and pants."[8] The location of these pictures is fundamental as they take the viewer to the privacy of their homes; an otherwise unreachable space for us. This provides us a hint of the photographer's talent to produce an atmosphere of intimacy and openness and also demonstrates a silent but visible bond between the photographer and these veiled women. The result of these elements is translated into pictures that neither entice or fulfill the viewer's voyeuristic appetite.

Saskia is able to unveil a unique dimension of these veiled women's realities while still protecting and being cautious of their beliefs and privacy. The artist explains that at the beginning of her project she made a promise to the women she portrayed: "that they would be totally anonymous, and that they could withhold any pictures they didn't like of themselves. I couldn't photograph their faces because as niqab wearers they don't want their faces to be seen. I also promised not to reveal their identities or personal information."[9] In this sense, the viewer never sees a face. A glimpse of consideration and dignity is conveyed throughout the whole series of portraits.

Photographing these niqab wearers in the privacy of their homes while showing us their favorite outfits or the clothes they wear beneath the niqab exposes a more personalized human dimension of the niqabis in a respectful and cautious manner. The photographer successfully creates images with such strong visual power that they are capable of exposing very particular features of the women's personalities and individualities. By doing so, the photographs expose a far more encompassing persona than just a Muslim woman wearing a nigab. While a niqab typically associates a person with Islam, it is often overlooked that behind this piece of fabric lies a person and a woman who is much more than just a religion. This is exactly what Saskia reveals to us through her *Veiled* project.

The award-winning photographic series has been acclaimed for the artist's conscious approach and has been linked to the 'slow journalism' movement.[10] Amongst the characteristics that define this type of journalism are deep investigation, selectiveness and the presentation of untold stories,[11] all of which Saskia's work is deeply tied to. *Veiled* is not her first project dealing with Muslim women, previous to this she had already developed a series of work on the subject. This means that she had already spent more than three years working alongside Muslim women, attesting to her ability to mindfully approach her subjects while still reaching a level of intimacy with these women that otherwise would be unthinkable.

In the pictures, we see women wearing a pair of casual sneakers, and others showing us a fancy colorful dress or even athletic apparel. Their homes also give us ideas about the person living in it through objects like books, paintings, toys, or extravagant pieces of furniture, which appear in the shoot. Every element in the images is tied to a deeper meaning and demonstrates how beneath these niqab wearers lies a much more profound reality.

It can be argued that the layers of clothes that these women wear, symbolically represent the different layers that comprise the world of niqabis. These women represent far more than just "black boxes" in front of the artist's camera and become women that, like you and I, have their own hobbies, inclinations, complexities and eccentricities. They become women with particular individualities who play a variety of roles in life. Women who are mothers, wives, students, athletes, workers; women who prefer wearing sweaters and jeans and others who prefer fancier clothes.

It does not matter what these women choose to wear or where they live. What matters is the human behind these elements, which the photographer successfully narrates by eliminating the negative stereotype associated with the presence of the niqab. For a moment, the viewer ceases to see them as only Muslim niqab-wearing women and sees them as human beings with particular individualities. Saskia humanizes her niqab subjects by developing a visual language that is able to return individuality and humanity back to these veiled women.

The power of Saskia's images is both the result of her exceptional talent with composition, color and texture, and also a testament to her deep knowledge and experience with the theme she is exploring. This is why her images are consistent and powerful, playful but also respectful, and communicative but also nuanced in the message the artist wants to convey.

1 SASKIA AUKEMA OFFICIAL INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT. HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ZAZQUIA/ ACCESSED 19/03/2018

2 INTERNATIONAL PHOTO FESTIVAL LEIDEN WEBSITE. HTTPS://PHOTOFESTIVALLEIDEN.COM/2017/10/14/SASKIA-AUKEMA-WINS-4TH-EDITION-OF-INTERNATIONAL-PHOTO-FESTIVAL-LEIDEN/?LANG=EN ACCESSED 19/03/2018

3 HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ZAZQUIA/ ACCESSED 19/03/2018

4 HTTPS://PHOTOFESTIVALLEIDEN.COM/2017/10/14/SASKIA-AUKEMA-WINS-4TH-EDITION-OF-INTERNATIONAL-PHOTO-FESTIVAL-LEIDEN/?LANG=EN ACCESSED 19/03/2018

5 HTTP://WWW.SCMP.COM/LIFESTYLE/FASHION-LUXURY/ARTICLE/2133570/WHY-NIQAB-BEING-WORN-MORE-MUSLIM-WOMEN-INDONESIA-AND ACCESSED 20/03/2018

6 SASKIA AUKEMA OFFICIAL WEBSITE HTTP://WWW.ZAZQUIA.NL/ ACCESSED19/03/2018

7 HTTP://WWW.ZAZQUIA.NL/ ACCESSED 19/03/2018

8 HTTPS://PHOTOFESTIVALLEIDEN.COM/ ACCESSED 19/03/2018

9 HTTPS://WWW.BIRMINGHAMMAIL.CO.UK/ ACCESSED 20/03/2018

10 HTTPS://PHOTOFESTIVALLEIDEN.COM/2017/10/14/SASKIA-AUKEMA-WINS-4TH-EDITION-OF-INTERNATIONAL-PHOTO-FESTIVAL-LEIDEN/?LANG=EN ACCESSED 19/03/2018

11 HTTPS://WWW.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.ORG/PROJECTS/OUT-OF-EDEN-WALK/BLOGS/LAB-TALK/2017-02-WHAT-SLOW-JOURNALISM/ ACCESSED 19/03/2018

The towns that have been

Boudewijn van den Broek

In German photographer Jasper Walter Bastian's series of photographs *A Road Not Taken,* he has documented a border town situated on the border between Belarus and Lithuania. When both states were part of the Soviet Union, citizens of Lithuania and Belarus intermarried freely and people were free to cross the border to visit their friends and families. This changed when the outer European border was put

into place in 2004. Bastian's photographs show the Lithuanian side of one such town, and the world in which the townspeople now live. I will analyze the series and demonstrate how the concept of liminality is used to shape the perception of the viewer, and the way in which the photographs taken inside and outside contrast one another.

In 1990, Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union and became the Republic of Lithuania, becoming a part of the European Union in 2004. Belarus and Lithuania defined their border in 1995, but only when Lithuania joined the EU did they put up an actual fence and was travel restricted. The border was finished in 2007. Some of the towns were literally split down the middle by the border, making it impossible for friends and family members to visit each other because of the fences that were put up. Bastian writes of the towns that are now secluded and forgotten. The people we see in the pictures are those left behind on the Lithuanian side of the border. There are multiple photographs that include the fence, showing us that the towns have literally been split apart.

The people we see in the pictures are living in a type of liminal state. They belong to a world that no longer exist, and have not yet entered a new world. Bastian states they mostly try to live of the land, and that the industry has left the towns since the fall of the Soviet Union. The concept of liminality was introduced by folklorist Arnold van Gennep when speaking of rituals. It literally means "being-on-a-threshold".[1] One finds himself in a liminal space when one transitions from something into another, but have not crossed that second threshold yet. In rituals wherein boys become men, it is the duration of time when the boys have left their childhood behind, but have not yet finished the ritual and become men. Victor Turner greatly expanded upon the theory of liminality and the use of the term. Turner did not focus solely on rituals, but expanded the use of the term by applying it to other aspects of 'inbetweenness'. This included the liminal state of refugees, immigrants, and borders. Turner introduced the 'margin phase' or 'liminal period', wherein the status of the individual becomes ambiguous as the person "passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state"[2]

The townspeople portrayed are living in this liminal period, a place between two places. On the one hand we have the place that was, the town before the fence, but the town has not yet moved on to a next phase. They live in the memory of a unified town, but are now in a between-state, not able to move forward due to the border that was placed between them and their family members. The towns were literally split in two, and have not moved on to become something new. Bastian portrays this liminal state by juxtaposing photographs taken in the current day, the situation with the border, and old family photographs of the townspeople.

The series consists of thirty-two photographs. These can be broadly divided into three categories. There are photographs taken outside, inside, and there are pictures of old photographs belonging to the townspeople. The photographs taken outside focus on the empty landscape and the nature surrounding the towns. We see the townspeople working on the land or posing for the camera, and the decayed state of the houses in the town. The outside photographs can be seen as landscape photography, the inside photographs feature more portrait photography and focus on the townspeople. The photographs taken outside feature empty landscapes and broken down houses. The old photographs serve as a mise-en-abyme, a picture within a picture, within the work of Bastian. They show us another layer of representation, one that predates the representation seen in the photographs of Bastian himself.

The use of old photographs in the series captures the happiness and togetherness of the townspeople, but we see nothing of this in the photographs by Bastian himself. An old man sitting on a bed in a dark room, facing a window from which a single beam of light shines on his face shows us a man looking forward, but thinking backwards. Light seems to guide the viewer in the photographs that Bastian has taken inside. The photographs have more color than those taken outside, which are mostly desaturated and void of color. The outside shows us the outcome of the border and the present, and the inside shows us the past. In the pictures taken outside, the emptiness is overwhelming. Landscape shots depicting large empty fields or broken down houses show us the decay of the towns. Other photographs taken outside depict the fence, showing us how crudely the border was drawn through the villages. On one photograph we see a field enveloped by fog. Only the front half of the field is visible, as a wall of fog obscures the landscape beyond. This photograph is like a mirror to the photographs of the fence. The other side of what is in reality one area has been obscured and becomes ungraspable.

In another photograph taken inside, we see an old photograph lying on a table of two young men looking into the camera. Like other old photographs used in the series, this one shows the viewer how the townspeople used to live. We see two young men, friends or family members. The light that shines inside the room illuminates one of them, but the other one is left in shadow. This photograph perfectly illustrates that the townspeople have been torn apart. One half of the photograph is in the light, the other half in the shadow. The two men appear on the same photograph, as they once lived in the same town, but this image seems to tell us that now they live apart in different countries with a border between them which they cannot cross. This photograph uses light in order to discern between the present and the past. The man in the light might still be living on this side of the border, but the other man is unreachable.

Roland Barthes writes in his Camera Lucida, that the essence of photography is the "noeme 'That-has-been'".[3] This concept of a time that has passed is evident in the photographs taken inside by Bastian. In the photograph of the picture on the table this becomes even more apparent, as we are watching 'that which has been' within the situation now. In this case it links the past with the present within one photograph. The work of Bastian, by way of the subject, instills the viewer with a sense of exactly this feeling Barthes laments on in his work.

Thierry de Duve categorizes two types of photography. The snapshot is a picture of an event, and time-exposure focuses on a subject. He categorizes the photo-portrait as time-exposure. The photo is a funerary moment, whether we are looking at a living or dead person. "Acting as a reminder of times that have died away, it sets up landmarks of the past."[4] Barthes would agree with him, as he states that the photograph "says for certain what has been".[5] De Duve states that a portrait is linked to mourning. The portrait is an image frozen in time, and allows for longer viewing than a snapshot, in which we see an isolated image of an event, therefore never being able to truly witness it.[6] The portrait does not limit itself to one event, but "allows the imaginary reconstruction of any moment of any moment of the life of the portrayed person".[7] The portraits shown by Bastian allow the townspeople to remember their friends and family in this way, which De Duve states creates mourning. He states that this is an inherent aspect of portrait photography, and that the mourning process occurs within the semiotic structure of the photograph.[8] The mourning process is also always linked to melancholy and depression.[9]

In Bastian's work we see this in two ways, in the old photographs that are used in the series and in the portraits of the townspeople inside their homes. The old photos are a testament to what has been, and are also all portraits or group photos, suggesting unity and the community as a whole. The photo of the man sitting alone in his room evokes in this sense the same feeling of mourning and something that has past. Barthes writes that a photograph restores what has been abolished, and serves as a kind of resurrection of that moment.[10] Seeing as Bastian tells us the townsfolk are longing for the good old days, the use of old family portraits evoke exactly that sentiment.

The use of old photographs in Bastian's work create this feeling of mourning within the viewer. The double representation in the series show us the liminal state in which the townspeople are currently living. The landscape photography instills in the viewer a sense of emptiness, which is made even greater when juxtaposed with the portraits of the townspeople inside and the use of old photographs depicting the happier times that are now past. In this way, De Duve and Barthes ideas of mourning within photography and the concept of 'That-has-been' are amplified by the way Bastian chose to represent the situation in the town; in stark contrast to the past. We see that which has been, but we will never be able to go back there, just as the town will never be able to go back to the way it was before.

1 TURNER. 1979, 465.
2 TURNER. 1969, 94.
3 BARTHES. 1980, 77.
4 DE DUVE. 1978, 116.
5 BARTHES. 1980, 85.
6 DE DUVE. 1978, 114.
7 DE DUVE. 1978, 123.
8 DE DUVE. 1978, 123.
9 DE DUVE. 1978, 124.
10 BARTHES. 1980, 82.

Rituals and photography: the ritual of conserving rituals in the works of Sacha Goossens and Rineke Dijkstra

Andrew van der Ven

It is one of those remarkable Dutch traditions that everyone seems to have an opinion about: carnaval. This three-day event originated from a catholic tradition. It is celebrated mainly in the southern provinces of The Netherlands. The official start of carnaval is on November 11th at exactly 11:11. 7 weeks before Easter, the decorated floats drive across the streets of several villages and cities. Photographer Sacha Goossens, who lives in the southern Dutch town of 's-Hertogenbosch, followed a group of children for three days. The children are part of the so-called "Jeugdprinsengroep". This is a group of eleven-year-olds who need to learn all the traditions and customs of carnaval.

Through this group, the rules of carnival are transferred to the younger generations. This ensures that this age old event will stay alive for the future generations. Capturing traditions on photo is a quite common practice; photography is seen as a neutral way of documenting events. It's more objective than, for example, paintings where the images is being created through the eyes and vision of an artist. The fact that the development of a photograph is a purely mechanical process makes it a credible source.[1] The idea that a photograph has a certain notion of 'truth' incorporated in it, is an idea that was generally accepted in the early years of photography. The ideas of filmmaker John Grierson contributed to this idea. In an essay on the term "documentary", he states that documentary photographers must "photograph the living scene and the living story, which should not be staged but instead be scenes and stories that are taken from the raw".[2] But, a photographer can certainly alter the way a photo is being captured. So it is possible for a photographer to have some sort of influence on the objectivity of a photograph.[3] What about the work of Sacha Goossens: is her work a good example of a neutral registration of traditions? And how does her work relate to other photographers who are also trying to capture traditions?

Just like in the other works of Goossens, children play an important role in her photographs. In an interview, she explains: "I am fascinated by the spontaneity and open-mindedness of children. (...) Children have the ability to create their own world in which nothing is impossible. And I have that in common with children. I don't like patronizing and treat children equally. I absolutely do not like sweet-voiced images and unnecessary fancy dress parties."[4] Goossens is particularly interested in how these traditions are transferred to the kids. In her series we follow the children during their preparations for the carnaval parade. For example, we see them in a make-up room while they look at themselves in the mirror. Or, we see them sitting in the bus on their way to a one of the many festivities. As the days pass, the children get to learn more and more about traditions and customs. What is striking about the photo series is that the children do not care about the photographer; she is a fly-on-the-wall. Except for few minor occasions, the children do not look straight into the camera and they seem to ignore her. Goossens moreover had little opportunity to "stage" the photos; she simply didn't have the time to do so. Her photos where captured intuitively: "During those days I did not have time to think about my photos. Photographing was very intuitive, I had to be constantly ready."[5] This adds an element of spontaneity to het work: the events are recorded in exactly the way they occurred. Goossens, as a photographer, hardly interfered in the production process. This makes her photos neutral registrations of events. Photo theoretician Joel Snyder argued that the less interference there is from the photographer, the more the photo becomes a documentary. According to him, photos should be shot "the way things were".[6]

The work of Goossens is reminiscent of the work of another Dutch photographer from the south, Rineke Dijkstra. Dijkstra most noticeable work is the series "Strandportretten" (Beach Portraits). In this series she photographed (young) children on different beaches around the world. The children are always captured in the same fashion: in front of the camera, screen filling, with only a small strip of the beach and sea in the background. The photos are in a way very confrontational to look at for spectators. The feeling of insecurity is clearly visible in the face of the subjects. It places the viewer in the role of voyeur. Dijkstra wanted to explicitly expose the feeling of insecurity of these children. In the first photo she made for this series entitled "Hilton Head Island, S.C., USA, June 24, 1992", her eye fell on a girl in a group. In her own words, she looked very unhappy. This American beach was one for the elite: the frequent visitors represented a certain beauty ideal that was common in the media at the time. Visitors who did not meet this beauty ideal were ignored. In the case of the girl in the picture, it was even worse. She was publicly denounced "fat", while she desperately tries to hold her belly in.[7] For Dijkstra this was a reason to put the girl in the spotlight. She tries to get a grip on a very different kind of tradition; the tradition of shame.

A number of aspects are immediately noticeable when we compare these two series. A directly visible difference is the way the photos are made. Where Goosens chooses to be invisible for the subject during the activities, Dijkstra chooses to be clearly present. The children who are the subjects in her series must be aware of the fact that they are being photographed.[8] It contributes to the uncomfortable attitude of these children while they're standing there in the spotlight. The children also look straight into the lens of the camera. Their feeling of insecurity is not being concealed whatsoever. The subject's awareness of being photographed makes it quite hard to act in a natural fashion. It makes it harder to make a photo that is a truly objective representation of the situation, because the photographer's presence alters the situation.[9]

Another difference is that Goossens follows a whole event, from start to finish. She is present from the very first day, she goes on until late at night and her series ends on the last day. There is not one decisive moment that is being captured by her, we see several key moments. For example, a key moment could be when a boy becomes emotional when he stands on the balcony on the last day, or a key moment can be that when the children tap beer for the first time, or the moment they first take part in a carnival activity as "princes". Dijkstra, on the other hand, focuses on one decisive moment. In her series, no more photos from the same moment, of the same child can be seen. It's all about that one photo that has to convey the message. In the photo on the American beach, we see nothing of what preceded this moment. For example, we do not see the people who called the girl "fat", we cannot see who made the girl so unhappy. We can, however, speak of a certain tradition that is going on here; Dijkstra made these photos of beaches all over the world for years. She noticed that on every beach she went, there are children looking unhappy because of their looks. It is a universal subject, that is relatable for many young people.[10] The work of Dijkstra therefore gets more the feeling of an art project than a real documentation of events. This is an important part of the analysis of the two works. The so-called "documentary intention" also determines how we should read these photos.[11] The staging in Dijkstra's photographs may make the photographs less useful for scientific purposes, because the subjects (and therefore also their situations) have been taken out of context.

Every intervention of the photographer has an impact on the way a subject might behave. And that might steer our interpretation of the image to a certain point. Semiotician and theorist Roland Bar-

thes argues that photography was invented to look innocent. Photos consist of a denotative message but at the same time, photography is an indexical medium. Photos are a representative of something that has been there in the past, but we're looking at it in another time and another place.[12] There is a relation between photography and "reality". The photographer has minimal influence on the photo making process. The main difference with other art forms, like pictorial art, is that the relationship between the medium and reality is absent. A photo camera natural-chemical process that directly captures objects that were present in real life, whereas a painting needs to be made through the hand of an artist. The direct relationship between celluloid and a person in real life gives a photo its "truth claim". That is the reason why we consider a photograph to be more suitable to capture "reality" than for example a pictorial work.[13]

Both Sacha Goossens and Rineke Dijkstra had the mission to register people living in their own habitat. Both photographers wanted to record certain traditions. But wat really distinguishes Goossens photos from Dijkstra's photos, is the lack of intervention by the photographer. Let's take the photo that is used at the exhibition as an example. One can explore something mystical in this photo. We cannot see clearly what is going on here. The only thing we as viewers know is that we're walking within the carnival procession. We can see that the minors of the Jeugdprinsengroep surround us. We see confetti coming out of the sky, falling right in front of us. The shimmering light that the particles reflect causes colorful artifacts in the image. The young girl in front of us falls a bit outside of the frame. It feels as if her positioning in the image is just not that satisfying to the viewer. In the bottom left side of the photo, we can see a bit of the costume of another kid. Again, it feels as if this kid should stand more inside the frame, or they had to stand fully outside of the frame to make a pleasant composition. The children standing in the back are out of focus and are underexposed, which makes it hard to see what they are doing. Finally, this photo lacks some sharpness. There's motion blur viewable, probably due to the fact that everyone in this photo, including the photographer, is walking. Giving the photo some blur may undermine its status of an objective representation, because the relationship with its referent is becoming (literally) less visible.[14] But on the other hand, it adds motion to the image and that may evoke an experience that's more immersive to the viewer. So, adding some blur in this case, could also enhance the relation with the photo's referent because the referent is also walking. I would argue that this photo is perfect, because of these "imperfections". These photos feel more legitimate, it is clearly visible that the maker didn't mess with the situation.

If Dijkstra would make a photo series about the Dutch carnival tradition, what would it have looked like? Probably not as one of the photos by Sacha Goossens. Dijkstra would have directed the children, she would move people and lights to create a certain composition with a message. But can a tradition be captured if it is altered that way by the photographer? Isn't a tradition a tradition, if it falls into certain conventions but is executed spontaneously? It is, for example, a tradition that on the balcony, one of the youth princes hands over the key to the new youth prince of carnival. This is of course a symbolic gesture. The only way for a photographer to get close to the subjects, is to stand behind the curtain of that balcony. It might bring up photos that are visually less interesting, because after all, you would mainly see the backs of the people standing on the balcony. But on the other hand, the symbolic gesture that takes place on that balcony is not being interfered by the photographer. The symbolic hand over of the key is a legitimate act that is being captured as so. It is the only way for a photographer to capture traditions in its purest form.

It is anything but easy to make an objective series of photos. In the past, the idea of the objective photo generated criticism and skepticism. It might be better for a documentary photographer to keep some distance between the camera and the subject, so that the traditional acts that are being executed are not interfered by an outsider. Goossens succeeded in capturing photos while remaining the spontaneity of the moment and conserving the tradition in the purest form.

1 GELDER, 2011, 16-17
2 FOWLER, 2002, 40
3 WALDEN, 2005, 259
4 AS QUOTED FROM SACHA GOOSSEN'S WEBSITE.
5 AS QUOTED IN AN INTERVIEW BY NAOMI HEIDINGA, PLAT VERMAAK OF PRACHTIGE VOLKSTRADITIE?
6 SNYDER, 1984, 86
7 AS QUOTED IN AN ESSAY BY JOSH ROSE, RINEKE DIJKSTRA, ODESSA, UKRAINE, AUGUST 4, 1993.
8 IBIDEM.
9 ÅKER, 2012, 328
10 AS QUOTED IN AN INTERVIEW BY HILARIE SHEETS, A PHOTOGRAPHER'S TESTAMENT OF YOUTH.
11 SNYDER, 1984, 79
12 BARTHES, 1981, 171
13 GUNNING, 2008, 42
14 DE DUVE, 1978, 119

Landscape as a Social Concern in Z-Axis - Francesca Warley

In *Z-Axis,* Chan Hong Yui Clement has photographed a unique method of urban construction, owing to the atypical topography of Hong Kong, which results in multi-level design. Taken between 2014 and 2016, the images reveal a relationship between urban and natural space, as they clearly show how the city has imposed upon the natural habitat over time. This essay will first analyse the features of Chan's images that betray a concern with aesthetics, such as framing, perspective, and camera choice. It will then look at the visual context to see how the man-made and natural environments are captured in a way that critically analyses their co-existence. From this, we can see how the images also contain a sociological implication. As such, I contend that documentary landscape photography can be informed by both aesthetical and social considerations, which ultimately reveals how documentary responds to both artistic and cultural strategies.

Hong Kong's distinctive urban design results from its mountainous terrain. As Chan writes in the statement for his series, because of the lack of natural flat land just under half of the city has to be built on uplands.[1] This kind of development results in a visually interesting spectacle, and we can see Chan's concern with the aesthetics of this landscape by analysing his approach and considering the effects this has on the outcome of the images. A first reflection can be given on the wide-angle and distortion free look of the photographs. Chan used a large format 4x5 film camera with a 110/5.6 lens that is reputed for producing incredible sharpness and having an excellent correction for distortion. The images are a clear indication of the practical abilities of the camera and lens; there is no curvature at the edges of the pictures, and they testify to its highly aesthetic qualities and reproduction in capturing details like the contents of peoples' laundry hanging out on their balconies, and enabling us to count the number of windows in buildings that occupy positions far into the background.

Aesthetic preoccupation is also evident when looking at the visual context of the photographs. In the image *Castle Peak Road, Tsing Lung Tau,* our eyes are drawn in via the bottom right corner by a concrete staircase, positioned in the foreground of the frame. In the manner of ascending the steps we are then inclined to take our eyes up to see the first row of housing constructions in the middle of the picture, which also occupy the middle ground within the frame, and as our vision has been led first to the right hand side of the frame, we naturally view the row from right to left. Behind these buildings stand colossal skyscrapers, which we are also disposed of to read from right to left. The tallest structure on the right is barely in the picture yet leads us back into the image, and the farthest to the left is then where we stop focusing purely on the man-made developments. This brief analysis not only offers up a large amount of information about the scene depicted, but also reveals a clear consideration of framing. Such attests to the visual considerations with which Chan was making his images.

Next to the left-most skyscraper we are immediately confronted with the abundant natural environment. This juxtaposition forces us to stop travelling around the image and think about what we are looking at. Upon close inspection we see that, just as the concrete structures have been captured in a way that sees them occupying the fore, middle and mid-background of the picture, the natural environment has also been selectively composed within the frame, appearing as if in layers. If we observe the photograph in three-dimensional terms, we first encounter man-made constructions such as the staircase and building materials, next a small hill lined by palm trees and proliferating forest, then the smaller white buildings and behind them the superstructures, and finally the even taller mountains in the distant background. Thus Chan appears to have found a perspective from which to photograph that specifically depicts the environment as made up of alternate layers of man-made and natural features. This ultimately provides an unusual viewpoint and interesting aesthetic that strongly informs the overall look of the image.

In this way, Chan's method draws similarities to the photographers' of the Dusseldorf School of Photography. Referring to a group who studied at the Kunstakademie Dusseldorf in the mid-1970s under photographers Bernd and Hiller Becher, the type of photography they espoused focused on the aesthetics of form and structure. In particular, Chan's series calls forth Thomas Struth, who was taught by the Bechers in 1976. In his work, we see a similar interest in the aesthetics of cities and again, detail is a key component of his images. In *Castle Peak Road, Tsing Lung Tau* taken in Korea, we are confronted with a wide-angle view and long depth of field much like in Chan's photographs. In the absence of single focus we are free to explore the intricacies of the picture at our will; we can choose to look at the clouds covering the tops of the mountains in the very back of the frame or count the exact number of blue roof tops in the foreground. Ultimately, there is no clear message, sociological or otherwise, in the image, and thus we read it by thinking about its artistic and visual qualities. To an extent, Z-Axis is a series that invites this kind of observation as well. However, Chan's images also reveal a social awareness and implication. As mentioned in the introduction, this is the nature of industrial construction upon a land that is naturally unsuited to such developments. Such is realised through Chan's repeated capturing of their evident differences. The first of these contrasts is the rigid structures of office blocks or residence towers, set against the languid and disorderly outlines of the forests and hills. This contradistinction is evident in Castle Peak Road, Tsing Lung Tau where the six skyscrapers stand parallel to each other and shoot vertically up out of the top of the frame, behind which runs a horizontal meandering ridge of hills. Prominent throughout the series is also the polarity of colour. The vivid green in the forests and hills is sharply set against the pallid hues of the white, blue and brown man-made structures. Unlike the dominant buildings ruining the view of the forest behind them, in the contrast of colour we can see the natural habitat thriving whilst constructions develop throughout it. Although not explicitly critical towards this urban development, from the fact that Chan frequently captures the stark disparities between the urban and natural environment, we can infer a sociological intention to at least make us aware of this subject.

In order to place Chan's images within a specific discourse around the fusion of aesthetic and social implications of documentary photography, we can look at the work of the New Topographics movement that operated throughout the first half of the 1970s in America. In 1975, William Jenkins curated an exhibition entitled *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* in New York. The pictures presented at the exhibition were the work of ten photographers, including Bernd and Hilla Bercher, whose style was determined by an interest in new ways of documenting the landscape. As Professor of American Studies Wendy Cheng notes, the New Topographics exhibition featured the work of ten artists who described themselves as landscape photographers, but who "rejected the picturesque, romanticising, and purportedly human-free landscapes of their immediate forebears".[2] The exhibition heralded a shift in landscape photography, presenting it as involved with vernacular and uncultivated truths rather than the refined, beautiful or idealistic. Jenkins noted that the exhibition would ask anew "what it means to make a documentary photograph" and such is evident in the reactions to the images.[3] Nicholas Nixon, one of the photographers included in the exhibit, said that it placed landscape photography "somewhere on a cloudy continuum between the literary and painterly, […] hover[ing] between fact and point of view".[4] His analysis suggests that the exhibition had created an entirely new position for landscape depiction within the medium of documentary, now concerned with what had previously been considered paradoxical features, of both aesthetic and social presentation.

This novelty was in part down to the photographers questioning the established aesthetic discourse of landscape photography, instead depicting, as writer Debora Bright interprets, "an instrumental realism".[5] As industrialisation was changing the American topography throughout the decade in which these photographers were documenting it, landscape photography thus developed a new component that cemented it within both the art and documentary disciplines. In this period, it incorporated not only aesthetic features, but also sociological concerns to do with the changing environment. In the work of Robert Adams, whose photos featured in the New Topographics exhibition and whose series *The New West* Chan credits as a significant influence for *Z-Axis,* we can see this new relationship playing out.

In *Landscape: Theory,* Adams is recorded in a typed-out interview stating he "was not worried about the landscape" but about "the people who care so little for it", and *The New West* reflects this anxiety. [6]His images portray a new type of American landscape, departing from the early 20th Century Romantic style of Ansel Adams and arriving at something at once expressive and formal, aesthetic and social. Robert Adams' landscapes exposed the effects of industrialisation and modernisation on the vast American West, therefore in many of his pictures we see man-made developments like garages, street signs and telephone wires. In the introduction to the book of *The New West* series, Adams explains his principal motivations as a photographer. What attracts him to photography is "not […] tract homes or freeways but the source of all Form, light".[7] Such implies that he considers himself first as an art photographer, which supports this essay's claim that a fundamental part of landscape photography is aesthetics.

Yet Adams goes on to question why landscape photographers should depict anything other than the unspoilt beauty of national parks, and suggests it is because, "we do not live in parks, […] we need to improve things at home, and to do that we have to see the facts".[8] In this statement, we can deduce his social concern for the landscape in relation to the society that inhabits it. As art historian Beaumont Newhall posits, the documentary photographer will photograph with "something of the emotion which he feels towards the problem, for he realizes that this is the most effective way to teach the public he is addressing".[9] Adams responds to this statement, for in his photographs we see a marriage between his artistic approach of photographing "the light and the trees and the horizon" and a social message detailing how these things are changing in the face of modern industrial developments.[10]

Thus Adams' photographs and others in The New Topographics exhibition defined the type of landscape photography that Z-Axis adheres to: one that mixes both aesthetic and social concerns to imbue the images with both a visual quality and factual information. As Bright argues, the New Topographics exhibition paved the way for this new type of photographic documentation, and it therefore holds a distinctive place in the medium's history. For her, the "New Topographics became not only what it was in 1975, but what it has been since".[11] Such influence as we can see in the later landscape photographs of Thomas Struth and indeed Chan Hong Yui Clement, for example. Finally, in Z-Axis Chan has documented idiosyncratic urban development in Hong Kong, which gives the images their clear aesthetic appeal. Yet in addition to this, they also inform of the unusual and possibly discordant relationship between the urban and natural environment. Z-Axis therefore associates with a type of landscape photography that unites aesthetic and social concerns. This essay has argued that this is a unique employment of the documentary medium, and as such helps define it as both an artistic and sociological practice.

1 CHAN IN HIS STATEMENT ACCOMPANYING THE SERIES.
2 CHENG, 2011, 151.
3 CHENG, 2011, 154.
4 CHENG, 2011, 154.
5 BRIGHT, 1985, 4.
6 FLATTAU, GIBSON, LEWIS, 1980, 2.
7 ADAMS, 1974, XI.
8 ADAMS, 1974, XI.
9 NEWHALL, 1938, 5.
10 FLATTAU, GIBSON, LEWIS, 1980, 6.
11 BRIGHT, 1985, 5.

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