Photography the Dominant Aesthetic

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

This exegesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

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The work presented in this exegesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I declare that I have not submitted this material in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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ABSTRACT

This body of practice and research is concerned primarily with the ontology of photography in demise, that is to say, traditional film-based photography. Inevitably it proceeds to examine more than the recent industrial shift from analog to electronic technology by reviewing essentially what the original status of photography was and how perceived from a phenomenological view of photography’s affect, value and persistence as a global and culturally dominant way of seeing and communicating.

Investigation proceeds on the premise of the author’s practice as an artist, thinking about and making photographs leading to a functional understanding of the convergence of contemporary art processes with philosophical method and particularly existential phenomenology.

What surfaces out of an examination of historic ontologies of photography tracing the industrial shift from analog to digital photography is a larger, discernible ontology of a photography in flux and the promise as well as hazards of its electro-digital palingenesis. This reshaping of photography tracks a decades long, irregular shift in post-modern perceptions of photography from a discourse locked in dichotomy between ‘formalist’ and ‘contextual’ theorizing ending in a reconstitution of materiality to the image.

However, it is the socio-perceptual affect of photography that dominates contemporary imagination and impels this inquiry into a world of perspectival and monocular views, this dominant aesthetic: truth in detail, meaning in focus, mimesis in diegesis, the ideal and the beautiful in photogenic form. We all end as photographs now, as anodyne and slender as the paper onto which the image is sealed or bright and sharp as the luminous screen upon which its shadow is cast.
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INTRODUCTION

I am sifting through some of the philosophical underpinnings of the power and limits of photography as a dominant descriptor that busily replaced and determined modern forms of written and spoken language as well as other forms of illustration, in its minute yet magnified, partial trace of the real.

The method of analysis is shaped here by the idea, histories and presence of art unashamedly as a kind of observational laboratory with a notion of ‘sculpture’ supplanting ‘art’ as a tool for seeing and understanding informed by the method of existential phenomenology. Whether accredited as art or not, it may have been just ‘visual-mindedness’ on my part that logs a persistent view of photography as a sculptural condition, or, a discrete object.

Alfred Steiglitz 1917 Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain
By ‘sculpture’ I do not mean elevating photography to a plinth as revered object but, in the Duchampian sense, the way the notion ‘ready-made’ cleverly shifts context by nature of its placement, in this case, the viewing paradigm of gallery from that of traditional museum setting to something like an experimental, observational laboratory.

“Art is a laboratory where experiments are conducted that shape thought into visual and imaginative ways of framing the pain points of culture.” (Van Alphen, 2005: xii).

For example, in the act of seeing a displaced urinal with its misnomer ‘fountain’ and bawdy signature, “R. MUTT 1917”, prejudice may be stripped bare to reveal object as an object in itself.

Given that experience, one either rejects it as an abomination within a place intended for viewing the desirable ideal or emphatically accommodates a whole new way of seeing. From this point on it can be shown that art works begin to think or rather, wonder. Thus, I see sculpture not in terms of idealized art object but simply a technique for seeing: setting aside naming or titling, without preconception.

The view of sculpture that I describe, as a potent trope, positions me to attempt to see without language becoming a kind of veil, a fixed and customary filter\(^1\). Instead I am experiencing, seeing and wondering, rather in the same vein as C. S. Peirce the American logician, philosopher and key figure in establishing semiotics with his acronym ‘F. R. L.’. That is to say, the First Rule of Logic is ‘wonder’ and “in one sense, this sole”, rule of reason is that,

“…in order to learn, one needs to desire to learn and desire\(^2\) it without resting satisfied with that which one is inclined to think.” (Peirce, 1899: 135).

\(^1\) A great deal of philosophical investigation has been linguistically orientated, leaving a history of philosophy replete with caution against being lost to what George Berkley (1685-1753) described as a ‘mist and veil of words’. Gottfried Leibnitz (1646-1716), John Locke (1632-1704), Alexander Johnson (1786-1867) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) were all philosophers who took their main task to be penetrating this mist.

\(^2\) Note the title *Burning with Desire* MIT 1999, Geoffrey Batchen’s book on “the conception of photography”.

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When Van Alphen characterizes art as a laboratory, he is not only relaying that insight to art practitioners but, rather reprimanding art critics and scholars for continuing to see art and the museum as historical product and not historical agency – that is to say, art in action and as process. The museum converts, in part if not whole, into studio and an extension of studio practice located alongside and not necessarily at the expense of the institution’s archiving aegis.

For myself, as practitioner, the oddness of photographic image has always filled up the foreground; a strange thing, a weird object, seen-as-though-seen-for-the-first-time and, in this way an experience of photography essentially without prejudice and/or context, as a thing-in-itself, akin to a “peak experience” (Maslow, 1964: 23). It is the most beautiful, unencumbered way of seeing and experiencing of the world and what Susan Sontag implies when she divines the most surreal aspect of photography as being the photograph itself.

Seeing ‘sculpturally’ in this way is then close to philosophical speculation in phenomenology, shãh mâr\(^3\) by Duchamp! What is experienced here, in phenomenological terms, is an epoché – photography as ‘sculpture’ or:

“… a suspension of belief of existence and consequently of action in the real world whereby one's own consciousness is subject to immanent critique so that when such belief is recovered, it will have a firmer grounding in consciousness – the world ‘is lost in order to be regained’” (Husserl, 1935: URL 24/5/2009).

Furthermore, the descriptiveness of the phenomenological method – economic, careful – and the persistent description of that which is present and observed, returns again and again to the experience. It seems similar to the process of drawing which, according to Ihde, is “in Wittgensteinian form: ‘describe, don't explain’” (Ihde 1986: 34). At this point description, as with drawing, splits spontaneously, amoeba-like and new meaning.

\(^3\) ‘shãh mâr’ is the Persian word for ambush and the origin of the chess phrase ‘check mate’
insight, like new life, is conceived. It is conscientious reflection that cleaves open
description through correlation and as intentionality, an exponential shaping of
experience making the noetic process, or insight, philosophical or, indeed, art.

Witnessing photograph as a phenomenon, its essential ‘thingness’ and affect takes
speculation beyond our modern, peremptorily optically-dominant sensorium. This draws
on the photograph in synaesthetic reflex into sublimating illusion, so that it remains
structurally undisturbed and hidden, it becomes a ‘habit of mind’ or subconscious in the
conceptual formation of illusion leaving image content in faux-unison with its referent.
And, this digs deeply in terms of the photographic object as a whole, its materiality being
subsumed, becoming transparent and unspoken, to the point where we need reminding
that; “… a photograph is a three-dimensional thing, not only a two dimensional image”
(Edwards & Hart, 2004: 1). Photographs have; “… volume, opacity, tactility and a
physical presence in the world” (Batchen, 1997: 2).

In the recent industrial shift from analog to digital photography as part of a fresh
examination of ontologies of photography, I have been drawn to addressing an ontology
of a photography in demise. And, this follows a decades long, irregular shift in
postmodern perceptions of art and photography eventually, over the past decade,
reconstituting materiality to image from a discourse locked in dichotomy between
‘formalist’ and ‘contextual’ theorizing. Postmodern critical theory of photography around
the mid-to-late 20th century commenced with an ontological desire to reveal essentially
what photography is, working from an earlier phenomenology of photography by André
Bazin⁴ and including the unaffected writings of proto-photographers – that is to say, the
early experimenters in photography such as Fox Talbot⁵, Daguerre⁶ and Niepce⁷.

⁴ Bazin, André (1918-1958), *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, (Bazin, 1958)
⁵ William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) was a British inventor and a pioneer of photography. He was the inventor of the
calotype process, the precursor to most photographic processes of the 19th and 20th centuries.
⁶ Daguerre was apprenticed in architecture, theatre design, and panoramic painting with Pierre Prévost, the first French
panorama painter. He became a celebrated designer for the theater and later came to invent the Diorama, which opened
Commentators on photography such as Roland Barthes, Phillipe Dubois, Susan Sontag, John Berger and Hubert Damisch, have all been concerned with an ontology of photography, but, as it was known in ‘traditional’ chemical or analog form, pre-electronic/digital with little or no anticipation of electronic imaging.

Roland Barthes explains in his tract on the essence of photography, *Camera Lucida*, he was:

“… overcome by an ontological desire: I wanted to learn at all cost what photography was ‘in itself’, by what essential features it was to be distinguished from the community of images.” (Barthes, 1980: 3).

In Paris in July 1822. In 1822 Joseph Nicéphore Niépce produced the world's first permanent photograph (known as a Heliograph). Daguerre partnered with Niépce three years later, beginning a four-year cooperation. Niépce died suddenly in 1833. The main reason for the "partnership", as far as Daguerre was concerned, might have been connected to his already famous dioramas. Niépce was a printer and his process was based on a faster way to produce printing plates. Daguerre perhaps thought that the process developed by Niépce could help speed up his diorama creation.


1 Nicéphore Niépce (born Joseph Niépce) March 7, 1765 – July 5, 1833) was a French Inventor, most noted as one of the inventors of photography and a pioneer in the field. He is most noted for producing the world's first known photograph in 1825. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nic%C3%A9phore_Ni%C3%A9pce (accessed 1 May 2011).

2 Roland Gérard Barthes(1915-1980) was a French literary theorist, philosopher, critic and semiotician. Barthes' ideas explored a diverse range of fields and he influenced the development of schools of theory including structuralism, semiotics, existentialism, social theory, Marxism, anthropology and post-structuralism.


3 According to Philippe Dubois, the first semiotical theories of photography tended to look upon the photograph as a mirror of reality, or, in Peircean terms, as an icon. Then came that most celebrated generation of iconoclasts who tried to demonstrate the conventionality of all signs, supposing even the photograph to present a 'coded' version of reality, or, as Peirce (according to Dubois, at least) would have said, a symbol. And finally the photograph was seen for what, according to Dubois, it really is: an index, more specifically, a trace left behind by the referent itself.”


4 Susan Sontag's *On Photography* 1979 is the seminal tome on photography, still in print

5 John Berger has written extensively on photography: *Understanding a Photograph in The Look of Things, Uses of Photography 1974 Another Way of Telling* 1982 and more

6 Born in 1928, Hubert Damisch is a French philosopher specialised in aesthetics and art history, and professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris from 1975 until 1996. Damisch studied at the Sorbonne with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and, later, with Pierre Francastel. In 1967 he founded the Cercle d’histoire/théorie de l’art that would later become the CEHTA (Centre d’histoire et théorie des arts) at the EHESS.


7 *Camera Lucida* was dedicated to Jean Paul Sartre’s 1940 essay addressing a phenomenology of imagination, *L’Imaginaire*. (Barthes, 1980)
Writers of this trans-Atlantic milieu based in Paris, included Christian Metz\textsuperscript{14}, Rosalind Krauss\textsuperscript{15}, and were all associated with the journal October\textsuperscript{16}, concerned with visual studies, semiotics and psychoanalysis, and:

“…they brought with them insights gleaned from the discipline of semiology, and asked: what kind of sign is the photograph? (Hauser 2007: 67).

The overriding conclusion was, based on the original work of C. S. Peirce that, as a sign, all photographs are indexical - the sign and signified are similar - understanding that the photograph image fundamentally comprises a trace, or physio-chemical imprint of the real, as photograph and referent or its object. Indeed Peirce, the key-figure in the establishment of the study of signs as semiotics, considered that:

“… photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But, this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs [indices], those by physical connection.” (Peirce, 1955: 106).

The closing decade of the 20th century entertained a rift in the postmodern critique of photography between what may be referred to as the ontological\textsuperscript{17} and the contextual\textsuperscript{18} group of theorists. It is the latter group that most vigorously declared fields of practice and exercised exclusion in order to hold the debate. Kitty Hauser, Geoffrey Batchen and Winifred Nöth all refer to the issue in slightly different ways, but with similar effect:

\textsuperscript{14} Christian Metz, French film theorist pioneering semiotic analysis of film
\textsuperscript{15} Rosalind Krauss: American art critic and associate of Clement Greenberg, until association with him became 'untenable' because of vitriolic criticism from anti-formalist, postmodern artists and art theorists
\textsuperscript{16} October is a peer-reviewed academic journal specializing in contemporary art, criticism, and theory, published by MIT Press. The journal was established in 1976 in New York by Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, who left Artforum to do so. Its name is a reference to the Eisenstein film that set the tone of intellectual, politically engaged writing that has been the hallmark of the journal. October was an important participant in introducing French post-structural theory on the English-speaking academic scene, and the journal became a major voice interpreting post-modern art. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_(journal) (accessed 1 May 2011).
\textsuperscript{17} ontological, formalist, realist, natural
\textsuperscript{18} contextual, relativist, Marxist, cultural
The most serious challenge to the ontological approach to photography is derived from the other major strand of postmodern photographic theory, one which stresses the importance of context.” (Hauser, 2007: 69).

And, Geoffrey Batchen19 opines that the differences between the two theoretical approaches are “contextual” compared with “formalism”, proposing that they need not function antithetically as there is value in both.

Postmodern, relativist critical theory on photography through the 1980s included John Tagg20, Allan Sekula21, Victor Burgin22 and Solomon-Godeau23 working from Marxist notions of cultural materialism and the writings of Pierre Machery24, Louis Althusser25 and Michel Foucault26…

19 Geoffrey Batchen, the Australian photography historian and theorist, has argued that the nature of photography can be understood through a study of its own history. He has attempted to think through the ways that photography has changed the institutions in which it has been deployed, and he has advocated looking at the way photography itself has been altered by entering into various institutional spaces. (Batchen, 1997)[http://publish.uwo.ca/~sbasnet/Photo.html#_ftn 1

20 British photography theorist John Tagg has argued that photography is a discursive system, rather than a coherent object or a unified medium or technology. According to Tagg, the term photography refers to an array of practices, which operate across a range of institutional spaces. In one place, photography may be specified as instrument and record, while in another, it could be produced as artistic expression or commodity. When photography is considered as a discursive outcome rather than as a coherent medium, the meaning and status of a photograph are considered as an event. The study of photography would thus entail an investigation of the rules that govern and constrain the performance of a photograph, with an understanding that the performance is always both conditional and specific (Tagg, 1993). [http://publish.uwo.ca/~sbasnet/Photo.html#_ftn 1 [accessed 18 December 2009]

21 Allan Sekula’s … interest in photography was sparked through his engagement with conceptual and performative art … David Antin, John Baldessari and Herbert Marcuse - all lecturers at San Diego - helped spark an interest in Western Marxism, Fluxus and conceptual art. To these were added the feminist and anti-Colonial influences of student activists such as Angela Davis and Martha Rosler. Today Sekula is known as a critic, writer and artist. [http://www.zannybeg.com.third%20text.htm (accessed 2 December 2009)

22 Victor Burgin is a British artist and a writer. Burgin first came to attention as a conceptual artist in the late 1960s. He has worked with photography and film, calling painting “the anachronistic daubing of woven fabrics with coloured mud”. His work is influenced by theorists and philosophers such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Burgin (accessed 16 December 2009)

23 Abigail Solomon-Godeau is an American feminist art and photography critic and art historian specializing in nineteenth-century French art.

24 Pierre Macherey (1938 onwards) is a French Marxist literary critic at Universite Lille Nord de France. A former student of Louis Althusser and collaborator on the influential volume Reading “Capital”, Macherey is a central figure in the development of French post-structuralism and Marxism. His work is influential in Literary Theory and Continental philosophy in Europe (including Britain) though it is generally little read in the United States. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Macherey (accessed 1 May 2011)

25 Louis Pierre Althusser (1918-1990) was a French Marxist philosopher. He was born in Algeria and studied at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, where he eventually became Professor of Philosophy.

26 Michel Foucault (1926-1984), was a French philosopher, social theorist and historian of ideas. He held a chair at the
“...to shed light on the ways in which photographs have been used to support and (sometimes subvert) disciplinary power and dominant ideology.” (Hauser, 2007: 69).

All maintain that photography exists only within specific contexts and the photographic image functions as an arbitrary assemblage usually acting out ideological tropes given the intent of an individual author/photographer and mostly in accord with prevailing institutions of authority and current power structures. Meaning for any and each photograph is determined by the context in which they are posited, formed by an array of surrounding features that include the milieu of discourses in which they exist such as pictorial tropes, captions, titling and/or more extensive text in accompaniment.

Geoffrey Batchen, attending to ontologies of photography compared with individual photographs analyzed in the context of power relationships, maintains that, as opposed to American-Gallic accounts promoted throughout the 1970s and 80s...

“...recent Anglo-American accounts of photography then as now, dominates how photographs are discussed in most museums and art historical texts” (Batchen 1997: 176).

Employing a prime neologism of Derrida’s “différance”, Batchen describes the critical dichotomy between formalist and postmodern views, each claiming liminality of photography in opposition to one another, or most particularly a postmodern dismissal of a more formalist view – either natural or cultural respectively. He goes on to elaborate:

“... postmodernists and formalists want to identify photography with a single generative source (either culture or nature, either context or essence, either the outside or the inside).” (Batchen 1997: 176).

The transparency of the medium is such that:

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prestigious Collège de France with the title "History of Systems of Thought," and also taught at the University of Buffalo and the University of California, Berkley. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault) (accessed 1 May 2011)

27 ontological

28 contextual
“in order to see what the photograph is of we must first suppress consciousness of what the photograph is in material terms” (Batchen, 1997: 2).

The Anglo-American nexus of art and photography by postmodern theorists, comprising artists and academics not “collectors and curators”, sought to dematerialize all art, including the photograph, rendering its physicality transparent and image emphatic, on several fronts. Firstly, they culled photography into the realm of cultural materialism, and conceptually redraft it into a more familiar mediation of text. Second, underpinning Anglo-American postmodernism, there is a political, Marxist determination to excoriate distractions of connoisseurship and commodification that in the process further renders to white noise mindless geek prattle on technique and formulaic aesthetics. This is not an agenda that can, particularly in the first part, be sustained over the longer term, because it simply ignores, blanks out, makes transparent, a physicality essential to the photographic image both as support and as the inscribed fundament of a photograph’s descriptive power.

What the ‘contextual’ branch of Postmodernists did was to elicit the exchange value of the photographic image as solely a discursive system, leaving its unspoken physicality to the museum, auction house, collection, practitioner, commerce, publishing and industry.

   The prevailing tendency is that photographs are apprehended in one visual act, absorbing image and object together, yet privileging the former. Photographs thus become detached from their physical properties and consequently from the functional context of materiality that is glossed merely as a neutral support for the material (Edwards & Hart, 2002: 1-2).

Furthermore, the technological shift from analog to digital affects photography at the fundament, so that, for example, photography functions throughout my recent photographic projects over the past decade, as deliberately un-staged compared to my previously exhibited photographic artwork. The making of documentary photography is

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29 Victor Burgin’s perjorative description of painting as “the anachronistic daubing of woven fabrics with coloured mud”
seen, in this case, as a continuum of testing photography’s unique indexical condition, its inscription of the real and fidelity to nature, chaos and to chance at the essence of documentary authority, a priori of the medium’s descriptive power. Photography appears to be a cultural assemblage controlled by natural liminalities requiring measured control over brilliant description and subjective realism of the photograph can be seen to be shaped out of a pinhole of objective reality.

Primarily though, it is this key point of trace, the forming of a latent image, exciting the intelligence and awe of proto-photographers at what had been ‘captured’. It’s the same slight shock that subsequent viewers and makers consistently experience, then sublimate, whenever confronting photography with its illumined tracing of the real, capturing of copious detail from a single viewpoint at unimaginable speed, received often as the verisimilitude of its referent.

Yet, paradoxically, the photograph contrivance is principally unnatural even given its iconic and/or indexical representation. Its completion ends as an artifice encasing a trace of the real, whereby its image is perceived to ‘stand for’ its referent. Damisch goes some way to describing the photographic document literally and in its physicality, as thin and insubstantial compared to its dynamical object or referent. The photograph has no actual connection with the referent apart from being astonishingly accurate, but very narrow, in its inscription of the real. Photography delivers aspects of appearance that, ultimately, can only meaningfully be consigned objectively to status within the pantheon.

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30 “capturing copious detail … at unimaginable speed” seems a fair definition for ‘une mémoire photographique’.
31 “… it is not part of its own nature that it must function as matter for an image. The photo, taken in itself is a thing …” (Sartre, 1940: 18)
32 “In Peircean semeiotic, the immediate object is the semeiotical object as it appears within the semeiosis process as representatively present therein, whereas the dynamical object is the object as it really is regardless of how or what it is represented as being in any given representation of it. The dynamical object is “the thing itself,” transcending any given cognition though not beyond cognition generally, whereas the immediate object is the thing as immanent in semeiosis, the thing as it appears to be (is thought to be). Understanding this distinction is of the first importance for anyone interested in the epistemological import of semeiotic, as Charles Peirce conceived it; for the dynamical object is that to which our thoughts conform when they have the value of truth, whereas the immediate object is the object as we think it to be, regardless of whether or not that thought about it is true or false. The former is required for the possibility of truth, the latter for taking due account of the possibility of error.” (Randsell, 2007)
of photography and of all other photographs through practice. Nonetheless, within this precise, yet compact, correspondence to the real, reside all claims or supposition to the objectivity of a photographic image, its realism.

This is deception, as the *perceived* differs from the *actual*, built into the make-up of the photographic image, a construction in which author and viewer are interchangeably complicit in the same way Sartre maintains all images are in essence a deceit.\(^{33}\)

Tom Gunning's examination of the camera's intercession between ‘real’ and photography, notes that within most theoretical discourse on photography, lens, film, exposure, shutter and film/print process tend to become “magically whisked away if one considers the photograph as a direct imprint of reality” (Gunning, 2004: 40). Gunning neatly divines Hubert Damisch’s ‘theses’ for those carried along with the ontological

\(^{33}\) “A photograph is this paradoxical image, without thickness or substance (and, in a way entirely unreal, that we read without disclaiming the notion that it retains something of the reality from which it was somehow released through its physiochemical make-up. This is the constitutive deception of the photographic image (it being understood that every image, as Sartre has shown, is in essence a deceit).” Damisch, *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography*, Note 2 p35.
sophistry of trace constituting, “a far more subtle and insidious historical deceit” that comes with “the black box, the photographic camera”34 that is the effect of the variable components of the assemblage(s) incorporating human decision-making all of which intercept and structure image meaningfully.

It is necessary to recognize that this ‘number of theses’ function in synchronicity, natural and cultural. Whilst Barthes’ proclaims photography’s evidential force, being a corollary of time not the object, asserts “the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation”35 this supplements Susan Sontag’s description of the function of the photographer. And, the photographer’s determination of lighting, exposure, texture, tonality, placement and the geometrical super-structure of the image is “... as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawing ...” (Sontag, 1977: 6-7). Lev Manovich underscores Sontag’s emphasis on an interpretative bias for film questioning the indexicality of motion pictures, tagging cinema as a “sub-genre of painting” in the context of digital manipulation, and increasingly accurate three-dimensional animation and the capacity:

... to cut, bend, stretch and stitch digitized film images into something which has perfect photographic credibility, though it was never actually filmed (Manovich, 1995: URL 17/7/2009).

Similarly, Levinson claims that digitization of the photograph undercuts any ‘truth claim’ as:

“...the very reliability of the photograph as mute, unbiased witness of reality...” (because of the) “...fallibility of technological manipulation and the potential for human refinement of production (Levinson, 1997: 41-43).

34 Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography Note 3
35 “… the important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and its testimony bears not on the object but on time. From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation.” (Barthes, 1980: 88-89).
It is clear that digital camera technology supersedes its analog predecessor(s) in overwhelmingly successful parody, manipulating electronic hard and software, sensors as well as circuitry, in a pixelated, centre stage re-enactment of the analog bringing augmentation along with sometimes disconcerting, though often useful and superior deviation from its analog predecessor. There is also a complex technical argument that photographs captured within digital cameras do derive from a latent image, a ‘trace’ formed within electronic sensors.

It is inevitable that the credibility of the ‘truth claim’ in terms of the iconic status as well as indexicality of photography, be questioned within the digital aegis because the physio-chemical retention of actual light and its absence, though effectively simulated, seems only ever be an electronic parody of the analog and that disparity acutely excises the photograph from the real. Such is the incisive and momentous change from analog to digital because what previously distinguished photography from all other forms of representation, was its apparent annexation of the real, mapping photography closer to nature or chaos of time intersecting space greater than any other form of visual representation.

The ‘capture of light’ in the analog process was by far a more important factor in registering the authenticity of photograph than image manipulation and enhancement, the latter having always been similarly extant throughout analog and digital eras. A key difference between high-resolution manipulation and enhancement in the digital image compared to analog process is that the electronic is less irksome than the wet chemical process or of a wide range of direct material application, whereas the digital requires specialized software skills as opposed to extensive and varied range of specialist analog technical skills. Paul Frosh nattily reverses Barthes’ semiotic maxim to read digitally as…

36 Few now recall the viability and commercial scale as well as high level of skills of the analog that existed until about thirty-five years ago in terms of the re-touching and image manipulation industry servicing re-touching, multiple exposure,
“...photographs are codes without a message (as) re-purpose-able visual content made of malleable info-pixels” (Frosh, 2004: 45)

Otherwise, there are definite differences in the response of sensors that transform light into electricity rather than blackening salts suspended in an emulsion, one being that digital responds to a far more extended light range with much higher resolution.

Regarding the difference between CCD/CMOS, semi-conductors/sensors, and silver halide, it is argued that digital photo-imaging lacks indexicality as distinct from analog photography. Even so, Tom Gunning maintains that, similar to the process of chemical photography, encoding data about light in a matrix of enumeration is determined indexically by objects external to the camera (Gunning, 2004: 41). This is a similar premise to the principle of optics and the physics of colour theory showing that while the outside world is colourless in itself, our eyes will register a particular colour dependent upon how much, or not, of a wavelength of electromagnetic spectrum penetrates an object surface.

Martin Lister envisions that the parodical disposition of digital camera is so effective that...

“...the images produced are photo-realistic, they borrow from photography’s currency its historic ‘reality effect’, simply in order to have meaning.” (Lister, 2007: 252).

In other words, the electronics and computer, as well as photographic industries, in order to deliver an image-making vehicle that appears usefully accommodated within extant paradigms and popular anticipation of what a photograph is, are determined upon shaping a parody of the digital camera that is so effective that dissimilar means of capture, retention and output are an insignificant factor with regard to the 'ends', or perceived relative values and intent of the new vehicle. Nonetheless, whilst it is true that

toning, colouring, silver stripping, copy-work, darkroom techniques, negative and positive re-compositing and so on, all replaced now by digital imaging outlets but with similar aims and output.
analog and digital systems capture and hold a definite range of the electromagnetic spectrum in different ways and for the most part the outcome is comparable, there are inevitably useful characteristics of electronic capture that have already altered and extended or even shifted photography’s vernacular into new trajectories. Some of these changes are in terms of exposure and resolution and/or still images culled from HD video. Even so, it may be seen that the digital/analog divide over claims to veracity may close in short order as non-sequitur as digital photography proceeds, at the least as a powerfully parody of the analog or persists with arguments that the latent image exists electronically, resulting in a parodically similar camera obscura/lenticular apparatus and single point perspective. Yet, as we attend to new media technology within its discrete, objective liminalities and possibilities, amongst these novel forms and paradigms, again and again the question needs to be asked and shall be asked with increasing frequency: do we desire or need to continue to produce and consume still images?

**Parts 1, 2 and 3.**

“...what is really at stake in the current debate about digital imaging is not only photography’s possible future but also the nature of its past and present (Batchen, 1997: 216)”

The ‘blue touch-paper’ igniting this exegesis is Part 1, Hubert Damisch’s *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography* 1963 (Damisch, 1963) and comprises speculation made in judicious reference to Damisch’s brief but dense pentagram of phenomenology addressing the ontology of the photographic image at the beginnings of the mid-twentieth century era of post-modernism. Thinking on ‘Five Notes’ focuses this discourse, projecting its luminance onto the end-phase of photography as it was, the way we knew
it and what photography might become revealing its dominant and covert global impact on ways of seeing, thinking and language in cyclical order.

“…photography aspires to art each time, in practice, it calls into question its essence and its historical roles, each time it uncovers the contingent character of these things, soliciting in us the producer rather than consumer of images.” (Damisch, 1963)

Part 1 establishes the vista for Part 2 and six exploratory essays and a conclusion in chapters followed by an eighth sub-section Letters to Photography comprising twenty-two short essays on the overwhelming influence of photography at the foundation of modern perception illuminated by the camera’s spectacular reconstruction of everyday vision as perspectival. Each of the essays configures aspects of photography’s secular, ubiquitous realism given its natural annexation of the real together with artificial containment as discrete image and taxonomic sequence. Photography was historically unprecedented and remains paradigmatic as ideal form, fundamental to all related representation that follows, a dominant aesthetic in a modern and industrial world and one towards which we are alarmingly bound in aspiration, three dimensions precisely absorbed into two, the very image of beauty.

Part 3, Making Work Work concludes the exegesis and introduces six photographic and short film projects Suburbia, Not Quite the Sydney Opera House, Somewhere Else, Sixteen Bearded Men of St Marys, Optical Scream and Optic Lingo all produced in the context of the thinking drafted within this exegesis and exhibited under the aegis of this Doctorate of Creative Arts program.

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I dedicate this exegesis to my parents, Dennis Richard and Joyce Cubby both of whom passed away over the period of my doctoral study, Dad at the start and Mum towards the end, they are at rest, together in the grounds of a very fine example of Early English Gothic architecture, the six hundred-year old church at Solihull, England. I wish they could have seen the end result of what I was so restless about as a child.

Perhaps my sisters in England, Janet and Judith will sometimes bear testament for my parents. The cover image of this exegesis is of Janet and myself photographed, circa 1955, with a group of friends outside our home at the time in Leek Wootton a
Warwickshire village. I am at the centre of the group, and, I recall that I felt, even during that fraction of a moment, that I was staring down a time tunnel looking at myself now returning glances back towards me then. Janet, to the left of me imitates the unknown photographer cupping her hands and, seemingly adjusts the focus of an imaginary lens.
PART 1

THINKING AROUND HUBERT DAMISCH’S FIVE NOTES FOR A
PHENOMENOLOGY OF PHOTOGRAPHY- A Decade for Each Note.

“It's a small world, but I wouldn't want to have to paint it.” (Chic Murray 1988)

Since it was written in the early nineteen-sixties, Hubert Damisch’s Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image has not been published widely, and more often quoted in part than as a whole. Perhaps three times after first published complete, some forty-six years ago, in the magazine L’Arc, Paris 1963. Fifteen years later, all five notes translated from French into English for October 5, Photography: A Special Issue, Summer 1978, recently archived and online with Jstor as a ‘rare art periodical’ in a translation by MIT Press (Damisch, 1963: URL 23/12/2009). Twelve years afterwards, it was included in full, within Classic Essays on Photography edited by Alan Trachtenberg 1980 (Trachtenberg, 1980: 287-290). Subsequently, twenty-three years pass until published, once more in full, with brief commentary in The Photography Reader edited by Liz Wells 2003 (Wells 2003: 84, 87-89). Cheung Chung-Fai, Director of the Research Centre for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a key academic in the contemporary development of phenomenology in Asia, acclaims Five Notes as “perhaps one of the earliest phenomenological works on photography” (Cheung, 2005: 38). Most recent though, selectively quoted in a book Shadow Sites by Kitty Hauser (Hauser, 2007: 67). And, small sections have been quoted sporadically through various scholarly papers over time as well as, since the advent of the Internet, occasional ‘not so scholarly’ references.

L’Arc and October 5 were intellectually influential magazines of their time and the books Classic Essays on Photography and The Photography Reader remain acknowledged as key contemporary readers on photography. Shadow Sites is a recent investigation into photography, archeology and the British landscape between 1927-55, wherein the author
summarizes, with creditable insight and wit, an overview of modern and post-modern photographic criticism and theory.\textsuperscript{38}


In his general introduction, Trachtenberg points up “formal criticism as a set of analyses and arguments which attempt to delineate a general character of the medium” (Trachtenberg, 1980: 269-285) superseding traditional critique from within the canons of art history, of connoisseurship. In that context, Barthes essay \textit{Rhetoric of the Image} (Trachtenberg, 1980: 269-285), just preceding Damisch’s notes, is characterized as providing the beginnings of a new seriousness of discussion along with Walter Benjamin and Walter Ivins as; “the more adventurous and intellectually aggressive works of cultural criticism” (Trachtenberg, 1980: xiii). Otherwise, for Trachtenberg, John Berger represents along with Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes “an alliance of aesthetic, cultural and political concerns” (Trachtenberg, 1980: xiii) in contemporary criticism. However, regarding Damisch, Trachtenberg makes no direct reference at the main Introduction and \textit{Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image} it seems it’s just there, representing, possibly, the author’s emphasis on formal critique.

Turning the length of the book to Trachtenberg’s brief preamble to “\textit{Five Notes}” combined with John Berger’s \textit{Understanding a Photograph}, both Damisch and Berger’s essays are cited as a shift in contemporary criticism from “purely ontological research” in quest of the “unique inherent properties of the medium” to “questions of the actual experience of photographs and other graphic media in the viewer’s response” explained by the editor as: “Structuralism represents one instance of this recent emphasis;”

\textsuperscript{38} Kitty Hauser gives acute, readable and very useful summary analysis of histories of critical understandings of photography including the modern and postmodernist critique so closely examined by Geoffrey Batchen. Hauser works from an archaeologist’s point of view that is extremely lively, exacting and contemporaneous in outlook, and, it is a discipline that seeks and witnesses traces everywhere as well as photography. (Hauser, 2007: 66-73).
Trachtenberg sees these two essays by known art critics as having different outlooks but exemplary of “current philosophical, social and political interests brought to bear on the act of reading photographs.” (Trachtenberg, 1980:287). Included is an epigrammatic biography of Damisch as a teacher of history and theory of art at Ecole Pratique des Hautes Estudes, Paris and writer on such topics as the relationship of chess to art as well as the author of Théorie du /nuage/ 1972 (A Theory of /Cloud/ translated to English 2002). Even so, it leaves a certain sense for the reader that although worth publishing in its entirety, Damisch’s short, heavily compacted tract may have proven too concentrated a piece to unravel in summary at the time. Nonetheless, Trachtenberg’s edition of collected essays has been, until the publication of The Photography Reader, the repository, from which the English translation of Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image has been most often quoted.

Liz Wells outline situates the writing of Hubert Damisch’s “Five Notes” in the context of the early nineteen sixties, “when a number of writers, including Sartre, were similarly attempting to comprehend photography as a particular type of phenomenon.” (Wells ed., 2003: 84). And, identifies a couple of pathways within the piece beginning with Damisch’s regard for the essence and schema of photography positing that the camera is not “neutral or impartial”39 but historically assembled with certain intent of reproducing long established image conventions. Further, photography produces nothing of “basic social utility” except the photograph as “exchange value” that is to say it functions primarily as an agreed commodity, and that the “mechanical nature of photography” renders image-making “essentially industrial”, so it remains “irrefutably seated within the capitalist system” (Wells ed., 2003: 84). On the last point, about a decade later, Susan Sontag similarly observes the cultural need…

39 Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 3.
“...to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone now is addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution.” (Sontag, 1977: 24).

Within a section examining ‘ontological’ approaches to photography in Kitty Hauser’s recent book *Shadow Sites* amongst accredited extant critical writings on what “…all photography is.” (Hauser, 2007: 66-67), the author explains Damisch’s historical positioning within the exchange and development of ideas from Bazin thence Sartre, Barthes and Damisch as well as Krauss, Dubois and Sontag as well as Damisch recognising “the difficulty of reflecting phenomenologically on a cultural object”\(^{40}\). Further, that:

“Damisch, like Barthes, sought to strip photography down to its essentials and in the process noting that the photographic image ‘is characterized by the way in which it presents itself as the result of an objective process. Imprinted by rays of light on a plate or sensitive film, these figures…must appear as the very trace of an object or a scene from the real world, the image of which inscribes itself, without direct human intervention, in the gelatinous substance covering the support. Here is the source of the supposition of ‘reality’, which defines the photographic situation.’\(^{41}\)” (Hauser, 2007: 66-67).

For early experimenters with various versions of what was to become known as photography there was, of course, no photography, that is to say, no generic name accurately describing their strange achievement; an imprint of light in astonishing detail out of natural event embedded in artifice and excised from within camera obscura. Most proto-photographers\(^{42}\) were literate, middle-class men with sufficient resource and time to apply their pursuit of retaining images made of light, so that Greek being the

\(^{40}\) Damisch, *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography*, Note 2.

\(^{41}\) Damisch, *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography*, Note 2.

\(^{42}\) Proto-photographers is the term drafted by Geoffrey Batchen identifying pioneers in the early thinking, development and invention of what became known as photography; “As authors and experimenters they produced a voluminous collection of aspirations for which some sort of photography was in each case the desired object.” (Batchen, 1997: 50)
authoritative language of science at the time was used in the configuration of nomenclature that might best encapsulate the concept with which they were so intensively engaged. There was dissatisfaction, even at origin, with titling such as ‘heliograph’ or the self-effacing ‘daguerreotype’ and notions of ‘pencil of nature’, ‘copy, ‘imprint’ only tentatively reflected something of this astonishing adumbration, until the term *phōs*, *phōtos* (light) and *graphie* (graphy) meaning ‘drawing with light’, initially proposed by Hercules Florence in 1834 was...

“…independently coined by English, French and German commentators in February 1839” (Batchen, 1997: 101).

Historically, there is no declaration of photography as trace until Bazin, followed by Damisch’s unequivocal reference itself preceding by some ten years similar definition that is key to Susan Sontag’s writings in *On Photography*. Sontag’s widely influential tract was first published as a set of essays in the fortnightly magazine *New York Review of Books* through 1973 then as a monograph in 1977 and continuously so in print since, written in literary and polemical rather than academic form containing no bibliography or notes to the writing. It is matter of history that Sontag’s thinking was interpolated with French intellectual and artistic culture of the time and she surely admired and advocated writers such as Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes. Furthermore, it is evident, that Gallic critique and its influence shaped mid-twentieth century recognition and articulation of photography as trace surfacing in the writings of existential phenomenology and semiotic analysis of photography through Bazin, Sartre, Barthes and Damisch.

To be frank, Damisch’s *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image* initially appears a slightly arid, scholarly document in need of dilution to make it palatable compared to say, the literary polemic of Barthes, Sontag or Berger. Nonetheless, as the *Five Notes* are unraveled, this short document endurably maps a very full compass defining the edge of photography in a densely compacted sequence of careful phenomenological exploration amongst a great deal of subsequent polemic and critical
analysis concerning photography and meaning. Translated from French into English it presents more as a chronicle of search by the author, observational notes primarily concerned to log ideation above popular or journalistic communication, making it a difficult task to absorb immediately and most likely explains occasional publication and reference. In short, though, it’s a very effective place to begin, in part because Damisch recognizes immediately, ahead of the main debate, the potential for a natural/cultural divide in critique of photography but exemplifies that one need not eliminate the other.

Opened up, these notes provide the most effective portal, a quintet of signposts by which to entrance deep, constructive identification of the medium, its analogon and affect between inception and demise. By 2013 it will be fifty years beyond first publication of Hubert Damisch’s *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image* – suffice to say, a decade for each note.
**NOTE 1**

Theoretically speaking, photography is nothing other than a process of recording, a technique of inscribing, in an emulsion of silver salts, a stable image generated by a ray of light. This definition, we note, neither assumes the use of a camera, nor does it imply that the image obtained is that of an object or scene from the external world. We know of prints obtained from film directly exposed to a light source. The prime value of this type of endeavour is to induce a reflection on the nature and function of the photographic image. And, insofar as it successfully eliminates one of the basic elements of the very idea of ‘photography’ (the camera obscura, the camera), it produced an experimental equivalent of a phenomenological analysis which purports to grasp the essence of the phenomenon under consideration by submitting the phenomenon to a series of imaginary variations.
IMAGINARY VARIATIONS

Damisch commences the first of *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image* with a theoretical identification of “a process of recording” or “technique for inscribing” with the nominative artifice of ‘process’ or ‘technique’ suggesting systematic application through an act of fabrication. As that description unfolds it incorporates the natural condition of ‘record’ or ‘inscription’ that is described as, a ray of light retained within an emulsion of silver salts as a stable image. At that level of fundament Damisch’s definition covers what we commonly know now as ‘photogram’, an impression made by placing objects directly onto a light sensitive surface, exposed to light, developed and fixed to image. It’s a camera-less image initiated by proto-photographers, preceded by the experiments of Thomas Wedgwood and Humphrey Davy, pioneering the effect of light on light sensitive emulsions aiming to fix a patterned image to ceramic and glass, contingent upon Wedgwood’s discerning interest in the education of children and a belief that learning was mostly related to sight, thereby fixing an image may provide an appropriate teaching aide. Having attempted and failed to produce an image using a camera obscura, Wedgwood concentrated on the process now known as ‘photogram’ with what was thought to be limited success in stabilizing the image. Of quite recent note is a particular photogrammic image of a leaf, held over at a Sotheby’s auction because of uncertainty over its authorship. Originally, *The Leaf* was attributed to Henry Fox-Talbot, made around 1839, but, now expertly disputed with a convincing argument that it may be the oldest known photographic object in existence, produced, possibly, about 1790. And, debate continues as to whether the origin of *The Leaf* could be historically accredited with forensic examination of the archives of the late eighteenth century social circle of the relevantly named Henry Bright and family of Bristol, Wedgwood, Davey and/or the inventor and engineer James Watt (Kennedy, 2008). Currently, according to the photographic historian and expert on Fox-Talbot, Larry J. Schaaf, Thomas Wedgwood is the most likely candidate for authorship of ‘*The Leaf*’, and 1790 the date of origin.
Subsequent to successful assemblage of camera obscura with chemically fixed images to paper, in 1834 Henry Fox-Talbot revisited the same principle of ‘photogram’, calling it ‘photogenic-drawing’. Much later, in the nineteen thirties, artists reclaimed the photogram as an expressive, pictorial form, re-titled without modesty, as ‘rayographs’ by the Surrealist artist, Man Ray or, the same effect, ‘schadographs’ by the Dada artist Christian Schad, although, ‘photogram’ eventually surfaces as the common classification. Closest to Damisch’s description of the event and its effect, may be the modernist photograms of the Hungarian Constructivist artist, László Moholy Nagy who created such images out of heroic-modernist fervour for machinistic expression as much as a reflexive view of fundament. Certainly, Moholy-Nagy’s photogrammic artworks were in published circulation at the time of Damisch writing *Five Notes*, and a passionate valorization of light and the mechanical image abound within his photograms as an
ideological package implicating a reflection on the nature and function of the photographic image.

Although the photogram process eliminates a known constituent of the full photographic assemblage, camera or camera obscura, Damisch, as a matter of phenomenological method speculates on ‘photogram’ being at the essence of photography, that is to say, subject to a ‘series of imaginary variations’ and in that sense photogram in itself seems more or less equivalent to phenomenological method. Even so, Damisch finds difficulty with that first methodological designation, hesitating to describing camera-less images as photograph, being ‘not of an object or scene from the external world’, that is to say, ‘inscribing’ the ‘external world’ by means of an aperture or lenticular projection within a camera.

According to Damisch, the problem arises in applying phenomenological method to an object of historically datable artifice as opposed to a natural event, and photography is an artificial assemblage, albeit one that cultivates natural phenomena by means of camera obscura. And, in its ‘cultural’ object-hood the artifice photography is mercurial and never absolute in its ontology, inherently unstable, never finished, subject to perpetual speculation rather than finite identification, though certain principles persist.

Ultimately though, there feels something residually dead-end within photograms, however pictorially poetic or ideologically heroic. In the end event, it’s a mildly unsatisfactory juncture between the nameless and the named that demands of the viewer a greater measure of effort than warranted in the construction of meaning. Now, because all photograms are demonstrably fundamental whilst being an incomplete assemblage of photograph, on each viewing they impart a slight doubt that by implication it may have been straightforward cultural ennui so long in obstructing consideration of

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43 Damisch was writing completely within the analog aegis, there was, of course, no photographic form other than analog in the nineteen-sixties except in the vaguest sci-fi prospect.
uses for the camera obscura other than painting, drawing or viewing solar and lunar
eclipses. Such grand indifference ensured lengthy germination of photography-as-we-
know-it against the near-tangible anticipation or ‘desire’ to record the shockingly
beautiful, transitory, brilliantly detailed images formed by lens within a camera obscura.
NOTE 2

The reluctance one feels, however, in describing such images as photographs is a revealing indication of the difficulty of reflecting phenomenologically – in the strict sense of an eidetic experience, a reading of essences – on a cultural object, on an essence that is historically constituted. Moreover, the full purview of a photographic document clearly involves a certain number of ‘theses’ which, though not of transcendental order, appear nevertheless as the conditions for apprehending the photographic image as such. To consider a document of this sort like any other image is to claim a bracketing of all knowledge – and even, as we shall see, of all prejudice – as to its genesis and empirical functions. It therefore follows that the photographic situation cannot be defined a priori, the division of its fundamental components from its merely contingent aspects cannot be undertaken in the absolute.

The photographic image does not belong in the natural world. It is a product of human labour, a cultural object whose being – in the phenomenological sense of the term – cannot be disassociated precisely from its historical meaning and from the necessarily datable project in which it originates. Now, this image is characterized by the way in which it presents itself as the result of an objective process. Imprinted by rays of light on a plate or sensitive film, these figures (or better perhaps these signs?) must appear as the very trace of an object or a scene from the real world, the image of which inscribes

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44 The ‘oddness’ of photograph distinguishing it from other forms of representation is so obvious that it would require a setting aside of ‘of all knowledge’ as well as prejudice in describing its origins and observable purpose and a futile comparison with other forms of representation. So, the integrity of the assemblage remains one of “multiple theses”.

45 What is considered in the process of setting aside extant knowledge as well as prejudice is, within experimental phenomenology, the process of epoché, describing the essence of the photographic image. And, that is not dissimilar a procedure to the ‘namelessness’ exercised in the process of all contemporary sculpture. However, the ‘purest’ event of imagery dancing on the wall of a darkened room opposing a chink of light; neither silver salts blackened by filtered, formless light; nor even fixed as a ‘photogram’, is ever completely what a photographic image came to be understood to be. And, as Damisch maintains, apparently contrary to Sonnenson, setting aside “fundamental components” from “contingent aspects” cannot be fully achieved with this form of document. The whole historically developed assemblage of camera, lens, exposure physio-chemical processing and print delivers image into recognisable existence, and ‘assemblage’ itself is a cultural matter, one of intention, opinion and mercurial adaptation and artifice, like the toy projector ‘within an illustrated box’ it is a dynamic, synchronic complex at the hand of human labour, and only when ‘everything swings into action’ projects intention into image outcome.
itself, without direct human intervention, in the gelatinous substance covering the
support. Here is the source of the supposition of ‘reality,’ which defines the photographic
situation. A photograph is this paradoxical image, without thickness or substance (and, in
a way entirely unreal, that we read without disclaiming the notion that it retains
something of the reality from which it was somehow released through its physiochemical
make-up. This is the constitutive deception of the photographic image (it being
understood that every image, as Sartre has shown, is in essence a deceit). In the case of
photography, however, this ontological deception carries with it a historical deceit, far
more subtle and insidious and here we return to the that object that we got rid of a little
too quickly: the black box, the photographic camera.
A CERTAIN NUMBER OF THESES

Damisch’s analysis first distinguishes between the unique objective natural-chemical constitution of a photographic image and its containment within an artificial-cultural machine, surfacing the intricacy of exacting phenomenological reflection, which is “in the strict sense of an eidetic experience, a reading of essences.” Damisch’s methodological quandary has to be acknowledged because, what is being examined as photography is not a singularly constituted essence but a synthetically aligned cluster of essences, or “number of theses” whereby the photograph represents its own analogon combining camera obscura; chemical emulsion; negative/positive transfer and conversion between materials; programmed interception of light by means of lens, aperture and shutter; decisions on the part of a photographer as well as type and quality of material at finish. Commencing with the supposition of photogram as phenomenological essence Damisch explores the photogram and its embodiment within the photographic assemblage. From that site it is possible to review photography in terms of its unique divergence from other forms of visual representation because of its containment of a natural event, a fixed and detailed adumbration of an object or material.

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46 Damisch in Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 2
47 For Damisch, a student of Merleau-Ponty, existentialism is, in part, why he exercises ‘reluctance’ and recognises ‘difficulty’ sufficient to proceed with a looser, less inflexible predisposition to arrive at ontology - as the method goes - deriving essence within the existence of a ‘something’ then imaginative correlation across this and that aspect of the object, until arriving at a common identity, what it is and what it does. In exposing the difficulties he encounters, Damisch does open up options from metaphysical absolutes and that’s very much in keeping with his background at the genesis of existentialism as a philosophical practice. “Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology is significantly different from the transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, in that it stresses the embodied nature of human consciousness. Existential phenomenology rejects the universal or ‘essential’ descriptions of transcendental phenomenology, preferring an embodied, historicized description – space and time should be described in terms of how they are in lived experience; it is in this sense that existential phenomenology sets itself against metaphysics (there is no ‘triangle’ only particular ‘triangles’). Hence phenomenological analysis provides an interpretation of phenomena that illustrates the lived significance they have for the subject.” (Frampton, 2006: 39)
48 Damisch in Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 3
49 Currently, digital photography delivers reasonably faithful parody of the analog, eventually though, imaging will not resist conformity with its silicon-electronic potential.
50 In Barthes view the limited analogon constituting photograph does not decrease the power of its optical iconicity for most people - lending assumption, the trust that the photograph is an analogon of reality, albeit limited in the information that it collects and redistributes, “Certainly the image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect analogon and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph” (Barthes, 1961: 17).
upon light-sensitive material\textsuperscript{51}. Thereafter, photography proceeds mechanistically by exertion of the photographer over a range of controls developed historically with the aim of improved production of a measured and filtered trace as photographic image. The principle of camera remains absolutely stable throughout the analog era as the assemblage shifts idiosyncratically whilst cultivating the same fundamentally natural event that precedes photogram which, in turn, foreshadows photograph, like “footprints left on the ground” made with “light being the operating agent instead of mechanical pressure” (Sonennson, 1989: 64). Photographs are an imprint derived from simple events, observation and desire to make nature and artifice combine in the discrete, dynamic and complex process of containing an image formed from a slight section of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Human intervention, by means of historically developed photographic processes, directs this natural event of trace onto a screen, increasing its intensity and resolution. Although, each discrete image can only ever record from a single viewpoint an image of ‘the real’, which means that the camera is always and inevitably photographing ‘something’. The ensuing image is a sufficiently\textsuperscript{52} effective simulation that we habitually attest it as the reality that it depicts, but it is not. The photographic image is a “contingent reality”\textsuperscript{53} and therein resides the trope constituting the mimetic deceit of all photographs whereby the tendency is for the viewer be complicit and sometimes overly complicit in authentication of contingency with the actual, making photography’s direct encounter with reality both

\textsuperscript{51} Barthes acknowledges the tightness of the seal of the sign to the signified, describing the photograph’s iconicity, “every photograph is somehow co-natural with its referent…” but the referent within photography diverges from other forms of representation, it is not seen as the “optionally” real thing that an image/sign refers to but the “necessarily’ real thing which has been placed before the lens without which there would be no photograph” (Barthes, 1984, p76)

\textsuperscript{52} “…the photograph’s essence is to ratify what it represents” (Barthes, 1984, p85) Barthes describes his failure of memory to recall when or where he had been photographed by a particular photographer, yet he had to accept that he’d been there in order to have been so depicted: “…because it was a photograph I could not deny that I had been there…” (Barthes, 1984, p85).

\textsuperscript{53} Photographs in themselves are superior evidence or at least there is nothing else that can claim that something had to been present, before the lens, to be photographed, but they cannot become the reality that they depict they are partial and extremely accurate in that partiality, but photographic images are a “contingent reality” (la Grange, 2005, p92) as Barthes puts it: “so much, no more” (Barthes, 1984, p85).
emphatic and deluding. The photographic trace is always derivative of light illuminating light sensitive material and the subject in the same passing moment whilst Damisch describes this event as an ontological deception it is also, by corollary, in unique contiguity with chaos\textsuperscript{54}, thereafter contributing all that can be defined as denotation within photographs.

Having bracketed knowledge other than the tracing of light ahead of the rest of the photographic contraption Damisch repositions the photographic camera and lens as artifice describing that as an “historical deception”\textsuperscript{55} and, subsequently referring to a “belated…unexpected revival of current interest”\textsuperscript{56} in the camera’s rendering of dimensionality. The camera was the origin as much as ever it delivered a revival of the framing of one point perspective. Beyond providing the stimulus for a geometric mathematics of space the camera obscura also presented a widespread, key social paradigm synonymous with objectivity, human judgment made ‘in camera’, that is to say, at a distance.

The photographic camera employs the principle of camera obscura centrally, as a device designed to direct the formation of an image onto a screen excluding extraneous light and adjusted for maximum resolution. The camera and the lens synchronize together as fabrications organizing particular kinds of seeing and each ancillary device added is similarly advantageous yet flawed characteristically, in accordance with optical physics, temporal mechanics or chemical interaction. The instant a camera obscura image became fixed was also the moment that selection and parallelogrammic framing nascent within photography formed the primary articulation of numerous, subsequent and interrelated components of the photographic assemblage, breaching the intractability of plain mimesis, forming a language of photography. Photographic grammar is a

\textsuperscript{54} “As a spectator, Barthes rediscovered the disorder of photography, all practices and subjects mixed up. Photographs are everywhere (ubiquitous) and entered his life uninvited.” (La Grange, 2005, p78)

\textsuperscript{55} Damisch in \textit{Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography}, Note 3

\textsuperscript{56} Damisch in \textit{Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography}, Note 3
designation of signs that give meaning as a semiosis out of the idiosyncrasies of physics, mechanics and chemistry as framing, composing, focusing, timing and scaling of an image into a precise, diegetic whole and all that allows a photograph to be read as connotation.

It is important to be aware that the photograph is the end product of the various stages of photographic production, bearing in mind how at each point in the process human intervention and technological means may affect the resulting image and its semiotic status.” (Hauser, 2005: 74).

The lens sharpens but the image but can only be focused in emphasis on a particular plane, the aperture allows a measurable amount of light in yet varies in depth or amount of focus, the shutter permits calculable exposure to light but blurs on longer exposures of moving subjects and so on. However, all of these quirks are taken up as functional signs and characteristics transform into conventions: frame structures a portable and precisely reproducible print, blur may usefully indicate movement, focus plane a foveal prominence and so on. The vocabulary becomes extensive and flexible, but it is not a neutral seeing, it is the way of a machine and human assimilation of how a particular device simulates fragments of a visible world into making diegesis, generalization and narrative.
NOTE 3

Niepce, the successive adepts of the Daguerreotype, and those innumerable inventors who made photography what it is today, were not actually concerned to create a new type of image or to determine novel modes of representation: they wanted rather to fix the images which 'spontaneously' formed on the ground of the camera obscura. The adventure of photography begins with man's first attempts to retain that image he had long known how to make. (Beginning in the 11th century, Arab astronomers probably used the camera obscura to observe solar eclipses.) This long familiarity with an image so produced, and the completely objective, that is automatic or in any case strictly mechanical, appearance of the recording process, explains how the photographic representation generally appeared as a matter of course, and why one ignores its highly elaborated, arbitrary character. In discussion of the invention of film, the history of photography is most frequently presented as that of discovery. One forgets, in the process, that the image the first photographers were hoping to seize, and the very latent image which they were able to reveal and develop, were in no sense naturally given; the principles of construction of the photographic camera – and of the camera obscura before it – were tied to a conventional notion of space and of objectivity whose development preceded the invention of photography, and to which the great majority of photographers only conformed. The lens itself, which had been carefully corrected for 'distortions' and adjusted for 'errors', is scarcely as objective as it seems. In its structure and in the ordered image of the world it achieves, it complies with an especially familiar though very old and dilapidated system of spatial construction, to which photography belatedly brought an unexpected revival of current interest. (Would not the art or rather craft, of photography consist partly in allowing us to forget that the black box is not 'neutral' and that its structure is not impartial?)

57 The play here is on the French word for lens: objectif.
THE ULTIMATE ANALOGON

For the inventors of photography Damisch sees no prescient ambition towards innovative categories of visual representation beyond an obdurate enthusiasm to fix the image formed within the camera obscura. Out of this preoccupation came the familiar assemblage of camera, lens, film and print; a little engine, manifest of desire, ideation, invention, production and consumption, a kind of “clock for seeing” (Barthes, 1980, 15) as Roland Barthes describes it with charming intuition delivering his assignment of time to the photograph.

Every time we see a photographic image we re-make it, re-construct it, re-view this historicized “product of human labour, a cultural object”\(^{58}\) never lost to anticipation and desire\(^{59}\). Damisch espouses an important characteristic of photography as seemingly archeiropoietic\(^{60}\), appearing automatic in its finish. Although, in the case of photography, mysterious and beautiful its accuracy may be, it is neither metaphysical nor magical, but, a cultivated outcome of an objective process whereby light rays, from full to minimal intensity or absence, imprint or not, upon a plate or light sensitive film appearing the “very trace of an object or a scene from the real world”\(^{61}\) fixed and suspended in a viscous light-sensitive surface bonded to chalcked paper. It is in literal and lucid truth a

\(^{58}\) Damisch in Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 2

\(^{59}\) Umberto Eco makes issue that photographs can lie or ‘fake reality’, “we know that, through staging, optical tricks, emulsion, solarisation, and the like, to the extent that someone could have produced the image of something that did not exist” (Eco: 1984, 223) and similarly but, less ‘theatrical’, and with regard even, for example, to documentary photography, John Berger, “the photographer creates the reality of the photograph” (Berger, 1984: 120). The second argument is that perception of the photographic image itself is a necessarily learnt condition for children as well as across cultures, so that as we (who have learnt whether we realise or not) view images we rapidly and subliminally reconstruct them, re-order the (limited) analogon, the perspective, every time in order to make them recognisable as well as meaningful and before we arrive at the message (coded or not). Otherwise, “cultural evidence for the arbitrariness of photography is reported by anthropologists who have observed members of remote tribes being unable to identify themselves in photographs” (Nöth 1990: 461).

\(^{60}\) Archeiropoietic: untouched by human hand, meaning images and/or objects not made by the hand of man, originally referring to icons appearing and commonly accepted as divinely manifest.

\(^{61}\) Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 2.
direct response to light, reflected, direct or transmitted onto a plane prompting the description ‘captured’ or ‘taken’.

“For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a non-living agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man. The personality of the photographer enters into the proceedings only in the selection of the object to be photographed and by way of the purpose he has in mind.” (Bazin,1958).

There are two transposable ways the photographic image becomes cultivated: primarily in the laboratory of photographic vernacular as camera, lens and film followed by the theatre of viewing providing engagement in the seamless construction of meaning, that is to say thinking, whereby the photographic assemblage is rendered transparent and the onlooker sutured to an index of image referent. The “loss of features in the photographic analogon which reduces the iconicity of the photograph.”(Nöth 1990: 461) are considerable and listed by Gubern as follows:

(a) the loss of the third dimension
(b) the limitation of the frame
(c) the loss of movement
(d) the loss of surface and the granular surface structure of the picture
(e) change of scale
(f) loss of non-visual stimuli

(Gubern,1974: 50-52).

Speculation on ‘where the photograph may be heading’ towards high definition of a human need for maximum simulation eddying, gently and wonderfully, in space before and between us can be checked against Gubern’s list and becomes an incorporation of all of those factors and a reconstitution of the desire for ultimate mimesis that triggered photography developing into the ultimate analogon. However, as Nöth describes it, the “selectivity” relative to reality has not diminished “popular belief” nor the capacity to
‘suspend disbelief’ in the viewers’ engagement with the photographic/filmic subject, following the narrative, and/or the denotative content of an image with the ‘learnt’ imaginative, creative and **subjective** completion of say (a/e) the aggregation of scale and dimension and optical displacement and distortion applied meaningfully, (b) extra diegetic events or sound and/or the elimination of ‘frame’ in prosthesis/cybernetics etc., (c) the potential for elegant stillness within a photograph along with idiosyncratic ‘grammar’ such as blur that traces movement, (d) filtering effect of grain that signals the theatricality of photograph reflexively inviting the viewer back into sublime consideration of its history and its romantic/sentimental annexation of time, and (f) the assemblage of eidetic memory of qualia or sense data stimulated by the image.

Thus, with regard to the photographic image there is sufficient within its optical trace and resolution (‘point by point’) for the ‘believability’ of the image as iconic, as a true image (without religious connotation) scientifically, and as evinced by Emanuele Martino using geometrical *invariance* as a fundamental feature proving iconicity in sufficient aspect; “When a three-dimensional object is mapped onto the surface of a photograph, a set of projective transformations is applied that leaves certain attributes of the object unchanged” (Martino, 1985: 9) and in Barthes view the limited analogon constituting photograph does not decrease the power of its optical iconicity for most people - lending assumption, the *trust* that the photograph is an analogon of reality, albeit limited in the information that it collects and redistributes,

“Certainly the image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect analogon and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph” (Barthes, 1961: 17).

In contrast, arbitrariness of a photograph in the form of arguments against the iconic essence of the image are twofold and concern, firstly, manipulation of photographic
imagery (which has even greater bearing with digital photographic images) and, secondly,

“cultural and ontogenetic determination in the perception of photographs” (Nöth 1990: 461).

Through the camera we are always photographing ‘something’, henceforth originality and meaning within the camera is of a different order to other forms of representation. For this image the object, the ‘something’, the person captured in a portrait is ‘in absentia’ so that the message that the extended moment of photograph presages is one of death, what is photographed is gone in a unique paradox embedded within all photographs. Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* reads the subject of a photograph as dead from moment of being photographed a “flat death” (Barthes, 1980: 92), death imminent in every photographic subject. He surmises that photographers make great effort to make animate and/or activate the subject when photographing in an attempt to keep the photographic subject from demise, nonetheless, to look into the eyes photographed of a person already dead or bound to die, as we all are, is to witness a fraction of time expanded into photographic quietude, in memoriam, evoking the viewer’s own sense of mortality.

André Bazin’s initial ontology of photography emphasized the notion of photograph as relic given an almost oddball argument relating its ‘embalming’ of events out of time similar to ancient Egyptians preserving life in the face of death. It could well be imagined that Bazin’s Roman Catholicism combined with phenomenology and an interest in Egyptology would tend him towards relational notions of relic to photograph as referred in Kitty Hauser’s comments:

“Curiously, both the phenomenological and semiological approach to photography invariably end with stressing its affinity with the relic, the ‘true image’, and with mortality and death, as if this is the end point of a discussion of photography’s ‘essence’ (Hauser 2007: 68).
And, this marked tendency to mortality listed as follows: Phillipe Dubois re-titles photography as “thanatology” (Dubois, 1983: 160) or ‘death drawing’; Christian Metz asserts at the fraction of a moment the shutter is pressed the subject is effectively dead;

“...but there is another real death which each of us undergoes every day, as each day we draw nearer our own death. Even when the person photographed is still living, that moment when she or he was has vanished forever. Strictly speaking, the person who has been photographed – not the total person, who is an effect of time – is dead.” (Metz, 1990: 156);

and, according to Sontag, “all photographs are memento mori” (Sontag, 1979: 15);

Barthes contends, “the return of the dead” is “there in every photograph” (Barthes: 1980, 9). Such melancholic tone throughout Barthes Camera Lucida emanates from his contemplation of a photograph of his mother soon after her demise, wherein he imagines “something like the essence of the Photograph” and makes the decision “to ‘derive’ all Photography (its ‘nature’) from “the only photograph which assuredly existed for me” (Barthes, 1980: 44). In his impassioned search for the essence of photography, it is a portrait he examines so intently, but, given Barthes thesis, applies his observations to all classification of the photographed moment, the instant that something is photographed has already passed. Barthes shift in thinking between photograph and mortality concerns the temporal and is akin to every moment we ‘die’ as we shed cells and they are replaced, we are not the same person (whole) today as we were yesterday as we shall be tomorrow, and similarly so, as we photograph.

Contrary to the somewhat gloomy tendency of mostly Gallic philosophers towards ‘essences’, the ‘nature’ of photography and seemingly immutable ontology, the view of more recent post-modern critics - an Anglo-American nexus that includes John Tagg, Alan Sekula or Victor Burgin for whom context defines photography - declaims the

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62 For more comprehensive references regarding this Anglo-American group of post-modern critics and commentators on photography see the chapter in this exegesis on Photography: the Dominant Aesthetic p.117 and specifically p. 120.
relating of photographs to relics and ‘true images’ as irrelevant metaphysical romanticisation, ahistorical speculation lacking theoretical rigour, unlike fanciful belief in any kind of acheiropoetic iconicity the photograph is seen as a cultural object existing within a social and political context, “made by individuals, the agents of history for specific purposes.” (Hauser: 2007, 69). It occurs to Hauser to speculate, reasonably I think, on the broad and stark subjectivity across the generation span and the religio-ethnic ground of these theoretical strands:

“The fact that the ‘contextual’ approach to photography tends to be articulated by Anglo-American writers, whereas the ‘ontological’ approach is dominated by writers working within a French tradition, is perhaps significant in terms of well-documented Anglo-Saxon-Protestant distrust of images and their capacity to enchant the viewer. The insights of Bazin and Barthes seem to reflect a rather Roman Catholic tradition of veneration of image” (Hauser, 2007: 69).

Damisch attends now to the ‘more subtle and insidious historical deceit’ dispensed with ‘a little too quickly’…the black box, the photographic camera’. Mozi (China 470-390 8th Century BC), Aristotle (Greece 384-322BC 4th Century BC) and Alhazen (Arabic 965-1039 11th Century AD) each, in their moment, interpose the early history of the principle of imagery forming on a wall opposite light filtering through a crack or small hole, used primarily as an observation tool, though images appeared dull except for events emitting the most intense light, a very bright day or an eclipse;

“the effect can be seen in attics under ill-fitting tiled roofs, where the sun’s rays are focused through chinks in the tiles. The same can happen when sunlight penetrates thin canopies of leaves. Aristotle watched an image of the sun formed beneath a tree becoming crescent-shaped during an eclipse” (Steadman, 2001: 4).

Alhazen, the eleventh century Arab scholar, was the first to correctly analyze the principles of the camera obscura (Lindberg, 1968-9: 154-76) influencing considerably the dominant writers on optics through the thirteenth century; Roger Bacon, John Pecham
and the Polish philosopher Witelo (Lindberg, 1968-9: 154-76). Alhazen’s observation of after-image, proved that light entered the eye and not as previously had been believed that the eye emitted light, then, given the question of how large or distant objects enter the eye, he proposed the notional ‘visual pyramid’ scaled from a viewed base to the point entering the eye. And, it is around this notion that efforts to depict depth were made within Italian painting in the thirteenth century and not until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, some six hundred years later, Renaissance artists began to develop a mathematical model of perspective. During the fifteenth century, Leonardo Da Vinci notes primary hints on the pictorial use of ‘camera’ in pinhole form…

“…these images, being transmitted from a place illuminated by the sun, will seem as if actually painted on this paper, which must be extremely thin and looked at from behind. And, let the little perforation be made in a very thin plate of iron” (Richter, 1977: 115-16).

Throughout the succeeding two hundred years, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ‘camera’ appears a contrivance for making astronomical observations, but, largely as a diversion, an entertainment, “a trick from the repertoire of ‘natural magic’” and a “curious device for spying on people in the street outside” (Steadman: 2001, 5). Spectacles used to correct long-sightedness can be traced back to Italy in the thirteenth century and prior to that,

“Marco Polo, journeying to China in 1270, is said to have observed elderly Chinese using spectacles. The Chinese themselves claim that spectacles originated in Arabia in the 11th century” (FFA - Foundation of the American Association of Ophthalmology, 2009: URL, 21/7/2009).

By the mid-sixteenth century spectacle quality and manufacture had become industrial and, subsequently, glass lenses came to replace the pinhole in ‘camera’ making possible a larger aperture and brighter image. At the commencement of the seventeenth century, Johannes Kepler the German mathematician, astrologer and astronomer was the first to
use the term ‘camera obscura’ (Latin for ‘veiled chamber’) he also recommended using
two convex lenses combined and suitably spaced apart to focus, instead of using an
angled mirror to turn around an image from ‘upside-down’. Written accounts from the
early seventeenth century refer mostly to camera obscura designs as shuttered rooms,
booths and tents, with little if any mention of enclosed box versions, though they did
exist, if rare, with either a 45 degree reflex mirror to a horizontal view screen or two
convex lenses aimed directly at a vertical screen.

By the eighteenth century portable box-type cameras were being produced,
commercially and in quantity, whether working in or outdoors, dependent upon light there
remains a problem of correspondence between depth of field and size of aperture but in
using the camera obscura as a drawing tool, focus can be adjusted whilst attending to a
particular part of a scene. It was this instrument, camera obscura, combined with the
chemical fixing of image that brought with it a lenticular capacity for perspective as it
traced the real and that Damisch refers to as ‘very old and dilapidated system of spatial
construction’. Some two or more decades later, even more pithily registered by David
Hockney, resembling music hall patter,

“I've finally figured out what's wrong with photography. It's a one-eyed man looking
through a little 'ole. Now, how much reality can there be in that?” (Hockney, 1987: 66).

Camera obscura, by means of pinhole or lens, converts a three-dimensional view into
two dimensions providing a direct method that provides the ground for similar
transformation as careful intuition or subsequent mathematical/geometric methods of
perspective, thus, what it provided historically was a ‘dumb’, immediate process
achieving correctly aligned perspective from one viewpoint without guesswork or having
to plough through mathematic abstraction to arrive at the same result and as described
earlier (Martino, 1985: 37) reversing that principle by means of geometric invariance
taken from a fixed photographic image, can be accepted as proof of the iconicity.
However, there are numerous other quirks and liminalities of lenticular viewing, framing, composition, lighting, plane and depth of focus, motion blur, sharpness, resolution, grain, contrast, tonality, chromatics, focal length marshaling against the ‘neutrality’ of realism announced by photographic trace, yet, those characteristics, in the wake of the real become potent and meaningful, the fabric of a photographic vernacular.

It may be a human predilection to mimesis that drove the need to fix images and photography generally, although Niépce and all of the numerous inventors who developed ‘photography-as-we-know-it’, record no intent for originality other than ways to fix images formed within the camera obscura. Nicéphore Niépce terms the process heliography or sun-writing prior to Henry Fox Talbot assigning it the pencil of nature, scribe of the real. George Herschel first uses the term photography, in 1839, derived from the Greek, phōs, phōtos, light, graphein, to draw; light drawing, more generalized than direct sun-writing, implying light sources other than, but, including the sun.

The common photographic image, that Damisch endeavours to describe, is not a solitary, natural event pending detection but, rather, a complex sub-assemblage (an assemblage of events housed within the greater mechanical assemblage) of several events, precisely structured, whereby time intersects form (or space) and the real, all at the instant of fixing light.
Essentially, time, space as well as light overlap unerringly to launch one consistent, compelling outcome - the photographic image. Alternately, as Vilém Flusser expresses it,

"Images signify – mainly – something 'out there' in space and time that they have to make comprehensible to us as abstractions (as reductions of the four dimensions of space and time to the two surface dimensions)" (Flusser, 1983: 8)

And, all provide editable material “a play” with form/space simultaneous to time, rendering extended, identifiable compositional device(s) effecting meaning within image so that,

“…the true content of a photograph is invisible, for it derives from a play, not with form, but with time” (Berger 1974: 293).

And this is true, given that a photograph within its adumbration holds time in fundament, but, as it is now another customary compositional device, time does not preclude form or space, neither colour within light nor all other optical quirks of physics as intent characteristic of photograph, at the least because,

“photographs are pictures which have many features in common with other images” (McLean, 1973: 59-67).

One hundred and fifty three years after the first use of the term photography by Herschel, David Hockney makes idiosyncratic commentary on the fixing of the camera obscura image and its natural formation of depiction, a long-used, one point perspectival view reduced from four into two dimensions retained as,

“Brunelleschi, looking through a hole at a street in Florence, makes a depiction of it from a fixed viewpoint...The photographic process is simply the invention in the 19th century of a chemical substance that could ‘freeze’ the image projected from the hole in the wall, as it were, onto a surface. It was the invention of the chemicals that was new, not the particular way of seeing...So the photograph is, in a sense, the end of something old, not the beginning of something new.” (Hockney, 1993: 12)
In defining the western system of pictorial perspective as a paradigm, a singular belief system, Damisch situates depiction firmly within the realm of ‘imagination’. For him, depiction, commencing his dialogue with perspective, is ‘thinking manifest’ – and it is true that everything we do and make reveals ourselves, in whole or part, sub-consciously or self-consciously and can present, therefore, as interesting, beautiful, constructive, banal, dangerous and in all subtlety, meaningful - it has affect. Perspective, Mirzoeff claims, “…perspective is not important because it shows us how we really see, a question that physiologists continue to grapple with, but because it allows us to order and control what we see.” (Mirzoeff 1999: 40).

And, Damisch accounts for the trope of perspective that, “…does not imitate vision, anymore than painting imitates space. It was devised as a system, of visual representation and has meaning only insofar as it participates in the order of the visible, thus appealing to the eye.” (Damisch 1994: 45)

Beyond that, Damisch attributes significance to perspective as a “form of thought” (Van Alphen 2005: 10) equating “the structure of perspective to the structure of an expression language” (Van Alphen 2005: 10) implying “a subject who does the enunciation and an interlocutor to whom the enunciation is addressed” (Van Alphen 2005: 11) and what Damisch claims is a critical engagement as rhetoric, a dialogue with the work itself. His understanding of the structure of enunciation is based upon “the linguistic theory of Emile Beveniste and psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Laçan” (Van Alphen 2005: 11)

Both Beveniste and Laçan maintain the essence of expression in language is not to be found within “referential or descriptive meaning” (Van Alphen 2005: 11), but in linguistic structure shaping subjectivity, symbolic deixis. The meaning of linguistic shifters or deictic words, personal or demonstrative pronouns such as ‘I’ or ‘you’ have no fixed referent and become meaningful only at the time and within the context they are used, referring to different people whenever used by someone else.
The use of the expression ‘I’ determines subjectivity because ‘I’ establishes a ‘point’ wherein another person can refer to ‘I’ as ‘you’, but, the interpellation of a second person is the key to constituting subjectivity because only a second person is in a position to acknowledge the subjectivity of the first and without the second person, ‘I’ is without meaning. Laçan eschews the dialogical circumstance twixt ‘you’ and ‘I’ and concentrates on subjectivity “interpellated” by “symbolic order”, comprising “language and representation as well as cultural laws and rules” (Van Alphen 2005: 11)

Ken Wilder within a recent on-line article titled Negotiating Painting’s Two Perspectives: A Role for the Imagination (Wilder 2007: URL 27/7/2009) questions, in reference mainly to Damisch, whether or not “an experiential account of representational seeing can be reconciled with painting as a form of thinking.” (Wilder 2007: URL 27/7/2009) Confident that Richard Wollheim “would certainly reject such a proposition, arguing that, unlike language, ‘pictures lack structure’ (Wolheim 2001: 13-27)” Wilder observes,

“certainly, linguistic derived semiotic accounts of painting that import terms such as denotation and connotation fail to capture the distinctive phenomenology of representational seeing: they prove inadequate in answering Merleau-Ponty’s question as to ‘where the painting is that I am looking at’, precisely because they jettison the need for a specifically spatial engagement with the work.” (Wilder 2007: URL 27/7/2009)

Wilder does not eschew paintings representing in more than one particular way, “including the use of signs which are read” but he does reject the widely held notion that claims “what is distinctly pictorial about how pictures represent is their status as sign.” (Wilder 2007: URL 27/7/2009). Wilder notes that Damisch “claims to be critical of applying linguistic models too directly to painting…” (Wilder 2007: URL 27/7/2009) … and points out that,

“…in A Theory of /Cloud/ (2002) he argues for ‘a semiological analysis that does not set out to by acknowledging its dependence upon the linguistic (phonetic) model,’ but rather
'aims to define the specific semiotic function that constitutes the mainspring of pictorial production." (Damisch 2002: 14)' (Wilder 2007: 7).

In *The Origin of Perspective* Damisch claims that "painting is a form of thinking", it functions as a "model of thought" and he argues against the notion of painting as code (Wilder 2007: URL 27/7/2009), but as…

"...the formal apparatus put in place by the perspective paradigm is equivalent to that of sentence, in that it assigns the subject a place within a previously established network that gives it meaning, while at the same time opening up the possibility of something like a statement in painting" (Damisch 1994: 446)

Damisch is under no illusion that perspective represents the way that we see the world but uses the premise of perspective to describe the vivid structure of meaning, void of analysis by over-application of a 'semiological (phonetic) model' that simply deconstructs and decodes and, instead, (re) opens, (re) cognizes an experiential model that values spatial thinking along with imaginative reciprocity between the viewer, the symbolic order of depiction and the author constructing new objectives, new meaning, or completes again novel but variant meaning in ‘unified subjectivity’. He describes the way that the spectator necessarily enters into discourse with the image, the thinking compact…

"...such an analysis cannot possibly proceed simply by a functional division of the painted surface into its constitutive parts, and then by breaking down these parts, in their turn, into the elements of which they are composed. On the contrary, it needs to circumvent the flat surface upon which the image is depicted in order to target the image's texture and its depth as a painting, striving to recover the levels, or rather the registers, where superposition (or intermeshing) and regulate interplay – if not entanglement – define the pictorial process in its signifying material." (Damisch 2002: 14)

It seems that the danger of ‘applying linguistic models too directly to painting’ is that it tends towards the formulaic, method rather than thought, translation before lived experience.
Damisch foregrounds deixis as the essence of expression, a position, a perspective and interpellation from another perspective, from 'you' to 'I', as the basis for communication that is spatial and visual and, accordingly, perspective positions the viewer within the scheme of image so that “the relation between symbolic order and subjectivity takes space spatially and visually.” (Van Alphen 2005: 11). Wilder points out Hanneke Grootenberger’s argument “that it is perspective that separates…

“…the natural space of the beholder – perspective naturalis - from the artificial space in the painting - perspecta artificialis – proposing that 'perspective splits real space outside a picture frame from a mathematical space that has to be imagined within a picture plane” (Grootenboer 2005: 4).

Further to this, Wilder points up Robert Hopkins’ view that “all depiction is essentially perspectival, that depictions are always presented from a particular point of view (Hopkins 1998: 77) and as Wilder extends Hopkins’s thinking:

“(That some depictions present multiple points of view does not invalidate this claim.) The importance of such an argument…is that this position is not directly given with the work. Any implied viewer of the scene presented cannot be represented within the scene itself (other than by devices such as the mirror in Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini’s Wedding), precisely because such a position is suspended, so to speak, within ‘real’ space. This position has to be imagined; it does not constitute what is represented within the work. Painting posits this absent viewpoint regardless of whether this place is ‘occupied’. The occupation (or not) of this position may be relevant or irrelevant to the scene. Where relevant, the spectator may be acknowledged or unacknowledged, casually disregarded or consciously negated…the anomaly is that while by assigning the spectator a place, the ‘systematic’ perspective of the early Renaissance makes explicit this split which is implicit to all depiction (albeit unregistered in medieval painting) then it also offers unprecedented possibilities for imagining away the distinction between the fictive and the real; it opens up the reciprocity of the viewer and the viewed.” (Wilder 2007: URL 27/7/2009)
Nicholas Mirzoeff takes the edge off the culture of the visual seen as collateral to developments from within advanced scientific thought and that “intelligibility, not compatibility with scientific thought” being the key to understanding the formation of visual culture as a convergence or “hybrid of both advanced and outdated ideas” (Mirzoeff 1999: 38). He describes perspective as:

“…a hybrid of medieval theories of vision with the modern need to picture the world. It is often referred to as an early modern scientific way of representing vision that was then superseded both by Einstein’s theory of relativity and by the demolition of pictorial space by the cubist techniques of Pablo Picasso in the early twentieth century. Unfortunately, this neat parallel between scientific knowledge and visual representation does not hold up under closer analysis. Perspective was not one agreed system but a complex of representational strategies ranging from popular entertainments to geometric displays and means of social organisation.” (Mirzoeff 1999: 38)

Hubert Damisch uses Benveniste and Laçan’s theories of language to rationalise the perspective paradigm not as code but an apparatus implying position for the ‘absent viewer’ or subject as an equivalent to a sentence, rather than sign, reciprocating within an already assembled network that gives it meaning. However, for Damsich perspective is not symbolic in itself, it doesn’t ‘stand’ for something else, it is not to be ‘read’ or ‘translated’ as such, it gives meaning as opposed to a sign that means something, it is a paradigmatic structure. Grootenboer explains that perspective by giving meaning is a structure that in the process of disclosing the visible, renders itself invisible (Grootenboer 2005: 162).

The photographic image includes temporal and well as spatial thinking, and to continue the simile of temporal deixis, time adverbs such as ‘here’, ‘then’, ‘now’, ‘soon’ function no

63 This is same for all forms of structure underlying depiction including, for example, the photographer W Eugene Smith’s idiosyncratic diagonal observable in all of his images, and Arnold Newman’s careful distribution of elements across the frame and in and out of the illusion, fore, middle and/or background.
less effectively than personal and/or spatial pronouns. At the intersection of time, light and space comprising photography the “true content” of a photograph is, in total, of time. John Berger claims that the choice of the photographer is not spatial but temporal, “not between photographing x and y: but between photographing at x moment or at y moment” (Berger 1974: 293) in doing so he extends the essential sense of decision that he identifies as “I have decided that seeing this is worth recording”. Whilst, in describing time he appears to suppress or ‘put to one side’ depicted space…

“…the objects recorded in any photograph (from the most effective to the most commonplace) carry approximately the same weight, the same conviction.”

He surmises that difference from one image to another lies in the “intensity” the viewer senses the extent of absence and presence, remarking that photographic images are most popularly used (in somewhat ironic, sentimental, apposition to modernism) as “mementos of the absent” a kind of temporal realism.

Within Berger’s identification of photograph as “a moment taken from the continuum of time” such an image always makes reference to what is not seen through the continuum as well as recording what is momentarily sighted or photographed. “A photograph, whilst recording what has been seen, always and by its nature refers to what is not seen.” He then makes a comparison between painting and the photograph, given that “the power of painting depends upon its internal references” that, beyond the painting are implicit, it “interprets the world, translating it into its own language.” (Berger 1974: 293).

Photography we learn to read “similarly to footprints or cardiograms” whereby “all references are external”, the continuum, a forensic language of “events” and clues.

As Berger suggests “a movie director can manipulate time”, through, for example, narrative device(s), ‘flashbacks’ or indeed ‘forwards’ and all of that contraction and expansion of time through sideways shifting of viewpoints and, he maintains that the painter can “manipulate the confluence of events depicted”. Interestingly, relative to the
latter point, Henry Horenstein, the author of probably the very best of analog photography manuals (Horenstein 1983) - now superseded by digital format - understood the unique facility of photography to collect vast detail instantaneously and much of it unnoticed. Within his instructional manuals he only ever used photographic images as exemplar of a photographic outcome, never at any point did he use photographic images to illustrate equipment, only graphic images; understanding the mass of information that a photograph vacuums up and endemically how rapidly that illustrative form dates its referent. Besides, graphic imagery can be manipulated very much more easily, in detail and through time, into a generic or universal model of any object for representation, in this instance, a camera, a lens, a tripod and so on. Or, as Barthes notices the principle of it and starting from the premise that the photograph is a un-coded image:

“The description of drawing is easier, involving, finally, the description of a structure that is already connoted, fashioned with a coded signification in view. It is for this reason perhaps that psychological texts use a great many drawing and very few photographs.”

(Barthes, 1977, 19)

None of this manipulation, in detail, is available to the photographer, it seems, or at the least the most emphatic if not sole decision a photographer takes is, according to Berger, when to shoot - at what point in time does the photographer “choose to isolate”. What is unique to the photographic image is, according to Berger, “what it shows invokes what is not shown”. And, he identifies that as “particular to each photograph” as: that of “ice to sun, of grief to tragedy, of a smile to pleasure, of a body to love, of a winning race horse to a race it has run” and in general terms he emphasises discernment of absence to presence may vary greatly, “found in an expression, an action, a juxtaposition, a visual ambiguity, a configuration.” He evaluates a photograph as effective “when the chosen moment which it records contains a quantum of truth which is generally applicable, which is revealing about what is absent from the photograph as about what is present in it.”
And Berger, with some misgiving, addresses time as a compositional device as he invokes the 'absent viewer' who brings his own thinking to bear upon image:

“Nor can this truth ever be independent of the spectator. For the man with a Polyfoto of his girl in his pocket, the quantum of truth in an ‘impersonal’ photograph must still depend upon the general categories already in the spectator’s head.” (Berger 1974: 23)

Reservation is reflected in his comment on the 'spectator's' interaction with the image seeming "close to the old principle of art transforming the particular into the universal"

For Berger, there is no construction for seeing, no translation, merely 'decision and focus' and the essential message of a photograph…

“…instead of being: I have decided that seeing this is worth recording, we may now decode as: The degree to which I believe this is worth looking at can be judged by all that I am willingly not showing because it is contained within it.” (Berger 1974: 294).

From within the photographic account Hockney questions the categorization of time itself:

"When is the present? When did the past end and the present occur, and when does the future start? Ordinary photography has one way of seeing only, which is fixed, as if there is kind of an objective reality, which simply cannot be. Picasso…knew that every time you look there's something different. There is so much there but we're not seeing it, that's the problem." (Hockney, 1987: 36)

No painting, even a 'photo-realist' tour-de-force nor one that includes a photograph as montage, can ever be that actual secretion of light that characterises photography. Comparatively, 'photorealist' painting must be amongst the slowest form of representation, brushstroke by brushstroke it takes up amounts of time measured by the hour, days even months and more, compared to the fraction of a second that it is possible to take a photograph, to macro-record a fraction of a second. So Sebastião Salgado the economist photographer of developing nations poverty and work, on a world
scale, wryly observes that the whole of his photographic monograph of world poverty each exposure equating to about 1/60 second, amounts to no more than about two minutes or less of real events in total time. Although, a photographic image expands its modicum of time across the continuum, from a fraction of a second to precisely the amount of time a negative lasts and/or an original positive print remains a document distributed as wide as any audience.
NOTE 4

The retention of the image, its development and multiplication, form an ordered succession of steps, which composed the photographic act, taken as a whole. History determined, however, this act would find its goal in reproduction, much the way the point of film as spectacle was established from the start. (We know that the first inventors worked to fix images and simultaneously to develop techniques for their mass distribution, which is why the process perfected by Daguerre was doomed from the very outset, since it could provide nothing but a unique image). So that photography’s contribution, to use the terms of classic economy, is less on the level of production, properly speaking, than that of consumption. Photography creates nothing of use (aside from its marginal and primarily scientific applications); it rather lays down the premises of an unbridled destruction of utility. Photographic activity, even though it generally takes the form of a craft, is nonetheless, in principle, industrial: and this implies that of all images the photographic one – leave aside its documentary character – wears out the most quickly. But it is important to note that even when it gives us, through the channels of publishing, advertising and the press, only those images which are already half consumed, or, so to speak, ‘predigested’, this industry fulfils the initial photographic project: the capturing and restoration of an image already worn beyond repair, but still, through its physical nature, unsuited to mass consumption.
AN IMAGE ALREADY WORN BEYOND REPAIR

The essential task of the photographic assemblage is one of ‘retention of the image, its development and multiplication’\(^{64}\) predisposing it to reproduction and the main social function of photography becoming mass publication, comparable to movie utilized as mass spectacle. Damisch observes that photography produces nothing of use, “aside from its marginal and primarily scientific applications”\(^{65}\), though he writes ‘in principia’ in the early sixties, succeeding decades imparted exponential growth on unprecedented scale, scope and dimension of all forms of consumer orientated media and technologies, and along the margins of power ‘primarily scientific applications’ that include medical, military, surveillance, policing, forensics, aeronautics, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies, microchip and high technology ceramics manufacture, within those flexible classifications not all photographs are made by cameras neither always require a photographer\(^{66}\). Damisch points out that although pictorial photography is fundamentally a craft, usually with capacity to multiply an edition, a portable print, it is, nonetheless, industrial reproduction within mechanized print press and automated laboratory, eventually including screen media that ‘fulfils the initial photographic project: the capturing and restoration of an image already worn beyond repair’\(^{67}\) even as the (then sixties) burgeoning mass market of non-utilitarian photographs itself take on the full flux of consumer product valuing photographic image as currency, a paradigmatic index, that is to say, not the stuff of reality, whereby transactions of image, icon, narrative and/or myth classify and codify; commemoration, family, community, workforce and place, memory, entertainment, sentiment, real estate, travel and vacation, sex, marketing,

\(^{64}\) Damisch, *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography*, Note 4.

\(^{65}\) Damisch, *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography*, Note 4.

\(^{66}\) Patrick Maynard’s book *The Engine of Visualization* (Maynard, 1997) takes the view that photography is ‘a process, not a product’ and the ‘ontological’ view of photography tends to makes fetish of the individual photographic image, “The earliest experimenters saw photography as a family of technologies which (like all tools) could extend our powers; our powers to detect, for example, to record, or imagine – not just our power to make pictures.” Accordingly, Maynard “considers those uses of photographic technology that extend beyond the making of recognizable images (icons).” (Hauser, 2007: 72)

\(^{67}\) Damisch, *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography*, Note 4.
modeling, advertisement, promotion, fashion, fame, wealth, power, brand and, thereby, obsolesce at an accelerating rate as 'pre-digested', that is to say edited, enhanced and commodified, ready for sale 'through the channels of publishing, advertising and the press.'

This 'image already worn beyond repair' is, in the main, perspectival arriving essentially with the photographic apparatus; camera obscura, lens and 'retention' of image automatically delivering reduction from three, or rather four including time, to two dimensions positing the photographic analogon on an industrial scale ahead of film, television and computer screen. To scale history, Nicolas Mirzoeff clarifies that:

“The Renaissance use of perspective certainly changed the appearance of images but this change did not entail a new attitude to perception or reality." (Mirzoeff 1999: 40)

Moreover,

“Damisch contends that the importance of perspective in cultural history is highly overestimated. Perspective is often considered to have been one of the main contributions of the Renaissance. It is not only considered one of that period’s most important products but it is supposed to have fundamentally determined the way of thinking and looking of Renaissance man. But, Damisch points out the number of Renaissance paintings actually painted according the principles of perspective is in fact relatively small as a result their influence on ‘Renaissance man’ could not have been all that great. Only now, in the twentieth century, do perspectival constructions surround us because of technologies such as photography, film and video that order our visual domain through the automatic use of linear perspective’s principles...The ubiquity of perspective nowadays can paradoxically only be understood as an archaic remnant of the Renaissance." (Mirzoeff 1999: 40).

Thereafter, it is the industrial flood of photographic images that by nature of presence, en masse, makes possible Walter Benjamin’s conjecture:

“...for the first time in world history mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art
Within Benjamin’s journal article *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* use of the term ‘aura’ describes reverence purportedly experienced before a unique work of art, systemic within traditional views of art and connected, in *ancientvicis*, with ritual worship of icons, and convoluted association with acheiropoieta, ‘iconic’ imagery not made by the hand of man, but, made miraculously, by the hand of God, thereby the hand of an artist sanctioned with a ‘god-given talent’ to perform the miraculous.

The art museum in its traditional role was experienced as a place for contemplation in admiration of the ideal. Jonathan Crary gives key example of two crucial nineteenth century art historicizing traditions stemming from Giovanni Morelli’s scholarly technique, that is to say identification by rigorous examination of details within a work of art diagnosing, as a connoisseur, characteristic traits, conventions and painterly/graphic gesture of the hands of artists. And, the other from the Warburg School, Aby Warburg who, influentially, established iconography as an independent art historical discipline - both of whom…

“...were fundamentally unable or unwilling to include nineteenth century art within the scope of their investigations. This in spite of the dialectical relation of these practices to the historical moment of their own emergence: the concern of the Morelli connoisseurship with authorship and originality occurs when new technologies and forms of exchange put in question notions of the ‘hand’, authorship and originality, and the quest for the Warburg School scholars for symbolic forms of expressive of the spiritual foundations of a unified culture coincides with a collective cultural despair at the absence or impossibility of such forms in the present. Thus, these overlapping modes of art history took as their privileged objects the figurative art of antiquity and the Renaissance.” (Crary, 1992: 21-22)

In fact, Benjamin’s use of the term ‘aura’ does not designate inherent features of an object, but, the way in which it is perceived, so, he actually assigns ‘aura’ to connoisseurship rather more than ritual, and not the object in itself, but, attributes that
are contingent and external to art work: lineage of ownership, public authentication as an original, uniqueness as an artefact and limited scope for exhibition/viewing, as well as currency as a cultural object.

To make it clear, again, aura is not positioned here as some inherent quality embedded within an (iconic) object as a kind of vibrant glow of magical inner life, rather, the aura that Benjamin signals is an amalgam of anticipation surrounding accredited art (works) concerned traditionally with primeval, feudal and/or bourgeois structures of power overlain with religious and/or secular ritual, laced with the supernatural. Deeper still, it is faux pas to assume that Benjamin refers to the confluence of ideas, sensation, feeling embedded as symbology and/or indexical presence within/as the material of image as object, causing both Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hubert Damisch to suggest:

“…painting must be approached not simply as an image mirroring nature, but as a wider, active intellectual process. Damisch makes the claim that ‘painting not only shows, but thinks’, through forms that might be designated as symbolic in Cassirer’s sense.” (Berland, 2007: 6).

Benjamin employs the term ‘aura’ to explain the commodification of art within capitalist economy as traditional reification of works of art, originally contextualized by ritual and religion, ‘aura’, becomes the currency as Karl Marx in Das Kapital distinguishes between the ability of a commodity to satisfy a human need, its use value (of which Damisch maintains photography has none, beyond marginal or limited scientific applications) and its value in the market place, its exchange value. Thereafter, Marx argues that exchange value pre-dominates under capitalism and art, artists as well as art works become valued as commodity as ‘aura’ enhances, mythologizes and, fulfils exchange value. Nothing makes for ‘success’ of an artist as commodity than fitting the bill of current mediated mythologies along with the usual vested interest of commercial gallery, art historicizing and critical agency but do little more than scratch the surface of a worn epoché only to enact and fulfill prevalent, populist histoires.
Jack Burnham engages Herman Hesse’s allegorical novel The Glass Bead Game to describe culture as it becomes religious and commodified, that is to say, stale and nothing to do with intellectual, spiritual or practical progress of humankind. Within Hesse’s tale set in a fictional land of Castalia, all culture has integrated into a pointless, annual game of glass beads, ritualized with an attendant castes of priests and congregation:

“The Game itself was a matrix for dead art as a kind of aesthetic surrogate. Here the best minds of Castalia distilled all aspects of previous high culture into an infinite variety of strategies and structures, which could permit the use of ancient Chinese temple plans alongside the harmonies of late Beethoven quartets. In its ritualistic desire to relive the past, Castalia is simply an allusion to a tradition somewhat like our own.” (Burnham, 1971: 1).

Yet, it is this cultural model within the industrial stream, mechanized and commodified exponentially: mass art education, the proliferation of biennials, art competitions, ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions, art festivals – an art concerned only with entertainment, box-office accountability, crowd control and distraction, bread and circuses.⁶⁸

Benjamin makes the distinction between ‘cult value’ of an artwork as a unique object with limited potential to be viewed and ‘exhibition value’ as an object accessible to all and argues positively for technological reproduction elevating exhibition value ahead of cult value.

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⁶⁸ “It appears likely that we never perceive the conceptual mechanisms of art because art scholarship, upon which most of our knowledge of art relies, is directed only to secondary structures. The fact that historical and critical analyses of art are essentially descriptive rather than analytical is of singular importance. Historical research, criticism, and connoisseurship, moreover, can never define art: their real function is to perform elegantly and gratuitously as pendants to the work of art. In other words, they prevent explanation. In elaborate detail historians tell us how to look at and think about art. The most impeccable scholarship, utilizing newly verified documents, voluminous footnotes, and convincing empirical generalizations about the development of art impulse, only succeeds in further indoctrinating into the art mystique. There is a perverse condition here. It seems that those who believe in art produce scholarship which supports their beliefs, while those who are nominally non-believers simply ignore art. In effect, art is predicated on a belief structure which operates under the guise of a continual investigation of art. Thus the more we learn circumstantially about the art historical phenomenon, the more we are convinced that art is essentially unknowable and ‘spiritual’ in substance.” (Burnham, 1971: 2)
“The circulation and reception of all visual imagery is so closely interrelated by the middle of the (nineteenth) century that any single medium of any form of visual representation no longer has a significant autonomous identity. The meanings and effects of any single image are always adjacent to this overloaded and plural sensory environment and to the observer who inhabited it. Benjamin, for example, saw the art museum in the mid-nineteenth century as simply one of many dream spaces, experienced and traversed by an observer no differently from arcades, botanical gardens, wax museums, casinos, railway stations, and department stores.” 69 (Crary, 1990, 23)

Benjamin’s antidote to aura paraded as fascist propaganda is: dialectic, politicizing art as weapon in the struggle for social justice, given the impact of technology rendering art increasingly reproducible on an industrial scale and, in consequence, as its aura diminishes becoming an absence into which is liberated a democratizing of art and art(s) capable of socialist revolution,

“Mankind, which in Homer’s time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics that Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.” (Jephcott Ed., 2007: 12).

Although, if aura survives one peck as exchange value, its wax and wane charts the peaks and troughs of capitalism in commodification of culture and its objects, with a

69 Note that Benjamin, a German Jewish literary critic, wrote his famous essay, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction in deadly serious struggle for his personal psychological and physical survival at a time of Hitler coming to power in Germany around 1933, bringing with it industrial scale ‘barbarism of the intellect’, ‘book burnings’; yet, still, imaginable for Benjamin, a faint hope that art might somehow be used in resistance against Nazism. For Benjamin the all-consuming question became whether or not art could have a positive political function encompassing those in revolt against fascism given that fascists such as Hitler, Mussolini, Marinetti (the Italian Futurist) had all, in Benjamin’s term, aestheticized politics. Fascism was, of course, a modernist movement combining technological utopianism with a mish-mash of petty bourgeois fear and disaffection mythologized into intellectually bizarre but graphically striking concoctions of Tibetan, Roman and Teutonic occultism, fraud and religiosity providing aural authority bonded with extreme modernist fantasies of man as machine, sport and health, eugenics combining with technology as aesthetic camouflage in the form of techno-media, movies, the spectacle of mass demonstrations and rallies promoting magical human/machinistic force, brut architecture, vis à vis Triumph of the Will by Leni Riefenstahl.
vitality that Benjamin did not see - nor could he do so beyond the Third Reich, at his own hand and in fraught circumstance – given the dominance of modern capitalism through the latter fifty years of the twentieth century colonizing the west, voyaging east and come back to haunt.
NOTE 5

Photography aspires to art each time, in practice, it calls into question its essence and its historical roles, each time it uncovers the contingent character of these things, soliciting in us the producer rather than the consumer of images. (It is no accident that the most beautiful photograph so far achieved is possibly the first image Nicéphore Niepce fixed in 1822, on the glass of the camera obscura – a fragile, threatened image, so close in its organization, its granular texture, and its emergent aspect, to certain Suerats – an incomparable image which makes one dream of a photographic substance distinct from subject matter, and of an art in which light creates its own metaphor.)
AN INCOMPARABLE IMAGE

Following such clamour, a momentary hush, and the stillness of first images. Even now, at the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century there remains contention over when the first fixed, photograph by means of camera occurred. The earliest known surviving photographic glass plate is widely accepted as having been created in June or July, 1827 by Nicephore Niépce “View from his Window at Le Gras”. Nonetheless, Roland Barthes, in a Spanish edition of his book La Chambre Claire, La Cámara Lúcid shows a Niépce picture from glass plate since lost, “Table Ready” from 1822 - and dated ‘around 1823’, translated as, "The Dinner Table" in the English edition Camera Lucida (Barthes, 1980, 86) - a granular image of a table set for a meal, it is this ‘first photograph’ to which Damisch refers. Either photograph would stand similar description “a fragile, threatened image, so close in its organization, its granular texture, and its emergent aspect, to certain Suerats”. Damisch is not referring to the staid yet guileless composition of a dinner table as beautiful, rather more its noematic presence, its ‘heliographic’ or photographic presence as perceived object; “its emergent aspect” this original, unique and surprising analogon - ever-reflexive, it returns gaze - not as a mirror reflection, immediately, un-rendered, reverse and ‘live’ - but fixed, delivered ‘late’ to the very first eyes that ever saw it, then witnessed by all who can see forever.

Similar to Niepce in his original titling of ‘heliograph’, ‘sun writing’, Damisch takes ‘beautiful’ at the speed of light, back and forth in epoché, short circuiting, between testing ‘photogram’ as an ‘experimental equivalent of a phenomenological analysis’ and ‘an art in which light creates its own metaphor”. Contemporaneous to Damisch’s 1963 notes, it is Marshall McLuhan’s aphorism, “the medium is the message” that is beautiful here,

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70 Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 5.
71 Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 1.
72 “The medium is the message is a phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan meaning that the form of a medium embeds itself in the message, creating a symbiotic relationship by which the medium influences how the message is perceived.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_medium_is_the_message_(phrase) (accessed 25 April 2011).
and, that which we aspire to: “an incomparable image which makes one dream of a photographic substance distinct from subject matter...”\textsuperscript{73} or, ponder this photographic substance enveloped in its own subject matter. Being a cultural event, albeit cultivating natural phenomena, photography is a medium imbued with scope for change - essentially it exists as phenomena nested within a dynamic apparatus dispensing a limited yet effective analogon, tracing the real whilst transforming four dimensional reality of space and time into a two dimensional image embedded within a three-dimensional object. Photography aspires to art whenever it questions its own liminality and/or histories, sliding into opportunity the measure of potential by means of pictographic materiality, iconography and symbology. The thinking of photorealistic images absorbs us in affect and an hermetic synthesis of making and seeing dominating all representation in its reformation of language and communication. Each photograph vacuums up every form of temporal or spatial vision into a beautiful, ubiquitous and deformed parody, “now all art aspires to the condition of photography.” (Sontag, 1977: 149).

\textsuperscript{73} Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 5.
PART 2

A SPLINTERING OF MODALITIES OF SEEING

There are no specific references within Damsich’s notes to types of photographic image in detail, depth or variety except as a single image: initially as photogram then pictorially as daguerreotypes and with passing regard to scientific photography. Daguerreotypes are usually about the magnitude of a matchbox, then, presumably in the notes of Damsich photographs may only be imagined scaled as ‘conventional print’ from a plate or negative, about ‘post-card size’ and up to the variety of sizes available to modern photographic material. There are no hints of photographic negative, positive or print in microscopic or mural format, neither as components consolidated as a discrete work in sequence, series, magazine layout, exhibition wall, montage, collage, panorama, stereoscope, multiple image nor any kind of grouping or extensive relation to each other.

Yet, broad categories of comparable technique or pictorial content, similar in scale and format to painting/drawing, such as landscape, portrait or still life, arrive in early historical note as landscape or experiment and, leading into the twentieth century, increasingly so in the style of discrete practitioners concentrating on a particular expressive and/or conceptual value, located within available versions of photographic technique and media extending the edge of the technology.

Given the condition of ‘trace’ as an indexical representation there is always the tendency to seek a subject referent of interest conditioning photographs as a kind of ‘graphic peel’ off the visible world. Dependent on the precise materiality of the photographic-object as a ‘peel’ it is, in some form, portable and can be juxtaposed alongside this or that photograph so that new and meaningful symbolic or metaphoric image relationships may be created. Photographs also make excellent taxonomies, whether scientific or, more
often than not scientistic\textsuperscript{74} and speculative\textsuperscript{75} as comparative listing or mapping between content of similar type. And, there are plenty of experiments as well as useful alternate and novel forms of photography within its early history including multiple-exposure or combined parts of negative/prints, panoramas and montages. It is, of course, on the basis of early recognition of the significance of similar image-following-image with progressive change, that moving film was created, such precursors being zoetropes, mutoscopes and (zoo) praxinoscopes emanating from flip books and the use of the magic lantern to project images, providing filmic animation based on the principle of ‘persistence of vision’ leading to the Lumière Brothers and Edison Company in the assemblage and development of the earliest motion picture cameras, film processing units and projectors.

However prescient David Hockney is with his comment…

“the pictures on the walls aren't like movies. They don't move, they don't talk, and they'll last longer. They will last longer.” (Hockney, 1983).

…it is necessary to look to forms other than motion pictures in making inquiry of photography’s ‘essence and historical roles’. And, categories that include still photographic objects grouping single, discrete or purposefully aligned images comprising novel photographic form reveal the contingent character of the medium supplying a panoply of image-objects all based upon the still photographic image and the next, and that one and another, until an idea is exhausted.

\textit{Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations} 1963 by Ed Ruscha is an art piece posited between pop, minimal and conceptual art with allusion to the painter Edward Hopper, and made in the same year that Damisch wrote \textit{Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography}. Ruscha explains;

\textsuperscript{74} In this case, scientistic refers to pseudoscientific language.

\textsuperscript{75} Eadward Muybridge’s photographic experiments in movement at the genus of animation, the moving image, are a large scale complex of scientific and scientistic speculation as well as proof of how horses gallop.
"I have eliminated all text from my books - I want absolutely neutral material. My pictures are not that interesting, nor the subject matter. They are simply a collection of 'facts', my book is more like a collection of ready-mades...It is almost worth the money to have the thrill of 400 exactly identical books stacked in front of you." (Ruscha, 1965: 24-25).

By the end of the decade he’d sold several thousand copies in reprint, considered the first modern artist’s book using photography, it plays on photography’s taxonomic capacity in expression of suburban living, no other citation here other than repetitious, mass construction of gas stations, each slightly variant. Ruscha’s pithy, minimalist photographic piece sits well in a continuum of ‘cataloguing’ art works from, say, August Sander’s “People of the 20th Century” to Bernd and Hilla Becher’s images of German industrial architecture, “Water Towers” 1988 and, there are allusions here to eighteenth and nineteenth century endless natural history collections in pretension of science. Also, with Ruscha there is also a text-free ambiguity setting up some American off-centre kind of camp humour around ‘neutrality’ or minimalism. In Ruscha’s 1963 book, each, untitled, deadpan urban image lists in adjacent association one gasoline station alongside another, published with five stations out of actual order, along Route 66 west-east - stations that, in reality, were situated along the highway at a distance solely in accordance with the economics of the gasoline market but sequenced by Ruscha as photographs in compact, linear juxtaposition - along a table or wall, or within a book, page after page of fascinating, syncopated comparison drawing attention to, for example, qualities and idiosyncrasies of implacably ordinary suburban architecture – the gasoline station being, usually, the first secular, modern and commercial edifice located at the entrance and exit of a locality – responding directly with the immediate environment of the artist/photographer, identical to the rest of the first world, post-second world war, on a similar road to inhabiting all of the same as depicted.

David Hockney complained, in the early nineteen eighties, that he was "sick of going to photography exhibitions and seeing photographs the size of postage stamps upon the
wall” (Hockney, 1983: URL 12/7/2009) as a rationale for his making larger scale photographic ‘joiner’ works, whereby Polaroid or one-hour photo-laboratory prints, each a small part or segment of a particular scene, are pieced together to form one larger, overall image-object. In conventional panoramic sequences of images, each single image is photographed and printed in the directional order of western writing, left to right, whereas Hockney in his later ‘joiners’ approaches a scene gesturally, like freehand drawing, using the camera similar to a pencil or brush, taking a curving scan of images through or over a scene as saccadic scanning, wordlessly marking an intuitive hierarchy of nodal points or track change throughout a scene.

Hockney commented his concern on the conservative exhibition format of photographs confident in his knowledge of the history of art and its display leading from the holy apse, aristocratic haul, clutter of academe or genteel association to the gallery space of a modernist-white-box as painting and sculpture reclaimed architectural space. It’s a history that photography could only follow and it’s not until right up to late nineteen seventies and early eighties when artists working with photography began to explore scale, dimensionality, image support, surface, layering in the context of location and space recognizing the white box as a non-neutral area and very much ‘part-of-the-work’, so that as viewer enters a room the whole of the work as well as its components are ‘seen’ simultaneously and reflexively. Hockney senses that photographs are all that may remain, “they will last longer” because the medium is omnivorous and could depict it all including itself but it can't be it otherwise it becomes all there is.

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76 Of course there had been major exhibitions that had used, say, larger scale prints such as the Edward Steichen curated exhibition Family of Man 1955 as a travelling arrangement, commencing at the MoMA in New York ending with a surviving edition at the Castle of Clervaux in Luxembourg but that tended towards an educational style of display, also published in book form. Otherwise, commercial displays in the lobbies of corporate buildings, notably Margaret Bourke White in 1933, the NBC Building New York, or as ‘wallpaper’ interior decoration, again, more on a commercial rather than artistic front. Also and relatively occasional art shows that, for example, took up the notion of juxtaposition of disparately correlated image content, scientific and art photographs, such as curated by Laszlo Moholy Nagy.
David Hockney looked on photography from the viewpoint of an acclaimed artist educated at the Royal College of Art, London, with his oeuvre and success as a painter and graphic artist in the trans-Atlantic pop art milieu of the nineteen sixties. Hockney appeared quite dated amongst post-pop, post minimal, conceptual and/or post-object artists come the early eighties when he began his published and televised research of photography as art. Since the first availability of photography, painters from Courbet to, say, Francis Bacon, numerous artists had used the photograph as source material for painting or printmaking. However, with the increase in availability and convenience of small, portable ‘professional and semi-professional’ photographic cameras as consumer regalia there were many and more artists by the nineteen sixties using photography to document their own artwork, painting and/or sculpture, then taking to the medium as a primary form and in that context re-engaging the hackneyed query, is photography art?77

John Hilliard marks out a discernible history showing that uncertainty usually occurs whenever photographs are shown directly alongside ‘paintings and sculptures’. The problem repeats in part because the terms ‘art’, ‘photography’ or ‘painting’ are meaningless outside of a paradigmatic context and in deixis prone to constant need of re-definition.

Jonathan Crary defines a splintering of modalities of seeing from within the nineteenth century commencing…

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77 John Hilliard commenced a professorial paper titled Is Photography Art? at the Slade School of Art, London1981 with a quote from the wonderfully portentous sounding Professor Fred Brown from the Studio, Volume 1, 1893, “Art and photography run on entirely different lines”. In his response, almost ninety years later, at the Slade, Hilliard maintains “Since the very beginnings of photography” the question of whether or not photography is art “…has been raised with periodic regularity, usually regarding the aspirations of photographers vying for parity with painters and sculptors.” However, during his era, Hilliard observes a reverse of flow, with art moving towards photography as increasing numbers of artists began to use camera; still, movie and early portable video as their “primary medium” and the work from that practice is consequentially regarded as art simply because it had been made by an accredited artist within the context of art, and “accordingly, their pictures are disseminated within an art milieu” whilst photographs are shown directly alongside, for example, painting and sculpture. And, as Hilliard points out, this is actually a recurring situation – “in the Paris Salons of the Nineteenth Century (after 1859), in the Photo-Secessionists’ Gallery 291 (opened in New York in 1905), and during various European art movements of the Twenties and Thirties.”
“...with Manet, impressionism, and/or post-impressionism, a new model of visual representation and perception emerges that constitutes a break with several centuries of another model of vision, loosely defineable as Renaissance perspectival or normative, and most theories of contemporary visual culture are bound to version of this ‘rupture’.”

Then, there is a second set of “perspectival space, mimetic codes and references” that has “usually coexisted uncritically with another very different periodization of the history of European visual culture that equally needs to be abandoned.” (Crary, 1990: 4).

And this latter modality entails photography from its early development and proliferation along with “related forms of ‘realism’” through the nineteenth century. Generally speaking, photography has since been seen as part of a continuum of a Renaissance mode of vision for which photography and then motion pictures extend a playing out of perspectival space and perception.

“Thus we are often left with a confusing bifurcated model of vision in the nineteenth century: on one level there is a relatively small number of artists who generated a radically new kind of seeing and signification, while on a more quotidian level vision remains embedded within the same generalist ‘realist’ strictures that had organized it since the fifteenth century.” (Crary, 1990: 4).

Central to Crary’s “delineation of modernization of vision” is as the idea that “the sense of touch has been an integral part of the classical theories of vision in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Subsequent dissociation of touch from sight occurs within a pervasive separation of the senses and “industrial remapping of the body in the nineteenth century.” (Crary, 1990:19). Hilliard also “rapidly concludes” that the “answer to this question lies at hand” (Hilliard,1981: URL 27/7/2009), that is to say the question of photography being art or not, is that painting and sculpture are often classified as the plastic arts, whereby the outcome, the product, shows and consists of “tangible or tactile characteristics” (Hilliard,1981: URL 27/7/2009) and that at the core of the traditional
conception of art is the sense of touch. Some twenty-one years earlier, Hilliard suggested that:

“the artist, striving to ‘grasp’ the world chooses touchable subjects” and by that he refers to “still life, landscape and the nude” and “uses the touch of his/her own hand in reconstructing a representation of them” then Hilliard opines “this in turn is touched by the mind of the perciipient” (Hilliard, 1981: URL 27/7/2009).

Recently, Damisch refers to the thickness (épaisseur) of painterly works, the layering and underside of painting and its “careful exposé of such theoretical models” meaning “critical revision of the categories and narratives that structure the history of art” as a counter argument to “industrial remapping of the body” (Crary, 1990: 19) that had led to a general dislocation of vision from touch.

Painting and sculpture are tangible, entirely synthetic objects, ‘graspable’ in body and mind at the interface of image content in its material form, but, not so apparent in the photograph. Hilliard designates the relative transparency of photograph, normally considered advantageous as problematic compared to the opacity, density or épaisseur of painterly/sculptural surface. In the photograph:

“the intervention between surface and content is so slight that one seems to look ‘through’ the picture plane without disruption.” (Hilliard, 1981: URL 27/7/2009).

78 “The guiding principle of Damisch’s work is the conception of the work of art as a ‘theoretical model’; that is, the capacity of art to invent paradigmatic structures, such as perspective, which operate on a both technical and perceptual level. To conceive of the work of art as a theoretical object, as Damisch proposes we do, is not to claim that the work of art simply illustrates a theory; after all, perspective appeared well in advance of its formalization by science. Rather, the careful exposé of such theoretical models must lead to a critical revision of the categories and narratives that structure the history of art. Damisch’s notion of ‘thickness’ [épaisseur], for instance, performs this critical work within the modernist field of aesthetics. Damisch’s excavation of the ‘undersides’ of painting, which was initiated by a series of key essays on, among others, Pollock, Dubuffet, and Mondrian that are assembled in Fenêtre jaune cadmium, has influenced more recent discussions of the informe as a counter-modernist strategy.” Dialogues with Others: A Symposium with Hubert Damisch Conference is organized by Sophie Berrebi and Eric De Bruyn with the support of OSK, ASCA- The Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, the University of Amsterdam and the University of Groningen 28-29 May 2009 http://www.hum.uva.nl/damisch-conference/object.cfm/E71B747E-1321-B0BE-A4C69104847E155B (accessed 22 April 2011)

79 In English both ‘see’ and ‘grasp’ are synonyms for ‘understand’.
And, implicitly…

“…the sensory interplay between the materiality of the work and its content, ordinarily central to the visual arts, is virtually lost.” (Hilliard, 1981: URL 27/7/2009).

Then, similar to Damisch’s allusion to the matter of symbology making, say, an art object ‘think’ hardly exists in photographs but, in painting and sculpture…

“…incongruent disruptions between form and content the (often literally) rough edges, are a vital ingredient, a means by which works acquire a ‘life of their own’ additional to their representative function.” (Hilliard, 1981: URL 27/7/2009).

Hilliard goes on to make a bizarre, yet, charming metaphor concerning photography’s characteristic and comparatively direct conveyance of image content:

“Photographs, however, like discrete servants, deliver their message then retire quickly, leaving the recipient to study their contents undisturbed by their presence.” (Hilliard, 1981: URL 27/7/2009).
**THIS INDUSTRIAL PERSPECTIVE**

Thinking along with an image or object means to engage in the construction of meaning and this operates in various ways as we ‘decode messages’ on all gradations between obvious and subtle. At an elementary yet sublimated level, perspective as a geometric substructure to a depiction provides a point of engagement, where the observer complies with the strategy in order to assemble the illusion of smaller appearing at a greater distance than larger pictorial elements. Perspective is incorporated naturally within the camera and with the advent of photography it becomes industrial so that: “in the camera the origins of linear perspective have been instrumentalized.” (Romanyshyn 1984: 63).

The camera and the lens perform perspective without the application of a geometric calculation making geometrization of space in the world implicit, and within that silent designation, a distancing of the observer from a world that is the object of observation. The photographic lens itself “…complies with an especially familiar though very old and dilapidated system of spatial construction…”\(^1\) only because the lens automatically creates perspective and is capable of doing so with such accuracy that the principles of perspective function in precise reverse, so that, for example, architectural ground plans and aerial contour maps can be extrapolated exactly from a photograph of the same, alternatively, a photograph only loses one point perspective when something flat is photographed and, paradoxically, that can appear infinite. The camera obscura provided a drawing aid and as the lens was added to the assemblage an effective alternative method to individual interpretations of perspective or guesswork before a consistent mathematical method fixed a point of perspective and relinquished the need for a camera. Early in the 15\(^{th}\) Century, Filippo Brunelleschi’s systemizing of the fundamental rules of perspective applied to architecture revived the concept of the vanishing point, known but lost to the Greeks and Romans. The seminal publication ‘*Da Pittura*’ (‘On

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\(^0\) My underlined emphasis
\(^1\) Damisch, *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography*, Note 3.
Painting) by Alberti in 1435 codified for painters in particular, most of the practical work on depiction extant in early Renaissance Italy including the idea that vision makes a triangle, and from this it is clear that a very distant quantity seems no larger than a point. However, it is the dizzying distance that this triadic view that sets up linear perspective as...

“...a celebration of the eye of distance, a created convention which not only extends and elaborates the natural power of vision to survey things from afar, but also elevates that power into a method, a way of knowing, which has defined for us the world with which we are so readily familiar. It is the transformation of the eye into technology and a redefinition of the world to suit the eye, a world of maps and charts, blueprints and diagrams. The world in which we are amongst other things, silent readers of the printed word and users of the camera...” (Romanyszyn 1984: 33).

As John Hilliard, for example, had already got the message, thus far:

“Artists, no less than others, inhabit a largely urbanized world that fosters detachment, that breeds isolation of the individual in the ‘lonely crowd’, that encourages us to stay home, stay off the streets and not confront the world directly – just read about it in the papers; watch it on television.” (Hilliard 1981: URL 27/7/2009)

And, it such a precise, remote and vicarious acquaintance is that provided by the photograph.

Michel Foucault’s critical work on Discipline and Punishment (Foucault,1977) is about understanding processes and organizations in a context of colossal socio-economic transformation both rationalizing and modernizing the subject: (re)creating the individual, modifying all social forms and exchange including family, schooling, agrarian and artisanal work, birth, life and death. So, the industrial revolution unfolds consistent with innovative administrative methods of control towards a common urban existence and, usually, about a three generation history or less for each one of us. Jonathan Crary
theorizes on “the development of new disciplinary techniques...fixing of quantitative and statistical norms of behaviour” (Crary, 1990: 17-18) informed by Foucault’s description of the task of newly accredited and constituted human sciences regulating and moderating individual behaviour occurring from the early 1800s as Foucault “ostensibly examines ‘disciplinary’ institutions such as prisons, schools and the military.” (Crary, 1990: 17-18).

And, Crary tracks a particular modern fixation with defective human vision that contributed, implicitly but with increasing precision, a delineation of ‘normative’ and new technologies for imposition of a standard vision. Thus, the invention of optical devices such as the phenakistoscope, providing early forms of simulation-of-movement in images or the stereoscope developed as a measure and formalization of binocular vision so that all fundamental components of nineteenth century ‘realism’ and mass visual culture, were developed in the milieu of the transformation of vision prior to photography and, accordingly…

“...in no way required photographic procedures or even the development of mass production techniques.” (Crary, 1990: 15-17).

Such unique hypotheses on the reconstruction of vision connect and reconnects similarly defined conditions of the modern, for example:

“Baudrillard’s notion of a shift from the fixed signs of feudal and aristocratic societies to the exchangeable symbolic regime of modernity finds a reciprocal transformation articulated by Foucault in terms of the individual” (Crary, 1990, 17)

and described by Foucault as...

“...the moment that saw the transition from historico-ritual mechanisms for the formation of individuality to the scientifico-disciplinary mechanisms, when the normal took over from the ancestral and measurement from status, thus substituting for the individuality of memorable man that of calculable man, that became the moment when the sciences of
man became possible is the moment when a new technology of power and a new political
anatomy of the body were implemented.” (Foucault, 1977:193).

Cute names, Michel and Jeremy for guys who scheme famously about imprisonment;
Michel Foucault employs Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, an architectural design for a
prison, never fully realized, in which inmates are isolated one from another, unable, ever
to see out of their cell, yet all are constantly observable from one central point. Ironic, it
seems that the panoptic ideal arrives close by, we enter it on waking and dream it asleep
relentlessly, terrifyingly realized - echoed in Orwell’s 1984 and Gilliam's Brazil - an era of
CCTV, electronic identity and banking, interactive and digital media, tracking and
listening devices, surveillance. Crary identifies the panopticon as Foucault’s “primary
theoretical object” (Crary, 1990, 17-18) from which he surveys transformation of
humanity itself into an object of observation as a matter of “institutional control or
scientific and behavioural study…” (Crary, 1990, 17-18) and, in pursuit of penal,
surgically precise and administratively exact compliance within modern power structures
Foucault overlooks “…new forms by which vision itself becomes a kind of discipline or

Foucault is unequivocal within Discipline and Punishment, in asserting…

“…our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance…we are neither in the
ampitheatre nor on the stage but in the panoptic machine.” (Foucault, 1977: 217).

Crary muses that, although Foucault is comparing power arrangements across antiquity
and modernity, his “use of the term ‘spectacle’ is clearly bound up in the polemics of
perjorative and alludes, dismissively, to Guy DeBord et al and their analyses of
capitalism of the time (Debord, 1967). Crary imagines Foucault's disdain for any facile or
superficial use of spectacle as an explanation of how the masses are controlled or duped
Crary positions arrival of ‘the society of spectacle’ within the late nineteen twenties:

"concurrent with the technological and institutional origins of television, the beginnings of synchronized sound in movies, the use of mass media techniques by the Nazi Party in Germany, the rise of urbanism, and the political failure of surrealism in France." (Crary, 1989: 97-110).

All of the nineteenth century optical devices Crary investigates implicate twentieth century devices. For instance, to ‘bring it home’ the television and its annexation of ‘evening-time’, ‘the couch’ and the ‘living room’...

"...no less than the panopticon arrangements of space, regulation of activity and the deployment of individual bodies that codify and normalize the observer "within rigidly defined systems of visual consumption." (Crary, 1990: 18)

Susan Sontag alludes to Plato’s Cave, “still reveling, its age old habit, in mere images of truth” (Sontag, 1979: 3), and, Crary extemporizes,

“...techniques for the management of attention, for imposing homogeneity, anti-nomadic procedures that fixed and isolated the observer using "partitioning and cellularity...in which the individual is reduced as a political force. The organization of mass culture did not proceed on some other inessential or super-structural area of social practice; it was fully embedded within the same transformations Foucault outlines." (Crary, 1990: 18)

Crary does not suggest that Debord’s notion of “the society of spectacle” spontaneously appears about the first two decades of the twentieth century, on the contrary, he notes its “prehistory” positing at least one of its features:

“Since the spectacle’s job is to cause a world that is no longer directly perceptible to be seen via different specialized mediations, it is inevitable that it should elevate the human sense of sight to the special place once occupied by touch; the most abstract of the senses, and the most easily deceived, sight is naturally the most readily adaptable to present day society’s generalized abstraction.” (Debord, 1967,18).
In order to exercise a “rebuilding of an observer fitted for the tasks of ‘spectacular’
consumption” it requires an “autonomization of sight” and its “disassociation from
touch…” (Crary, 1990: 19)…to prepare humanity for industrialization (Crary, 1990: 19).

The relentless swing of the demolition ball modernising throughout the nineteenth
century swipes classical vision:

“…what begins in the 1820s and 1830s is a repositioning of the observer, outside of the
fixed relations of interior/exterior presupposed by the camera obscura and into an un-
demarcated terrain on which the distinction between internal sensation and external signs
is irrevocably blurred. If there is ever a ‘liberation’ of vision in the nineteenth century,
this is when it first happens.” (Crary, 1990: 19).

So that, out of liberty afforded by ruin, rubble and ground emerges a plurality of means to
recode the activity of the eye, to regiment it, to heighten its productivity and to prevent its
distraction…

“…prosthetic and complementary to the needs of newly risen industrial power structures.
“Thus the imperatives of capitalist modernization, while demolishing the field of classical
vision, generated techniques for imposing visual attentiveness, rationalizing sensation,

And, such modernizing vision distances and controls a more nervous, indulgent, mimetic
world of simulacra and the hyperreal. (Baudrillard, 1988: 166-184).

In heterogeneous bits Walter Benjamin notes, cuts and pastes observation and quote,
fiction and document collaging

“an ambulatory observer shaped by convergence of new urban spaces, technologies and
new economic and symbolic functions of images and products – forms of artificial lighting,
new use of mirrors, glass and steel architecture, railroads and museums, gardens,
photography, fashion, crowds.” (Crary, 1990: 20).

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Interesting to note the use of a lenticular term ‘blurred’ describing diffusion between sense and symbol,
Benjamin points out an era he envisioned but never arrived into, drafting modernist perception as:

“acutely temporal and kinetic…modernity subverts even the possibility of a contemplative beholder. There is never a pure access to a single object; vision is always multiple, adjacent to and overlapping other objects, desires and vectors. Even the congealed space of the museum cannot transcend a world where everything is in circulation.” (Crary, 1990: 20).

Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche attends to the shock of neue weltanschauung:

“sensibility immensely irritable…the abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever: cosmopolitanism in foods, literatures, newspapers, forms, tastes, even landscapes. The tempo of this influx prestissimo; the impressions erase each other; one instinctively resists taking anything in, taking anything deeply, to ‘digest’ anything; a weakening of the power to digest results from this. A kind of adaptation to the flood of impressions takes place: men unlearn spontaneous action, they merely react to stimuli from the outside.” (Nietzsche, 1967, 47).

Within this modernist milieu, images or media function industrially, accelerating, yet, adjacent to everything else:

“The circulation and reception of all visual imagery is so closely interrelated by the middle of the century that any single form of visual representation no longer has significant autonomous identity. The meanings and effects of any single image are always adjacent to this overloaded and plural sensory environment and to the observer who inhabited it.” (Crary, 1990: 23).

Towards the twenty-first century and the shift to digital entails all imagery being reformed as pixel and vector yet, consistent with all forms of technological shift, first appears as a parody of the technology it superseded. The minimalist artist Carl Andre, prior to any really noticeable technological shift from its analog status labels photography “the
pornography of art"³³ (Andre: URL 25/4/2011) meaning the voyeuristic gaze akin to the gaze of surveillance; both are a securely distanced, vicarious yet overly-familiar looking. However, the ability of the observer to control or affect *le source véritable* of what is seen, also becomes removed, cool and dangerous...

"...pornographic images allow a protracted, voyeuristic gaze, detached from the demands of actual engagement, and this is precisely a dominant characteristic of photographs – whether of installations of sculpture, war atrocities or explicitly displayed genitalia.” (Hilliard, 1981: URL 27/7/2009).

Knowledge, through photographs must always be fractional because the language of photographs, the array of symbolic tools at its disposal though effective and varied, are limited, as Barthes accepts, the photographic analogon is ‘good enough’ in itself, even brilliant, but just plain incomplete:

“...The intimately exposed body in the centre-fold cannot avoid the most prolonged and searching gaze that seeks to ‘know it’; yet even though the captive image cannot escape this probing, it resists being ‘known’ precisely because of the nature of its imprisonment - as a mere facsimile, without speech or motion or smell or any of the warm fullness of bodily presence. The mutilated soldier or slain gangster can be studied with morbid curiosity - an experience cleansed of the stench of decaying flesh, of the sound of agonized distanced experience of the world, without danger or hardship or commitment – and without real excitement, real anger or real pleasure. The view in every sense is two-dimensional.” (Hilliard, 1981: URL 27/7/2009).

Ultimately, the photograph is returned to its objective state as illusion and a very limited analogon of reality.

³³ “I’m afraid we get a great deal of our exposure to art through magazines and through slides and I think this is dreadful, this is anti-art because art is a direct experience with something in the world and photography is just a rumour, a kind of pornography of art.” (Andre: URL 25/4/2011)
IF ONE OF THOSE DOTS STOPPED MOVING FOREVER

Monotheism has always been a weapon of mass control, of surveillance, as enslavement enforces religious conversion with the aim of suppressing and/or eliminating traditional cultural unities and consciousness based upon beliefs, religions and cultures of the enslaved. Peoples of the Ibo, Ashanti and Yoruba societies, nations and cultures from the west-coast of Africa, shared little if any original ethnic or cultural similarity between each other, but, to the white enslavers of the eighteenth century they were all black, culled and shipped as slaves, detailed to pick tobacco and the cotton in the share-cropped fields of the Southern States of America. With conviction and threat the overseer would let the pickers know that if he wasn’t watching them, God would be watching over them in the pickin’ fields, seeking out and making note of the lazy and the indolent. Surveillance at it most crude, yet effective, devout illusion as a method of management, from dawn to dusk, as low as it gets and the way it works, the grandest purpose for an everyday creed. The more powerful a religion the greater impact it must have in controlling a population, supplying the best and most effective discipline. So, whichever imperial hand guides this era, god is watching you now, do not stray.

With reference to Samuel Y. Edgerton the art historian writer of a seminal history of linear perspective, Robert D. Romanyszyn makes a comparison between two illustrations of the city of Florence, the first dates from about 1350 a fresco in Loggia Del Bigallo and the second known as the “Map with a Chain” dating about 1480. They sit either side of the invention of linear perspective by Filippo Brunelleschi, 1425, codified in Alberti’s treatise Da Pictura published during 1435-6. Romanyszyn observes…

“…between these two paintings there is a world of difference; between them a new world has emerged.” (Romanyszyn, 1989: 35).

Romanyszyn describes the first image one of clutter and confusion as buildings crowd in onto on another through multiple perspectives there appears no positioning for the
viewer, except amongst it. Loggia Del Bigallo appears similar to a child’s rendering of a house with front, back and sides presented all at once, quite naïve in appearance compared with the second image, a more realistic view presented about one hundred and thirty years later. Although, the latter image, Map with a Chain, is not more real, but, simply more familiar as a mode of depiction to a present day observer, and the disparity one image from another is not concerned with simple optical realism but a difference between one way of thinking and another, one world and another.

Linear perspective vision according to Samuel Y. Edgerton is the ‘innate’ geometry in our eyes’ (Edgerton, 1977: 4) yet this is no more a natural way of seeing than a Picasso canvas of broken planes and simultaneous, multiple perspectives. Perspective is a learnt experience that is sublimated and thereby appears innate, thus as a child within a western culture we develop in language, refining ways of thinking and we are taught to see…

“…a three-dimensional plane where depth is a matter of spatial distance from the viewer and where all objects decrease in size as they recede from the viewer towards a vanishing point.” (Romanyshyn, 1989: 32-33)

The impact of this embedded way of thinking is described by Helen Gardner, the American art historian who notes that linear perspective…

“…made possible scale drawing, maps, charts, graphs and diagrams – those means of exact representation without which modern science and technology would be impossible.” (De la Croix & Tansey, 1977: 434).

William Ivins, cultural historian of similar relevance, states…

“…many reasons are assigned for the mechanization of life and industry in the nineteenth century, but the mathematical development of perspective was absolutely prerequisite to it.” (Ivins, 1975: 12).
Also, Edgerton observes that…

“…space capsules built for zero gravity, astronomical equipment for demarcating so-called black holes, atom smashers which prove the existence of anti-matter – these are end products of the discovered vanishing point.” (Edgerton, 1977: 65).

The anonymous painter of the Loggia Del Bigallo fresco gave no consideration to spatial homogeneity as in linear perspective, but reflects the sense of an artist without disconnection between touch and sight, depicting the world as though walking through the city of Florence as a transposable tactile/visual experience from many different planes and edges as opposed to from a single vantage point:
“In short, what we have with this earlier painting is a rather vivid impression of what it must have been like to live in another, earlier, medieval world. The painting tells us that it is was a world marked by time and by the presence of the body in the midst of things. But, this is also depiction prior to the advent of perspective whereby time is made space, the viewer distanced from the body of the world removed from being amongst things. If this fresco is confusing it is because it is not yet showing a city that has become “a spatial landscape mapped by a bird’s eye view.” (Romanysyn, 1989: 35).

Map of the Chain, Florence 1480AD approx.

Whereas, the Map of Chain view of Florence 1480 presents such a ‘bird’s eye view’ from above the city “elevated and distant, completely out of plastic and sensory reach of the depicted city” (Edgerton, 1977: 9-10) Seated on the hill to the right hand corner of the image is a man facing towards Florence as depicted, apparently sketching, but certainly close or similar to the fixed viewpoint of the whole, a man of distant vision.

“Seated there as he is above the city, he incarnates at its birth a new ideal of knowledge according to which, the further we remove ourselves from the world, the better we know it. It is an ideal, however, which by definition means knowledge of a world that is
increasingly disincarnate. On the hill above the city only his eyes remain ‘in touch’ with
the world observed below. But, at that distance such eyes, unrelated, for example, to ears
and hands, can no longer know the words of anger or of love uttered by those living in the

Approaching a city by airplane gives a similar view to that of the Map of Chain depiction,
closer in time to the twenty-first century it is a familiar scene that sits well with the innate
geometry in our eyes or, indeed, that of the photograph by means of which the origins of
linear perspective have been instrumentalized, it is the way reality is usually defined in
the modern world, the narrative

movies watched and the magazines read. Nevertheless, the best travel writers and
photographers usually invest in the very highest quality footwear as an essential part of
equipment, entering the earlier vision cannot be eliminated only suppressed or sidelined
because it’s always ‘felt it in our bones’. For a traveler newly arrived in a strange city,
burdened with luggage and seeking out a room for the night, the veracity of it means
aching limbs, sore feet and shoulders clothes needing to be washed and a feed to had,
this is a city…

“...measured not by the gaze of a distant eye, but by the history of the body.”
(Romanysyn, 1989: 38).

Despite dislocation from the world to suit our industrial function…

“...we remain in our everyday living situations bodily creatures with a carnal knowledge of
the world. It persists this life of the body…forming the underside of our technological
world.” (Romanysyn, 1989: 38).

Nonetheless, on the surface, linear perspective persists as this “innate geometry in our
eyes” (Edgerton, 1977: 9) or this “especially familiar though very old and dilapidated
system of spatial construction”. And, within photography, a lenticular aperture opens up

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84 Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 3.
a landscape convergent upon a vanishing point comprising only light and its absence articulated solely within a fixed eye of observer of the world focused as an object of vision, a spectacle. The line of sight running from the eye to the object of view or ‘vanishing point’ is referred to by Leon Battista Alberti in the first written primer of perspective *Da Pittura* 1435 as the ‘centre point’, ‘punto de fuga’ meaning ‘point of flight’ or the ‘prince’ of rays relating to the princely ruler of Renaissance city states usually commissioning art of the period, so that:

“when perspectival sets were used at the French royal palace of Versailles in the seventeenth century, King Louis XIV was seated directly on the line so that he alone had the perfect place from which to see the perspective” (Mirzoeff, 1999: 40)

…and what is being described here is the ideal viewer as “imagined by the system” distinguished from the actual viewer.

“In Renaissance and early modern court culture, the ideal viewer and actual viewer were often the same person – the king, prince or other authority figure for whom the work was made.” (Mirzoeff, 1999: 40)

Alberti explains the fairly simple process of the making of a vanishing point as follows:

“First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen.” (Edgerton, 1976, 42-43)

What is being created here is a frame, a ‘window’, for painting, inherent in all photographs and critical in articulating images to print and screen, whereby photographs are a form of image production dependent upon selection over synthesis so the image is formed by choosing out of what already exists ‘out there’, that is, beyond the ‘window’, classified as and by means of frame. Meaning is determined by inclusion inside the enclosure, shifting as elements change or are changed within a fixed or, more often, mobile ‘viewfinder’. Inevitably, relationships among these elements are developed,
mostly, independent of the ‘real’ or actual spatio-temporal, relations amongst those ‘original’ elements, so that,

“...if the photographer selects only two of the people out of a crowd to include within the frame, a new relationship is formed among the two which is valid for the new context of the elements, but does not exist in reality.” (Derman, 1995: URL 13/8/2009).

And, because of the human propensity to seek meaning, within the frame, no thing is ever neutral so that selection (or synthesis) needs, at best, to be intelligent and skilled.

Next Alberti makes a decision on the size of human figures within the painting, dividing the height of the man into three parts measuring each third as a braccio, just over half a metre, and with that measure the bottom line of the rectangle may be divided without limit and as needed for depiction...

“...then I establish a point in the rectangle wherever I wish; and as it occupies the place where the centric ray strikes, I shall call this the centric point. The suitable position for this

David Cubby Photography, the Dominant Aesthetic 94
centric point is no higher from the base line than the height of a man to be represented in the painting, for in this way both the viewers and the objects in the painting will seem to be on the same plane. Having placed the centric point, I draw lines from it to each of the divisions on the base line.” (Edgerton, 1976: 42-43).

Through the centric point is then drawn a horizontal line across the frame that Alberti notes as the ‘centric line’, referred to today as the horizon line, setting the limit for the height of any object depicted within the frame, viewed, as it were, through the ‘window’, and fixed at the eye level of an observer *imagined* to be standing on a horizontal plane, staring straight ahead at the world. Similar to a viewer standing at edge of the water, staring out to the ocean, the eye level is always synonymous with the horizon rising and falling in precise concordance with the position adopted, lower or higher but always gazing straight ahead. At the horizon line all heads of people within the image will appear at the level of the horizon and size diminish ‘from the feet up’ to create an illusion of distance known as ‘horizon line isocephaly’ and as Edgerton notes...

> “…no picture made by any artist in any civilization anywhere in the world before 1425 intentionally shows this phenomenon.” (Edgerton, 1976: 196).

Even so, this is historical invention, *no other previous and/or concurrent cultural depiction ever included this system*, with the implication that no one saw this way prior to Brunelleschi’s discovery and Alberti’s treatise in Renaissance Italy in the early fifteenth century, none had this construction contained within their visual conscience as an innate geometry of the eye. Perspective convergence to the science of medieval optics would likely appear mere ‘*fata morgana*’, mirage, disprovable by simple geometry to hand. Containment of pre-modern modes of visual construction made room, centre-stage for linear perspective vision, corresponding to ‘automatic’ realism within the photographic image and movie screen. And it endures in the field described by Crary of visual culture existing between a radically new kind of seeing and signification and late ‘realism’ through the nineteenth and twentieth century.
Hannah Arendt the philosopher makes note that modern alienation takes a “twofold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into self” (Arendt, 1958, 6). A voyage that is either telescopic; from outer space glancing back to the earth and beyond, or microscopic searching deep into the interior of the body, material of the planet. Notional or actual, the constraint of window implies ‘boundary’, a screen, formal separation of observer and observed, conditioning perception as prescription for exclusion of self from the world and alienation so characteristic of the modern era fulfilling Descartes notion of dualism and the foundations of a consciousness of...

“...self, separated from the world, the imaginal eye of the artist” having “already prepared space for that achievement.” (Romanysyn, 1989, 42).

Such a window on perception means confinement or eclipse of the body as ‘l’oeil catégorique’, ‘the eye-emphatic’ the sensate giving primacy over access to the world, dis-locating and anaesthetizing, by means of a visually ‘transparent’ screen that is for all other senses ‘opaque’ or impervious, sealing off touch, small, taste and sound. The world becomes spectacle alone, the object of vision that is measurable, analyzable, information, electronic, data, byte, and, all of it endlessly reproducible and transposable as viewfinder, print, movie, television, computer, radar, MRI, CCTV, macro, micro and tele-scopic thus...

“...the microscope and telescope as early instruments of technology will incarnate this fixed, intense, focused stare of the single eye.” (Romanysyn 1989: 48)

According to Romanysyn, an isocephalic view...

“...prepares space for sixteenth-century emergence of the scientific world of explanations” giving example of Galileo’s law of falling bodies, whereby all objects fall equally fast, within a neutral, consistent space and are rendered flattened and equal as: “calculable objects in a mathematical equation.” (Romanysyn, 1989: 43).
And, it's a world-view that brings everything to the same level, an equalizing vision providing a ground or foundation for reductive measurement of the world as specimen, matter, body, corpse and the dynamic whole, disassembled into elements, modules to be reassembled in new or preferred configuration. And, not merely a way of seeing seen as useful to science but at the disposal of all of social organization. And, a monocular view William Blake predicts in his famous epithet “May God us keep, from single vision and Newton's sleep” (Wright, 2003, 30), though as God is leveled to an horizontal infinity and calculated as nought, it becomes human vision that is the world’s measure. And this is a dreaming that leads to an explosion of technology, literally so, of ‘mutually assured destruction’ as well as similarly equitable outcome as global consumers of exactly the same manufacture of burger and coke. Foucault defines this as the...

“...moment when the sciences of man became possible is the moment when a new technology of power and a new political anatomy of the body were implemented” (Crary, 1990: 18-19) and, in the same instant, Crary’s defines a “subsequent dissociation of touch from sight occurs within a pervasive ‘separation of the senses’ and industrial remapping of the body in the nineteenth century.” (Crary, 1990: 18-19).

On the reverse of the great seal of the United States of America is an all-seeing eye and can be seen on any dollar bill, it is the ‘eye of providence’ surrounded by a triangle and rays of light floating above an incomplete pyramid of thirteen steps representing the original number of states, the eye is surrounded by the words Annuit Cœptis, meaning ‘He approves our undertakings’ and below the pyramid Novus Ordo Seclorum, meaning ‘New Order of the Ages’.

The ‘Eye of Providence’ emblem, of an eye set within triangle and hallowed with rays of light signaling glory appears during the late eighteenth century, as iconography of freemasonry in the publication of Thomas Smith Webb’s Freemasons Monitor 1797 although, contemporary freemasons disavow any formal connection with the design of the great seal of the United States of America. A similar radiant eye set within triangle
appears above the French ‘*Declaration Des Droits De L’Homme et du Citoyen*’ 1798 and
the radiant eye set in a triangle symbol adopted from Christian iconography whereby the
triangle refers to the Holy Trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as well as
analogous symbols recovered and accredited by seventeenth century writers claiming
origin in the Greek classics and similar symbols recur historically within alchemy,
astrology, kabala, Rosicrucianism and freemasonry often touted as a suggestive of the
protective observation of a benevolent deity. Indeed the iconic ‘all-seeing eye’ can be
traced back to Bhuddist scriptures, for example, *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, represented
within a triangle again, as the trinity Bhudda, Dharma and Sangha. Horus the son of
Osiris god of the sky of the Egyptians is represented by the *Wedjat*, ‘Eye of Horus’ from
a solar deity, an all-seeing eye and Horus’s mother, Isis, required of him to protect the
people of Egypt from Set, the god of the desert, storms and chaos. Horus became
depicted as a falcon, or as a falcon-headed man - one eye weakened as the moon and
one eye strong as the sun, the god of sky, light and war - leading to Horus’ name, (in
Egyptian, Heru), which meant the distant one. And, it is this original version of the
symbol that points up increased distance between humanity and reality.

In the movie *The Third Man* from the novel by Graham Greene, a moment of
conversation atop a temporarily inoperative giant ferris wheel in post-war Vienna the
point where the main character Holly Martins has discovered that his old school friend,
whom he believed to be dead, is the ‘Third Man’ Harry Lime, it transpires he faked his
death at cost of life to others in order to avoid capture over a profiteering scam marketing
dilute and, therefore, lethal antibiotics across the British and Russian Sectors of
immediate post-war Germany:

> “Holly Martins (Joseph Cotton):‘Have you ever seen any of your victims?’ Harry Lime
(Orson Welles) ‘You know, I never feel comfortable on these sort of thing’s (referring to
the stuck ferris wheel). ‘Victims? Don’t be melodramatic. Look down there. Tell me. Would
you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving forever? If I offered you
twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stopped, would you really, old man, tell me to keep my money, or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare? Free of income tax, old man. Free of income tax - the only way you can save money nowadays’” (Greene, 1949)

In pyramidal structure, the higher up the managerial ladder the further separated from quotidian life and it’s a recognisably similar arrangement to that of a monotheistic God, ‘on high’ and ‘in heaven’, central but far from a world revolving around and beneath the deity. But, with linear perspective as a measure of the world all that exists is human vision and God is dethroned losing his place…

“…in the fifteenth century, before he is banished in the seventeenth century by Descartes to the beginning of things as a harmless watchmaker, and declared dead by Nietzsche in the nineteenth. Yet, the same perspective moves humanity exuert, stage left, as Copernicus, in the year 1543 takes view from the sun and a de-centred earth is set in oscillation around its source of light and energy so that we could only adopt an “astrophysical viewpoint” (Arendt, 1958: 265). Thereafter, we float on an earth set upon uncertain elliptical revolution through the ether, our median place within the cosmos eclipsed by Copernicus, our pivotal position within creation dispersed with Darwin and our central self, our ego, devolved through the work of Freud.” (Romanyshyn, 1958: 47).
THE IMMOBILE EYE

The fixed viewer, immobile, behind the window, stares straight ahead positioned to measure the world, this is the monadic eye referred by Jonathon Crary as a ‘Cartesian camera obscura’ defined by Descartes and Locke and according to Richard Rorty, differing from anything in Greek or medieval culture and that the fundamental accomplishment of both philosophers was…

“…the conception of the human mind as an inner space in which both pains and clear distinct ideas passed in review before an inner eye…The novelty was the notion of a single space in which bodily and perceptual sensations…were objects of quasi-observation.” (Rorty, 1979: 49-50).

Furthermore, Crary notes that all comes to closure as a prevailing modality of vision at the same time photography emerges in the early part of the nineteenth century:

“Historically speaking we must recognize how for nearly two-hundred years, from the late 1500s to the end of the 1700s, the structural and optical principles of the camera obscura coalesced into a dominant paradigm through which was described the status and possibilities of the observer.” (Crary, 1992: 27). As an assemblage, dominant not exclusive, but, an ‘assemblage’ understood by Deleuze as “simultaneously and inseparably a machinic assemblage and an assemblage of enunciation…” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 504),

…not simply an “inert and neutral” piece of machinery tinkered with and improved but an historically constructed artefact “embedded in a much larger and denser organization of knowledge and of the observing subject.” (Crary, 1992: 27). As well as an apparatus used as entertainment or graphic aid for around two centuries it also provided an important metaphor of vision and…

“…stood as a model, in both rational and empiricist thought, of how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world; at the same time the physical incarnation of that
model was a widely used means of observing the visible world, an instrument of popular

Now, Alberti’s procedure sets about constructing a distance point on a separate drawing
mapped onto the primary drawing of the vanishing point. See figure 3, on the original,
‘vanishing point drawing’ there is the vanishing point A, the horizon line B and
orthogonals C. The separate drawing to the left includes the distance point D and vertical
intersection E. Lines drawn between the two figures identify the projection of the ‘distant
point drawing’ onto the ‘vanishing point drawing’ establishing transversals F representing
equidistant parallels that appear closer together as they approach the vanishing point,
illustrating the attenuation in size and, thereby the gradation of depth within linear
perspective. The distance point marks the viewer’s position on the ‘interior’ side of the
window leveled at the same height as the centric or vanishing point, additionally the
distance point is fixed prior to drawing the vertical intersection establishing the degree of
depth.

Accordingly, two conditions distinguish the systemization of Alberti’s distance point.
Firstly, the distance point marking point establishing the viewer’s position on the camera
side of the window is positioned at the same level as the centric or vanishing point, fixing
the place of the imagined observer, the eye, symbolic of humanity positioned as the measure of the world’s horizon and reality. Secondly, prior to fixing the vertical intersection the distance point is fixed in advance, establishing the degree of depth.

In the first instance, the immobile eye, this ocular measure of the world does not concern movement or stasis in the literal sense but reveals a shift of paradigm whereby movement in the world is controlled by a particular viewpoint, ‘seeing things in perspective’. Heidegger explains the fundamental compulsion of mathematics as “a determination to take things in advance of our experience of them” (Heidegger, 1935/6) and the most explicit formation of that resolve is experiment, modeling, and/or mapping. It is that perspectival eye as measure of the world, mostly from the fifteenth century onwards, assiduously charting the landscapes and oceans of a world taken as the object of experiment. Distanced, behind the ‘window’, the observant, ‘immobile’ eye builds up efficient, quantitative measure of the world, predicating certain potential for error, replacing qualities of the actual world, all the more with greater diligence and studious care, to the point whereby plotting the map overrides any tangible or real journey as the father of Prince Modupe makes clear to his kind son with, “things that hurt one do not show on a map.”

Furthermore, the space between the distance and the vanishing points is, in theory, limitless and linear perspective notionally ad infinitum with collateral impression of the eye as measure of the world suddenly empowered with infinite vision. This simply did not appear pictorially, nor by any other reference, prior to Alberti’s construct, it is a distinct newly charged vision, novel world view, and preparatory vision for unbounded horizons, taking one unnerving leap into space and an endless universe.

85 Prince Modupe tells in his autobiography, *I Was A Savage* (Modupe, 1958), how he had learned to read maps at school, and how he had taken back home to his village a map of a river his father had traveled for years as a trader: “…my father thought the whole idea was absurd. He refused to identify the stream he had crossed at Bomako, where it is no deeper, he said, than a man is high, with the great widespread waters of the vast Niger delta. Distances as measured in miles had no meaning for him…Maps are liars, he told me briefly. From his tone of voice I could tell that I had offended him in some way not known to me at the time. The things that hurt one do not show on a map. … With my big map-talk, I had effaced the magnitude of his cargo-laden, heat-weighted tracks.” (Mcluhan, 2001, orig. 1964:150).
in psychoanalytic sublimation it surfaces a sense of self gifted with infinite vision. The second order establishes that distance point at infinity, a priori of establishing the degree of profundity enveloping depth subject to human vision, an infinite horizon out of human invention still serving certain human needs, as much as a ‘closed universe’ was real, surely tangible so an infinite universe is similarly real, neither being true nor false nor one entirely obliterating the other, only different worlds. Within the geometrics of linear perspective more haptic depth of levels or layers are superseded as a matter of suppression by spatial distance relative to the viewer whereby the comparative size of things becomes exclusively a matter of distance. It is a reality that suppresses or ‘de-commissions’ earlier views of the world, becoming an ‘innate geometry of the eye’ an habitual way of seeing. Yet, we do continue to construct worlds sensually in haptic, tactile, aural, aromatic as well as optic ways whereby significance in scale is a function of imperatives other than distance, we still inhabit, breathe the air of ‘closed’ worlds, enfolding and releasing in ‘finite’ complexity.

Depictions of Madonna and Child prior to the mid-fifteenth century use scale indicative of importance within the ethos of sacrosanct hierarchy, rendering Madonna far larger than

Cimabue 1285-86                                Giotto 1305-10                                Van Eyck 1437-8
attendant saints, angels and worshippers. Cimabue, the last of the Byzantine artists in Italy late during the 13th Century *Maesta di Sana Trinita* 1285-86, Giotto through the early part of the 14th Century *Madonna in Glory* 1305-10 and Jan Van Eyck at the start of the 15th Century *Madonna in Church* c. 1437-8.

Of this reality, in secularity as well as religion, value continuously registers need and materiality scaled within emotional space, whereby the most desired may be at great geographic distance, but it looms large in significance, even ‘beyond the horizon’, ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’, we feel it in our carnality, the way we negotiate and/or construct the world(s) we inhabit.

“Our sense of self and world view based on our complete cache of sensation inevitably produces an imagined figure of self bearing a significance of bodily parts unfamiliar to modern convention, ‘distorted’ compared with the an image built upon the abstraction of mathematical measurement. Even making arithmetical index of our current complement of senses as ‘five’ assigns a dull equitability and finality, where there is, in truth, none of that; because, all retains potential, each sense variant, departing and combining enormously in depth, subtlety and complexity that may change or fade, return phoenix-like or retain the capacity for the development of unanticipated, original sensation according to need and changing circumstance; the brain that grew the cortex to swim, perambulate and fly through worlds vanished, extant and beyond, must, always be in a state of evolution. Viewing the world with linear perspective eyes suppresses any sense of carnality reduced to Cartesian split, whereby the former provides ‘objective’ versions of the ‘real world’ and the qualitative flesh of the body in its relationship with the flesh of the world is consigned to a matter of ‘subjectivity’. In that consistent, measured locale all things become neutralized and calculable objects within a quantifiable space preparatory to shaping a modern world of industry and economy.” (Romanyshyn, 1984: 53-56).

John Locke the seventeenth century philosopher makes central a metaphor of the camera obscura as human understanding in his *Essay on Human Understanding*, 1690:
"External and internal sensations are the only passages that I can find of knowledge to the understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this dark room. For, methinks, the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left...to let in external visible resemblances, or some idea of things without; would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion it would very much resemble the understanding of man." (Locke, 1690: II, xi,17)

Crary refines this view by reference to the manifold use of the term ‘in camera’, literally meaning in the seventeenth century to be in juridical or similarly socially privileged contemplation…

“...the camera obscura allows the subject to guarantee and police the correspondence between exterior world and interior representation and to exclude anything disorderly or unruly. Reflective introspection overlaps with a regime of self-discipline.” (Crary, 1992: 42)

Similarly for Descartes, knowing the world is "uniquely by perception of the mind", given safe confinement within vacant ‘internal space’ precedes knowledge of the ‘external environment’. Crary takes the 'insight' of Locke and Descartes and illustrates such with two paintings by Vermeer, the Flemish seventeenth century artist most likely making full use of the camera obscura combined with, at the time the most sophisticated lens manufacture processing painterly images of unprecedented realism, The Astronomer 1668 and The Geographer c. 1668-9 (Crary, 1992: 45).

Both depict, likely the same person, in a self-referential loop of internal contemplation of an external world and replicate a similar condition of their own creation by means of camera obscura all of which reflects, over again, a Cartesian view attributable to both Locke and Descartes. Both Geographer and Astronomer avert their eyes from direct gaze out of the window, but, in the case of the Geographer, close examination of the
globe and the Astronomer, checking calculation, dividers in hand, with a certain
contemplative ‘blank stare’ as it were, inwards. There is no immediate sensory
connection in the attention of either to the outside world, both appear fully engaged with
representation ‘in camera’ and its resolution made complete, along the edge of two
conditions, defined by Descartes as dissimilar, “res cogitans and res extensa, between
observer and world”. The clarity of view is mathematical of “magnitudinial relations”
whilst…

“…the camera, the room, is the site within which orderly projection of the world, of
extended substance, is made available for inspection by the mind. The production of the
camera is always projection onto a two-dimensional surface – here maps, globes, charts
and images.” (Crary, 1992: 46).

In La dioptrique within his philosophical writings, Descartes goes beyond traditional
understanding of camera obscura, describing it first in its conventional format:

“Suppose a chamber is shut up apart from a single hole, and a glass lens is placed in
front of the hole with a white sheet stretched at a certain distance behind it so the light
coming from objects outside forms images on the sheet. Now it is said that the room
represents the eye; the hole the pupil; the lens the crystalline humour…” (Descartes, 1637, trans. 1985: vol. I,166).

Subsequently, Descartes recommends a demonstration using the eye of a recently dead person or that of an ox or similar size of animal, so that the images delivered into the camera obscura are formed by a ‘cyclopean eye, detached from the observer’…

“…cut away the three surrounding membranes at the back so as to expose a large part of the humour without spilling any…no light must enter the room except what comes through the eye, all of whose parts you know to be entirely transparent. Having done this, if you look at the white sheet you will see there, not perhaps without pleasure and wonder, a picture representing in natural perspective all the objects outside” (Descartes, 1637, trans. 1985: vol. I,166).

Disconnection of eye from observer and insertion into the apparatus representing objective vision, the dead eye becomes reincarnate as a metaphysical entity, analogous of God’s eye, a monocular aperture corresponding…

“…to a single, mathematically definable point, from which the world can be logically deduced by progressive accumulation and combination of signs…sensory evidence was rejected in favour of the representations of the monocular apparatus, whose authenticity was beyond doubt” (Crary, 1998: 48)

…and the continuous predilection of classical science towards objectivity…

“…to the extent that the observer is excluded and the description is made from a point lying de jure outside of the world, that is, from the divine viewpoint to which the human soul created as it was in God’s image, had access at the beginning. Thus classical science still aims at discovering the unique truth about the world, the one language that will decipher the whole of nature.” (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984: 52).

Disparity between the monocular vision of camera obscura and binocularity of humans for Descartes resolves at the pineal gland, where, he postulated…
“…there must necessarily be some place where the two images coming through the
eyes…can come together in a single image or impression before reaching the soul, so
that they do not present to it as two objects instead of one.” (Descartes, 1637, trans.

However, in a post-Copernican world the analogy of the camera as divine eye dissipates.
Yet, in preference to both being eclipsed, humanity, in peripheral orbit, favours
compromise with a de-centred God, allowing Hannah Arendt’s “astrophysical view point”
or that “visibility became a contingent fact” and mathematician philosophers, Leibniz as
well as Pascal deal with the absence of a divine eye and reconciliation of the legitimacy
of universal truths in a world of increasingly undeniable relativity, that is to say, multiple
viewpoints. Also, for Liebniz, the conic fundament of the optical system is the point that
defines order, whereby “the point of the cone defined the monadic point of view” (Crary,
1992, 51) ‘monads’ for Liebniz were the fundamental but hierarchical element(s) of the
universe, ‘the building blocks’, accordingly it appears the optical cone within the lens of
the eye parodied by that of the ‘camera obscura’ providing order…

“…the science of conic sections shows that there exists a single point from which an
apparent disorder can be organised into a harmony…for a given plurality, for a given
disorder there exists only one point around which everything can be placed in order: this
point exists and it is unique. From anywhere else disorder and indetermination remain.
From then on, to know a plurality of things consists in discovering the point from which
their disorder can be resolved, uno intuito, into a unique law of order.” (Serres, 1968: vol.
1, 244).

As Leibniz validates relative and multiplicitous views within his writings in Monandology
(Leibniz, 1714, trans. 1965) with specific reference to ‘scenographic’ vision based on
perspective:

“Just as the same city regarded from different sides offers quite different aspects, and
thus appears multiplied by perspective, so it also happens that the infinite multitude of
simple substances creates the appearance of as many different universes. Yet they are but perspectives of a single universe, varied according to the points of view, which differ in each monad.” (Leibniz, 1714, trans. 1965: 157)

So, distinction between the human eye and that of God for Leibnitz is one of cone to a cylinder and divergence between human to God’s view differs as scenography to ichnography, of perspectival visualization compared to a bird’s eye view. An ichnographic view is a general view of the whole, a map-view bearing no ideational or functional relation to a camera obscura, typified by, for example, Jacopo de’ Barbari, View of Venice 1500.

Jacopo de’ Barbari, View of Venice 1500

Antonio Canaletto Perspective with Portico 1768
Barbari delivers a synoptic view contrasted with the monadic scenography of Antonio Canaletto 1697-1768 modelling a city that could only be known by a steady accrual of sundry viewpoints. Canaletto began working in his father’s occupation, that of a theatrical scene painter, his immaculately drafted perspectives of Venice were inspired by the roman vedutista, veduta or ‘view painting’ of Giovanni Paolo Pannini also originally a stage set designer, subsequently Canaletto started painting the daily life of the city and its people, a pre-occupation with the theatricality of the city. He made frequent use of the camera obscura. Certainly, not a matter left to technological determinism and within that overt delineation as a genealogical precursor or foundational episode nascent to photography, though Crary’s understands that “the structural principles of the two devices are clearly not unrelated” (Crary, 1992, 32), he argues in the context of Deleuze that “machines are social before being technical” (Deleuze, 1988: 13) and observes that by the commencement of the nineteenth century the camera obscura no longer equates with truth and an…

“…interiorized witness seeing truthfully; statements to that effect no longer surface, the end is sudden and finite, the assemblage of camera obscura, particularly as a metaphor for thought, implodes and the camera is about to become a different kind of object, operating within another discourse and practice (Crary, 1992, 32).

The camera becomes modernist vision, technological utopianism operating through photography.
TO DO OTHER THINGS

On an industrial scale, packaged and distributed within every single camera a photo-lenticular signal of perspectival view delivering its quotidian inheritance, becoming culturally innate, photography everywhere. Each vehicle its own ‘camera obscura’, the entire body of photographers of any kind and altogether as well as every viewer of any photograph petrified in a shadow box, either side of a ‘window’. On unprecedented scale the world becomes more the substance of light and its absence, the full complement of embodied senses eclipsed by a monocular eye steady, in isolation, viewing landscape convergent upon a vanishing point. Perspectival illusion overwhelms its support, outshines an incomplete analogon so that illusion supersedes the whole, photography prevails and is available to everyone including artists.

During the nineteen thirties Picasso was familiar with a number of experimental photographers, many of whom would mix photography and painting, including his one-time girlfriend Dora Maar, Bill Brandt and Cartier Bresson as well as Brassai the latter making careful note of his and others conversations with Picasso, to be published later, the artist states in conversation with the Parisian photographer, Brassai:

“When you see what you express through photography, you realize all the things that can no longer be the object of painting. Why should the artist persist in treating subjects that can be established so clearly with the lens of the camera? It would be absurd, wouldn’t it? Photography has arrived at the point where it is capable of liberating painting from all literature, from the anecdote, and even from the subject. In any case, a certain aspect of the subject now belongs in the domain of photography. So shouldn’t painters profit from their newly acquired liberty…to do other things?” (Brassai, 1999: 89).

Recovered, just over a decade ago, from almost forgotten storage within the Musee de Picasso, Paris, a huge collection of photographs collected as well as taken by Picasso, published by the Musee curator (Baldassari, 1999)…
“...in the phenomenal archive that Anne Baldassari has worked so hard to unearth (1994-1999) are thousands of early cartes-de-visite; postcards of tourist resorts; crates of photogravures and 400 photograms; portraits of and by friends and anonymous studio shots; and slides Picasso cut or painted over. Picasso himself explained the value of this hoard: ‘It's not enough to know the works by an artist, you also have to know when he did them, why, how, under what circumstances. Some day there'll be a science ... that deals with human creativity ... I often think of this knowledge, and I want to leave as complete a record as possible for posterity.’” (Hopkinson, 1999).

Of the two most renowned British artists and figurative painters of the twentieth century, Francis Bacon and David Hockney, both made rich reserve of photography in pursuit of expressionist and pop painting respectively. Bacon - in the flush and mess of his studio expressed through unruly, passionate, canvas invocation, intuitively felt his way around the analogon of photograph, making distortion through faux motion blur and/or focal length with an innate understanding of the medium’s relation to time and consequent mapping closer to chaos than any other form of representation. Hockney initially uses the photograph as support for painting, documentation, image source and construction in finely bound albums and painterly/filmic conundrums, culminating in both published and broadcast commentary. Eventually, he takes up the camera as an end in itself, making exquisitely pressed artwork followed by an enthusiastic hodgepodge of empirical and collaborative scholarly research into linear perspective and the photograph on the basis of its historical impact on painting as an art form. The findings, summated in a somewhat contentious theory known as the Hockney-Falco thesis maintains that, in the overwhelming number of cases, developments in painterly realism and geometric accuracy since the Renaissance result from the use of optical aids including the camera obscura, camera lucida and curved mirrors, complementary to or in place of graphic technique and ability. Hockney’s collaborator Charles Falco is a condensed matter physicist and optics expert especially capable of accurately defining distortion of specific optical devices, together the two identify similar distortion in historical art masterpieces,
first published as *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters* (Hockney, 2001).

“As described in *Secret Knowledge*, in January 1999 during a visit to the National Gallery, London Hockney conceived of the idea that optical aids were the key factor in the development of artistic realism. He was struck by the accuracy of portraits by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, and became convinced that Ingres had used a camera lucida or similar device. From there, Hockney began looking for signs of the use of optical aids in earlier paintings, creating what he called the Great Wall in his studio by organizing images of great realistic art by time period. What he saw as a sudden rise of realism around 1420, combined with Charles Falco’s suggestion that concave mirrors could have been used in that period to project images, was the germ of the Hockney–Falco thesis.” (Dupré, 125-6: 2005).

Hockney’s well-known ‘joiner’ works made from Polaroid or one-hour ‘photolab’ images comprise multiple images collaged, of a defineable event, or person or place and, without original intent, bear considerable resemblance to Cubism as Hockney takes issue with the condition of photograph. Romanyshyn maintains that Hockney had deliberately broken the camera eye and that his photographic work and studies give us…

“…a direct appreciation of the origins of linear perspective visions…and, how the camera, as model of our vision, has been an unacknowledged inheritance of the linear perspective eye” (Romanyshyn, 58: 1984).

I suspect “unacknowledged”, because few, except Jonathon Crary, have fully deciphered debilitation of sensory experience against the management of attention as ‘free will’ pursuant to the scale of control of a docile mass necessary to develop a disciplined, secular industrial culture over some five hundred years. Indeed, as Crary provokes ‘attention’, the emphasis on linear perspective as ‘the innate geometry of the eye’ had become so matched to socio-political requirements, and an ‘enlightenment’ illumined by correct perspective along with accurately focused perception. This eye, observed and
served, developed and propagated through every fashion of populist and exclusive cultural hubs including salons; scientific and artistic academies of both aristocratic and republican letters; museums, particularly of natural histories; universities; book and journal publications; coffee houses; debating societies; freemasonic lodges then, at the point of exhaustion of camera obscura as a tool and model for observation ‘une augmentation massive de la photographie’ as camera, photograph and film see off painting to artists enacting what Picasso describes as, other things.

Hockney is opinionated in classic, deft Yorkshire mode and expresses his thoughts empirically and direct:

“You can’t look at most photographs for more than say, thirty seconds. It has nothing to do with the subject matter. I first noticed this with erotic photographs, trying to find them lively: you can’t. Life is precisely what they don’t have - or rather, time, lived time. All you can do with most ordinary photographs is stare at them – they stare back blankly – and presently your concentration begins to fade. They stare you down. I mean photography is alright if you don’t mind looking at the world from the point of view of a paralyzed cyclops – for a split second. But, that’s not what it’s like to live in the world, or to convey the experience of living in the world.” (Hockney, 1984: 9)

The impetus of the viewer is to stare at a fixed moment in time, as a rabbit caught in the headlight of an oncoming vehicle, the lack of ‘liveliness’ of a photograph its temporal glitch, a frozen moment. At best it might be felt that time slows down allowing one to observe in an almost painterly way, there are many examples of this in photographs particularly art photography from, say, Julia Margaret Cameron in the 1860s to the early street photographs and later opera images of the Australian artist and photographer, Bill Henson’s use of long lenses with a shorter depth of field and textured grain, images made figures in a crowd appear monumental and sculptural, as though watching slow motion frame or the world had stopped for a poetic moment so the eye might mobilize and wander enchanted amongst these figures caught in statuesque pose, unself-
conscious mid-action. It’s a device, there are scenes of individuals picked out of city
crowds similarly and very effectively telling only one possible tale of transcendent pathos
in the influential slow motion/stop frame movie *Koyaanisqatsi: Life out of Balance*, 1982,
directed by Godfrey Reggio with music composed by Philip Glass and cinematography
by Ron Fricke a kind of…

“visual tone poem contains neither dialogue nor a vocalized narration: its tone is set by
the juxtaposition of images and music. In the Hopi language the word Koyaanisqatsi
means; ‘crazy life, life in turmoil, life out of balance, life disintegrating, a state of life that
calls for another way of living and the film implies that modern humanity is living in such a
way.” (Glass, 2009).

The tactile eye roams the world, a place here and there and a hint of the way forward
shows in Canaletto’s monadic eye, as he depicts a “city that could only be known by a
steady accrual of sundry viewpoints”, and such a clue appended, antithetically and
ironically, by Ed Ruscha in his 1963 *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (83) in a ‘steady
accrual’ that is, monadic and taxonomic of geographically disparate, yet, along the
highway, linear, ‘similar viewpoints of similar things’. In all cases, the camera eye is
monocular, set in position behind a window and incorporeal and eternal whilst time flows
by the window.

Hockney makes comparison of his ‘joiner’ photo-works with the painterly movement
Cubism, nascent of post-impressionism and a seminal shift in perception of painting from
meaning suspended within a singularly calculated illusion to that of a multi-planar view of
an object within itself. Both Picasso’s ‘cubist’ and Hockney’s ‘joiner’ works, consolidate
splintered and re-moulded perspectives simultaneously of the same subject within space
and over a span of time.
“He must have spent hours with her in bed, very close, looking at her face. A face looked at like that does look differently from one seen at five or six feet. Strange things begin to happen to the eyes, the cheeks, the nose – wonderful inversions and repetitions. Certain ‘distortions’ appear but they can’t be distortions because they are reality. Those paintings are about that kind of intimate seeing.” (Hockney, 17: 1984).

In describing Picasso’s portrait of Maria-Thérèse Walter (there are several portraits, Maria-Thérèse was the French mistress and model of Pablo Picasso from 1927 to about 1935) Hockney reminds that memory is formed from the stuff of perception and that cannot be solely visual because recollection in dreams manifest tactile ‘snatches’ as much as visual ‘glimpses’, of an uneven, sometimes synaesthetic mix of caress - aroma, taste, voice as well as fragmentary images. Generally speaking, it’s impossible to
replicate within synaptic memory a ‘perfect’ likeness ‘photographically’ as it were, a geometrically accurate illusion, in the form of, say, a figure-length portrait.

Perception just isn’t like a keepsake photograph delivering a single plane of a ‘accurate’ view as a momentary shock of recognition each time it’s viewed; at best though, snapshots of lovers, views of home and holiday, erotic images serve as a trigger for an avalanche of snippets of memory formed out of all manner of sensation comprising dynamic, that is to say ‘moving’, recall. Within Hockney’s photo-collages and Picasso’s Cubist paintings the world is re-made substantial, corporeal and the body moves within space by means of ‘feelings’ rather than apprehended by measurement, similar to depiction from the fourteenth century exemplified in the Florentine fresco, Loggia Del Bigallo. Distance in a measured sense, linear perspective is no longer emphatic, the body restored to viewer and depicted alike participating in temporal world.

“Cubism is about our own bodily presence in the world over time. It’s about the world, yes, but ultimately about where we are in it, how we are in it. It’s about the kind of perception a human being can have in the midst of living.” (Hockney, 1984: 23).

With Cubism, there is no longer any sense of being external to a world behind the window of linear perspective, the experience is one of entering into and amongst the image, “we live in an age of measurement, but the great achievement of modern art, of Picasso and the others of the Cubists, was to eliminate distance” (Hockney, 1985: 68). Not a shift in spatial distance but in perception, reinstating touch to the visual. Hockney makes his joiners from photomat prints akin to drawing, where the camera is drawn this way and that, across, then into and of a scene; no gridding of collage in the way Polaroid photos, each print inclusive of a white frame, promotes; left to right, up and down. Ultimately, within Hockney’s joiner works, neither a non-geometric nor literal left/right

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86 in English another emotive-tactile term.
way dominates, Hockney’s hand and camera scans ‘freehand’ in saccadic fashion (53-54). According to Romanyshyn, Hockney in his photomat works recognises the bordered limitations of his Polaroid pieces and resultant inclination to ‘grid’ the collage and in his mature ‘joiner’ works, rather more similar to Cubist painting than the Polaroids, reassigns corporeality to the eye making it bodily and dynamic. Hockney points out that Cubism was influenced by Oriental art where two particular perspectival devices are used, firstly, ‘mobile’ perspective using the scroll, sometimes ten metres in length, as a device to incorporate time into space and secondly, axonometric perspective *dengjiao toushi* translated as *equal angle see-through*. Hockney muses that the effect of the Oriental pictorial view, given it’s mobile eye and axonometric projection, is not one of *window* but that of *door* and the difference...

“...between a window and a door is you can walk through a door toward what you are seeing” (Hockney, 26: 1984).
Doors open and allow a viewer enticed by a glimpse, to walk through into a scenario that provides a trans-sensual experience of the sounds of birds singing or of rushing water, coolness of wind through mountain trees, scent of flowers and herbage, caress of hands touching lover.

Similarly, Romanyszyn suggests Hockney's Merced River is a photowork that as it...

“...breaks the square grid pattern, does seem to convey the sound of a rushing stream. Here is a photograph that offers synaesthetic perception. It speaks, as does the world, to a body whose eye is also an ear.” (Romanyszyn, 1984: 60).

Hockney's *My Mother, Bolton Abbey* 1982, a photo-work that fair flows with the ‘squish’, the smell of and drizzle of a damp English afternoon and a typically stoic picnic visit to another finely manicured remnant of the Reformation.
Axonometry is not based on optical principles, yet it is a graphical way of transforming three into two dimensions and was, historically and influentially, the system from which Occidental isometric projection stems. Neither axonometric nor isometric projections have vanishing points, so that parallel lines whether vertical or horizontal remain equally scaled and parallel throughout whereby…

“…the three-dimensions of a cube are projected onto the picture plane without optical distortion…height, width and length are true to scale”

(Krikke, 1996).
Having no vanishing point, Axonometry carries no optical distortion so that in a building with vertical pillars and horizontal beams all remain parallel, when they are so. Furthermore they don’t diminish in size in the distance, and having no vanishing point axonometry does not assume a fixed viewpoint. So that:

“Classic Chinese hand scrolls…are viewed by unrolling them from right to left. Hand scrolls are based on a (pictorial) synthesis of space and time. Rather than having a ‘subject’, the scroll is based on a ‘scenario’. For instance, a scroll may depict ‘life along a river.’ Upon unrolling the opening sequence of the scroll, we may see people boarding a boat on a river. As we unroll the scroll further, we see the boat cross a lake, navigate rapids in the river, stop at a small harbour, and lastly arrive at its destination at the sea-shore. In other words, the scroll has taken the viewer through an experience in space and time.” (Krikke, 1996).

The Chinese anoxometric projection primarily served military and technical ends, ballistics and diamond cutting as a system eliminating blind angles and simplifying calculation. Axonometry was introduced to the west by Jesuit priests returning from China in the seventeenth century, but it wasn’t until the early nineteenth century that it was underpinned by mathematical/geometric formulae in a published paper 1822 by an Englishman, William Farish, for use in western architecture as an improved form of technical drawing entitled isometry (meaning ‘equal planes’). Anoxometry, fundamentally a pictorial system, is sometimes confused with the purely mathematical/theoretical method ‘orthographic projection’, which is Greek in origin, a two dimensional-projection developed later, during the Renaissance, into a three-dimensional system. From mid-nineteenth century isometry exponentially became a seriously useful tool for engineers and included in architectural curricula throughout Europe and America, though with different definitions around similar systems, which only became consistent when the Bauhaus and De Stijl architects exhibited to spectacular and influential effect axonometric/isometric drafting in Paris in 1923.
In pictorial terms...

“...the Chinese artist ignored the optical law of diminution, (whereby figures and objects in the background are smaller than those in the foreground), and the effects of light and shadow, (clair-obscure). Figures in the Chinese painting are not modeled in clair-obscure; they are rendered as flat, two-dimensional figures which are placed in 3-D axonometric space.” (Krikke, 1996).

The most recent techniques in 3D pictorial computing often refer to axonometry as 2.5D and there is a huge revival of interest in this form of projection transforming three into two-dimensions given that computer graphics, virtual reality and digital cinematography no longer need to rely on camera input. Rather than use optical material, digital artists may employ a combination of linear perspective and/or axonometry:

“The digital image blurs the customary distinction between painting and photography and between mechanical and handmade pictures” (Mitchell, 23, 1992).

The scale of the revival of its usefulness axonometry increases understanding of the shortcomings of linear perspective as “the innate geometry of the eye” and not the only methodology for constructing pictorial space, imagine the impossibility of moving from A to B through a three-dimensional animated space with a vanishing point. In anticipation of some revival of interest in the usefulness of isonometric/axonometric space Claude Bragdon the American architect and author wrote favourably of the method in 1932:

“Isometric perspective, less faithful to appearance, is more faithful to fact; it shows things nearly as they are known to the mind. Parallel lines are really parallel; there is no far and no near, the size of everything remains constant because all things are represented as being the same distance away and the eye of the spectator everywhere at once. When we imagine a thing, or strive to visualize it in the mind or memory, we do it in this way, without the distortion of ordinary perspective. Isometric perspective is therefore more intellectual, more archetypal, it more truly renders the mental image - the thing seen by the mind's eye.” (Bragdon, 1932: 84).
Linear perspective is fundamentally \textit{optical}, originating from a lenticular view by means of a camera obscura, rendered into mathematic/geometric form by Alberti as a means of retaining and manipulating that view \textit{prior to} and, apparently, without anticipation of the invention of photography, that is to say, it is the eventual fixing of the camera image or retention of the effects of light within the camera that constitutes photography as Damsich explains; “The retention of the image, its development and multiplication, form an ordered succession of steps, which composed the photographic act, taken as a whole”\textsuperscript{47}. Both mathematical and chemical forms are simply different ways of capturing the \textit{same optical effect} that incorporates \textit{the same linear perspective}, of camera and lens. Such is the illusory/pictorial space component of the photographic assemblage.

Then, Damsich concludes in brackets, ‘by way of an aside’:

\begin{quote}
“It is no accident that the most beautiful photograph so far achieved is possibly the first image Nicéphore Niepce fixed in 1822, on the glass of the camera obscura – a fragile, threatened image, so close in its organization, its granular texture, and its emergent aspect, to certain Suerats – an incomparable image which makes one dream of a photographic substance distinct from subject matter, and of an art in which light creates its own metaphor”\textsuperscript{48}.
\end{quote}

The last sentence is very strange, whilst speculating on the mystery and beauty of photography it refers to the objectification of photograph, as a thing itself, perceived complete, beyond being a support for an illusion, but ‘a photographic substance’ the whole analogon, defined in its own terms not only by what it can do as much as what it cannot do; followed by “in which light creates its own metaphor”, harvesting natural phenomena, the currently visible section of electromagnetic spectrum to spear and spiral its way through aperture, burnt into a bed of salts, accurately replicating its own source and reflection, washed clear and opaque into a ‘cast’ of presence, a true trace of light as a positive/negative shell out of which its metaphoric transcription can be re-formed in

\textsuperscript{47} Damsich, \textit{Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography}, Note 4.
\textsuperscript{48} Damsich, \textit{Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography}, Note 5.
granulated detail, over and over again.

Criticisms of the Hockney-Falco theory claiming that graphic skill and/or talent discretely manifest and proliferate linear perspective as pictorial space are non-sequitor based on surprisingly low-level personal attacks on Hockney's draughtmanship and/or endless point by point case, amassing data pro and con including vast amounts of material that cannot likely be proven one way or the other. It is historically clear that linear perspective originated out of the effects of camera obscura and dominated the development of depiction from the Renaissance until exhaustion of interest and the arrival of photography ultimately obliterating any need to use Alberti's geometry or associated array of instruments. Criticism fails because it misses the point: whether the linear perspective view is disciplined externally or enthusiastically embraced what is at stake here is a blinkering of perception, that ensures domination of an optical over intellectual view and the prescient 'vanishing point' excising reality. As Romanyshyn indicates, Hockney's insights and efforts serve to remind us, at least, of…

“…the historical character of this (linear perspective) vision, rather than continue to assume it is a natural condition”. (Romanyshyn, 1984: 63)
PHOTOGRAPHY: THE DOMINANT AESTHETIC

Social paradigms are modeled out of a need to make sense of the world that we experience, a socialized aesthetic, and for the modern world the dominant social aesthetic emanates from within the massive, exponential expansion of an industrial world over the past five centuries. Those kinds of encounter with greatest impact tend to surface archeologically within language leaving traces signaling larger tracts of sublimated as well as conscious thinking.

Out of cameras and models of objectivity embedded within English language is the phrase ‘in camera’ that is still used as a legalistic and judgmental term, based upon a notional camera obscura, surfacing in the seventeenth century to represent introspection and objective thinking. It was a larger ‘common sense’ that faded with the need for mass industrialization and a re-emphasis of social aesthetic from introspection and reason towards a more abstract logic, and rather than an emphasis on qualitative notions a shift towards quantitative worlds of financial capital, exchange value emulating money.

Clues reflecting social aesthetic are colloquial and embedded within the language of everyday: Damisch satirizes the French word for lens, l’objectif, questioning the social sense of all lenses as a device rendering objective vision in its resolution of distance as

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89 “Perhaps the most famous image of the camera obscura is in Locke’s Essay concerning Human Understanding (1690)... ‘External and internal sensations are the only passages I can find of knowledge to understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this dark room. For, methinks, the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left... to let in visible resemblances, or some idea of things without; would the picture coming into such a dark room but stay there and lie so orderly as to be found on occasion it would very much resemble the understanding of man.” (Crary, 1990: 41-42)

90 “The ‘real world’ that the camera obscura had stabilized for two centuries was no longer, to paraphrase Nietzsche, the most useful or valuable world. The modernity enveloping Turner, Fechner, and their heirs had no need of its kind of truth and immutable identities. A more adaptable, autonomous and productive observer was needed in both discourse and practice – to conform to new functions of the body and to a vast proliferation of indifferent and convertible signs and images. Modernization effected a deterritorialization and revaluation of vision.” (Crary, 1990: 149)

91 “The lens itself, which had been carefully corrected for ‘distortions’ and adjusted for ‘errors’, is scarcely as objective as it seems... (the play here is on the French word for lens: objectif.) Damisch, Five Notes for A Phenomenology of Photography, 1963 Note 3
power. The name devised for the subject of a fashion photograph is ‘model’ and it is on the materiality of model that we structure dreams, aspiration towards print and screen. Mesmerized by filmic images modeled from light and its absence, modeling that by which we desire to model ourselves; immobilized between shadow and light, the beautiful.

**Resolution of Distance as Power**

L-objectif or lens of distance, projection and power, looking outward and projected forward, one point perspective that originated from within the camera obscura becomes habit of mind, a primed aspect of sense and a dominant aesthetic, isolating and distancing the viewer from a world to be observed securely from behind a screen, a window, a grid, that can only be acted upon remotely, in prosthesis.

Surveillance and security elicited military interest in photography and had impact on the development on the kinds of photographic technology inherited by subsequent imaging and media technology and systems. It is largely out of military-ware that computing, networking, prosthesis, cybernetics, robotics, gaming, animation have been developed and that defines the kind of media technology driving and controlling contemporary civil society.
At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century one particular ‘latest toy/gadget’ being the AR.Drone a stable and dynamic quadricopter ‘drone’ visually equipped with a camera and controlled by means of iPhone. The preferred weapon of choice for some time used by the US Military, and, subsequently most major military powers, against individual targets has been the armed drone. Since the exponential increase in miniaturization and sophistication of related technologies through the final two decades of the twentieth century, serious interest in Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) extended up through hierarchy of the American military. UAVs offer comparatively inexpensive, highly efficient combat technology eliminating risk to home personnel. First generation UAVs were principally surveillance aircraft, inevitably becoming armed as unmanned combat air vehicles (UCAV), such as the MQ-1 primed with Predator AGM-114 Hellfire air-to-ground missiles.

*Black Mirror! Black Mirror! Mirror, Mirror on the wall Show me where them bombs will fall* (Arcade Fire, Black Mirror 2006).

As a tool for search and rescue, it is claimed UAVs can help find humans lost in the wilderness, trapped in collapsed buildings, or adrift at sea…UAVs will likely play an increased role in search and rescue in the United States. This was demonstrated by the successful use of UAVs during the 2008 hurricanes that struck Louisiana and Texas.
What is the nature of this progress? As the media story unfolded, the speed and scale of awful realities overwhelmed political and media confections of truth. Before suppression and absorption into national and federal political spin, the shock of the hurricane disasters of Lousiana and Texas delivered testament to the near total lack of governmental and civic planning and action in terms of even basic social welfare for the community, astonishing for a first world nation. ‘Improved’ search and rescue does precisely nothing to solve fundamental issues of social health and safety including prevention of harm and preparation for shock.

*Predators, operating between 18,000–29,000 feet above sea level, performed search and rescue and damage assessment. Payloads carried were an optical sensor, (which is a daytime and infra red camera), and a synthetic aperture radar. The Predator's SAR is a sophisticated all-weather sensor capable of providing photographic-like images through clouds, rain or fog, and in daytime or nighttime conditions; all in real-time. A concept of
coherent change detection in SAR images allows for exceptional search and rescue ability: photos taken before and after the storm hits are compared and a computer highlights areas of damage." (JAW, 2008).

Joseph Weizenbaum observes US scientists advising the Defense Department on earlier industrial and technological warfare through the American war in Vietnam:

“These men were able to give the counsel that they gave because they were operating at an enormous psychological distance from the people who would be maimed and killed by the weapons systems that would result from the ideas they communicated to their sponsors. The lesson, therefore, is that the scientist and technologist must, by acts of will and of the imagination, actively strive to counter the forces that tend to remove them from the consequences of their actions." (Weizenbaum, 1976: 276)

Given the long term establishment of modern campaigns of civil disobedience, organizations for peace and ethical associations - NGOs such as, for example, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament CND 1957 the Association of German Scientists, Vereinigung Deutscher Wissenschaftler (VDW) 1959 (VDW, 2009) and a vast international list or inter-related ethics and peace orientated organizations - Weizenbaum’s moral petition of some thirty five years ago has not succeeded. One reason is that the lives of those with access to the most distancing technology are in considerably less danger than if the same humans were deposited on the battlefield, no matter how ‘refined’ or however much of a blunderbuss the airborne arsenal proves to the target. To ‘put things into perspective’, warfare, fraud and hegemony of the wealthy becomes even more insidious and dangerous for those without power compared with those with the technology for whom warfare becomes an arid application of data mapped telescopically and microscopically, a matter of satellite surveillance, cybernetics, prosthetics, biotechnology and nanotechnology.
Rudolf Zur Lippe in his book *La Géometrization de l’Homme en Europe à l’époque moderne* (Zur Lippe, 1985) makes comprehensive analysis of how vision gains power as a facility in a fragmentation of the whole into parts, dislocation from context and the creation of the discipline of anatomy, the body a matter of measurement so, not only a surgical dissection of the world, but also of the self. Zur Lippe observes and illustrates:

“military movements, ballet and fencing…he indicates how this geometric vision…gives rise first to the anatomical body, the body fragmented into parts, the corpse; and second the body as reflex movement.” (Romanyshyn, 1984: 77).

Reflex means empathic response to stimuli, transference of thought and action through sensation. The first world, the west, is so imbued with language and thinking in disconnected aspect, secure in a carapace of prosthetic weaponry, attentive only to surveillance through a global miasma of print and screen, serviced by means of zip speed optical cabling to the point of no return from a pyramidal trajectory of seeing. We assimilate the same genus of language, cloned culture, a single dominant aesthetic of

Still from the Nazi Propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* Leni Riefenstahl
dissociative seeing and non-aesthetic sans taste, touch, scent, sound, feelings with the closure of potential for evolution of new sense becoming daleks of a new, darker age.\footnote{This representational imaginary, which both culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographer’s mad project of an ideal coextensivity between the map and the territory, disappears with simulation, whose operation is nuclear and genetic, and no longer specular and discursive. With it goes all of metaphysics. No more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept; no more imaginary coextensivity; rather, genetic miniaturization is the dimension of simulation. The real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models - and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times. It no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is no longer real at all. It is a hyperreal: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.” (Poster, Baudrillard1988, 166-184)}

Alberti’s treatise on perspective describes a veil over a window view that creates a gridded fragmentation of the perspectival scene:

“…a veil loosely woven of fine thread, dyed whatever colour you please, divided up by thicker threads into as many parallel square sections as you like, and stretched on a frame. I set this up between the eye and the object to be represented, so that the visual pyramid passes through the loose weave of the veil.” (Edgerton, Samuel Y., 1976: 115).

Herewith a “geometrization of vision supposes a fragmentation of the world” (Romanyshyn, 1984: 77). The grid is used as geometric transfer between the latticed scene through the window and the grid on paper, what also occurs is division and subdivision of into fore, middle and background or a figure into bodily sections as Alberti explains;

“…for just as you see the forehead in one parallel, the nose in the next, the cheek in the next, the chin in the one below, and everything else in its particular place, so you can situate precisely all the features on the panel or wall which you have similarly divided into appropriate panels.” (Edgerton, Samuel Y., 1976: 119).

It interesting to note that Henri Cartier Bresson the French photographer repudiates, for his purposes, any notion of what he refers to as little schema grills or the Golden Rule…etched into our ground glass within a camera, preferring an intuitive geometry whereby time and space are relative, concomitant and transposable. The gridded view,
Alberti’s veil, pre-determines how the world will be seen in analysis, a mathematization of the world and mind so Heidegger demonstrates that modern science and technology are characterized a priori by the same mathematical disposition. Romanyszyn describes the veiled window as a device for transferring three-dimensional reality to two-dimensional graphic representation, becoming a metaphor of the world as a geometric device sublimated to just such a habit of mind:

“The grid-like structure of the window and even the window itself have become invisible, and all that remains is a reproduction, which we now take for the world itself. The window-veil as a grid which was originally something to see through has become for us a map to look at...our mathematical map of the world is the map of our minds made visible” (Romanyszyn, 1984: 82).

**Immobilized Between Shadow and Light**

Modeling beauty out of illumined tonality and the flat plane, looking inward and reflected backward the analog photographic image comprises a pre-digital binary structure of light and its absence compressed from three to two dimensions replacing the third spatial dimension of distance with the fourth temporal dimension revealing a fixed, portable and reproducible aspect of a world of detail, hypnotic and glamorous, the second aspect of a dominant aesthetic.

“Despite the clear realization of this physical presence, the way in which the material and presentational forms of photographs project the image into the viewer’s space is overlooked in many analyses.” (Edwards & Hart, 2007: 1)

In her book *The Beauty Myth, How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* Naomi Wolf promotes a view of modern “flawless beauty” for women caused solely by patriarchal conditioning as a device for social dominance. That may be the case, although any affects on forms of beauty emanating from within the photographic assemblage are not considered by Wolf’s thesis. Photography, as well as its print and screen progeny, dominate representations of beauty amongst contemporary imagery, yet
there are a mere two references to photography listed in the index of Wolf’s book (Wolf, 1991). Photography is never recognised by Wolf as anything other than that which it depicts and within The Beauty Myth she clearly shares a relativist theoretical understanding of each photograph as physically transparent and existing purely as image defined by context.

The first reference to photographs in The Beauty Myth comprises quotes gleaned from observations by editors and agents on magazine censorship of photographic images of older women, airbrushing ‘enhancement’ of ageing ‘celebrities’ in order to appear youthful concealing skin blemishes, wrinkles, fat and so on. Wolf provides a summary of some typical pre-digital magazine retouching techniques before making comparison with the retouched enhancement of women under her notional example of lightening the faces of blacks and Wolf concludes that to:

“…airbrush age off a woman’s face is to erase women’s identity, power, and history.” (Wolf, 1991: 82-82).

The second reference regards “synthetic lighting” and styling for fashion photography in addressing make-up that imitates the artificial refulgence of many fashion photographs, whereby women are encouraged to:

“…negotiate a three-dimensional world by two-dimensional rules” (Wolf, 1991: 105)

Dimensionality here refers to the reflexivity of facial make-up imitating the effect of softened studio light that, in turn, is set to simulate skin cream. These complementary processes are, according to Wolf, intended to render radiance as a rite of beauty based on metaphors of light as inner or spiritual glow and, according to Wolf, borrowed from ancient notions of divinity:

“Moses’ face when he descended from Mount Sinai blazed like the sun, and medieval iconography surrounded saints complete with halos.” (Wolf, 1991: 103-104).
However, photographs do exist physically within the world, they are reproduced in all manner, scale and qualities of printed material including books, magazines, journals, newspapers as well as projected and broadcast to every manifestation of screen. Original photographs exist as chemical deposits on paper, images mounted on a multitude of different sized, shaped, coloured and decorated cards, as subject to additions to their surface or as drawing their meaning from presentational forms such as frames and albums.

Photographs are both images and physical objects that exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience." (Edwards & Hart, 2007: 1)

And, photographs are materially…

“…enmeshed with subjective, embodied and sensuous interactions. These characteristics cannot be reduced to an abstract status as a commodity, not to a set of meanings or ideologies that take the image as their pretext.” (Edwards & Hart, 2007: 1).

Similar to photographs, all idioms can be said to carry a trace of veracity, and ‘we become what we desire’ may be seen as a turn of phrase that cuts deep into our sensual relation with the whole photographic assemblage, image et al, rendered consumable. Ideals of modern beauty follow the same trajectory as the beginnings of modern visual technology whilst modern photography suffuses our sensibility, not simply as 'image' but substantially and insidiously each photograph in it’s physical entirety carries the potential to become an ‘object of our desire’. That is to say, driven by an innate extended physiological proprioception we ‘feel' with our eyes and are 'touched' in response, transforming ourselves into the embodiment of photograph. It maybe that the model and viewer interchangeably aspire to become sealed as thin and close to a two dimensional being as a three dimensional object can physically be, like the page of a magazine or strip of film that seals the image and fixes the gaze both ways.

“American Women have the uncanny ability to “wish” themselves into any mould they
“It seems to me that today all American women have high cheekbones, long graceful legs, delicate wrists and thin hands,” says Beaton... A generation ago nobody had high cheekbones. Now everybody has them. I don’t really understand how women manage to change their actual bone structure, but apparently they do. I think it all started with somebody like Marlene Dietrich.” (Roe, interviewing Cecil Beaton, 1956: URL 4/4/2011)

The zygomatic or malar bone shapes the prominence of the facial cheek, there are no historical records within western culture of high cheekbone bones commonly accepted as an essential characteristic of beauty prior the advent of photography and movies.
Certainly, within the history of makeup there has long been a pinching and rouging of cheeks, a biting and reddening of lips emphasising ruddy health but nothing of the elevated malar until the development of professional lighting within industrially nascent fashion photography, glamorous movies and commercial styling. At that moment, high cheekbones arrive in magazines, movies, salons, advertisements and everyday conversation as though the sculpted cheekbone had universally signaled beauty through the ages. Now the face of the modern era is refracted through studio lights and camera pentaprism casting a vacant photogenic gaze, deep large eyes, pale complexion, full lips, straight medium-sized nose, paired back oval ears, white teeth, long neck, almond-shaped visage and high malar of symmetrical features.

Joan Crawford 1905 - 1977
Customary practice regarding beauty within cultures that have not yet fully encountered photography or countercultural groups who refute conventional glamour seems exotic and bizarre to modern western sensibility yet, by the same token, high cheekbones and starvation appear peculiar to non-westernized or anti-modern groups:

“...some cultures perceive chubbiness as a symbol of opulence and social status. In New Guinea, pierced noses are attractive, and the Angku women of China view blackened teeth as a mark of beauty. There are also countercultural definitions of beauty promoting body modification such as tongue-splitting, tattooing, and branding.” (Jang, 2006: URL 23/11/2009).

The British Medical Association (BMA) publication *Eating Disorders, Body Image and the Mass Media* (BMA, 2000) is the first accredited, complete medical report directly linking anorexia and bulimia to media images. Although there had been numerous previous studies stating that:

“...advertising and the mass media may play a part in creating and reinforcing a preoccupation with physical attractiveness “(Downs and Harrison 1985; Myers and Biocca 1992; Silverstein et al. 1986)

Similar studies have found that media images influence consumer perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable level of physical attractiveness (Martin and Kennedy 1993;
Peterson 1987; Richins 1991). And, further research claims that female college students, adolescents, and pre-adolescents compare their physical attractiveness with that of models in advertisements (Martin and Kennedy 1993, 1994b; Richins 1991) and female pre-adolescents and adolescents have desires to be models (Martin and Kennedy 1993; Peterson 1987; Richins 1991).

“Research has also found that most female characters on television are thinner than average women. In 1980 a study of Playboy magazine during the period 1959-1978 found that there was a 10% decrease in weight for height over the models used during this twenty-year period. Significantly this represented a much greater discrepancy between the magazine images and the actual size of women in society as a whole, as women became heavier in this period. In a similar study it was found that the mean bust-to-waist ratio of 15 actresses appearing for the first time in 1940-1959 was 1.34, while the ratio for actresses appearing for the first time in 1960-1979 was 1.22. It has been estimated that models and actresses in the 1910’s have 10%-15% body fat - the average body fat for a healthy woman is 22%-26%.” (BMA, 2000: 29).

Studies that examine any direct affective link between the photograph and anorexia don’t appear to exist. However it is possible to find acute commentary closer in time to the industrial shift in depiction that delivered photography and with a greater experience and insight than Wolf into the startling yet dangerous nexus between beauty and film.

“It was the soft featured, full-fleshed, round-faced woman who for centuries was regarded as the most beautiful. Consider the feminine portraits by Giorgione and Rubens and da Vinci. Not until motion pictures came along did the girls with shadowy eyes and high cheekbones and firm jaw lines – say Greta Garbo, Katherine Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford – get popular. The special intensive lighting for cameras did it…In those earlier days of sunshine and candlelight, the most admired ladies were the ladies who always appeared somewhat pneumatic...” (Boyd, 1973: URL 4/4/2011)
Photographic images are structured out of the response of light-sensitive material to light and its absence and correspond well, graphically, to a faceted, skinny face and body as opposed to a rounded, plump shape. Throughout the first complete century of archives of photographic and filmic images it's possible to define countless taxonomies of images consistent with Boyd's commentary on the look of Hollywood movie sirens between the 1920s and 1950s and the reconstitution of beauty into industrial imagination and simulacra.
Victorian/Edwardian erotic images of women often bear lingering resemblance to the painterly, and, as photographic production intensifies through the first half of the twentieth century it's plain that the human frame and visage slim down radically until, eventually, the glamour industry promotes an ideal for male and female alike, of faceted veneer. James Dean in the fifties exhibits a fine featured, chiseled visage whilst Twiggy, mascara eyed and biro slim, denotes the sixties, marking the beginnings of an anorexic ideal.
"I never thought I'd land in pictures, with a face like mine..."

In claiming a holocaust against women's body starved not by nature, but by men, Naomi Wolf employed figures grossly exaggerating numbers of fatal anorexic cases within America of 150,000 girls dying every year starving themselves to death from anorexia. The correct figure, according to the American Centre for Disease Control, was, at the time of Wolf's public assertion, closer to 100 deaths a year, not 150,000.

Nonetheless, there is an encyclopaedic mass of data on the physiology and psychology of disorders related to body image researched and published by western medical authorities over the past four decades. The results from first world surveys in America,

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93 “The body type portrayed in advertising as the ideal is possessed naturally by only 5% of the American females. The average model weighs 23% less than the average woman. 90% of all girls ages 3-11 have a Barbie doll, an early role model with a figure that is unattainable in real life. 47% of girls in 5th-12th grade reported wanting to lose weight because of magazine pictures. 69% of girls in 5th-12th grade reported that magazine pictures influenced their idea of a perfect body shape.” (RCF, 2003). “Officials, in Fiji, reported a sudden increase in anorexia and bulimia with the arrival of television in their communities. The primary reason for following a nutrition or fitness plan was to lose weight and to become more attractive rather than to improve overall health and well being, according to mainstream nutrition and fitness magazines from 1970-1990. Nothing has progressed to date other than research urging magazine editors to adopt policies to vary body type, size and shape, gender and ethnicity within their pages” (AFP/SMH, 2010). “Nearly 11 million cosmetic plastic..."
Europe and Australasia all address widespread apprehension regarding social and personal impact of augmentation surgery, eating disorders, self esteem and depression affecting both genders, but mainly female, following a long gradient of effect towards full-blown bulimia and anorexia and showing no sign of abatement through the first decade of twenty-first century.

The British Medical Association (BMA) report, heralded on publication in 2000 as a key endorsement with little if any explanation of the view that media impacts on eating disorders does not much more than accredit notional links on the basis of reliable data between anorexia, bulimia and media images, recommending adoption of...

“...a more responsible editorial attitude towards the depiction of extremely thin women as role models, and should portray a more realistic range of body images.” Followed by the

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surgery procedures were performed in the United States in 2006, up 7 percent from 2005. Surgical cosmetic procedures increased 2 percent, with more than 1.8 million procedures performed. For the first time, breast augmentation (329,000) is the most popular surgical procedure since the ASPS began collecting statistics in 1992. Minimally invasive cosmetic procedures increased 8 percent, with more than 9 million performed, and hyaluronic acid injectables (778,000) make the top five for first time. Reconstructive plastic surgery on eating decreased 3 percent.” (ASPC, 2008).
recommendation that: “Health professionals should work with the television industry to increase awareness of the possible impact of programming on young people, and encourage the inclusion of healthy eating patterns into their programming.” (BMA, 2000: 47).

Recent research presented at the Australasian Society for Behavioural Health and Medicine annual scientific conference in Brisbane February 2010 (ASBM, 2010: URL 6/3/2011) presents a similar message, with no precise regard for photography nor any social agent being causative, only, similar to the BMA report, a presenting of data and recommendation.

“Eighty per cent of Australian women are dissatisfied with their own body image, researchers say. And 90 per cent told the University of Queensland researchers they knew other women who were unhappy with their shape. While the air-brushing of models' photographs - the subject of recent debate - seems to matter little, there is a call for a greater diversity of body shapes in fashion magazines and advertisements, studies show. ‘There have been calls to eliminate thin models and replace them with more average and realistic-sized models.’” (ASBM, 2010: URL 6/3/2011)

Throughout all of the researched data there appears no identifiable acknowledgement that there may be something in the machine, profiled upon the imperfect analogon of

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94 Ms Fletcher said there had been little research into the topic, so she and research partner Phillippa Diedrichs had monitored an internet forum debate on the website of a popular Australian women's fashion magazine. They monitored 65 women debating models' body shape in 300 separate posts. They found there was a good deal of confusion about what constitutes a healthy female body shape. Ms Fletcher said there was a clear advocacy for more diversely-shaped models, but also a desire that thin models were not eliminated. 'Thin models were seen as a source of aspiration ... like a beauty and weight Holy Grail,' she said. (ASBM, 2010: URL 6/3/2011)

'So while wanting more diversely-shaped, more relatable bodies, at the same time they still liked the idea of using thin models...’ (Gray, 201, 27). “The three main types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder. Females are much more likely than males to develop an eating disorder. Only an estimated 5 to 15 percent of people with anorexia or bulimia (Andersen, 1995: 177-87) and an estimated 35 percent of those with binge-eating disorder are male. (Spitzer et al, 1993: 137-53). In their lifetime, an estimated 0.5 percent to 3.7 percent of females suffer from anorexia, and an estimated 1.1 percent to 4.2 percent suffer from bulimia. (APA, 2000: 157). Community surveys have estimated that between 2 percent and 5 percent of Americans experience binge-eating disorder in a 6-month period. (Bruce & Agras, 1992: 12, 365-73). The mortality rate among people with anorexia has been estimated at 0.56 percent per year, or approximately 5.6 percent per decade, which is about 12 times higher than the annual death rate due to all causes of death among females ages 15-24 in the general population. (Sullivan, 1995: 1073-4)" (NIMH, 1995)
photography’s peculiar technology, conditioned from within the photographic assemblage creating a tendency towards thinness. The photograph made of light and its absence seared to a flat surface the materiality of desire continues its cycle of being consumed and expurgated whole. Beyond a state of irresolute anxiety, there seems to be ill consideration of a bloated industry re-shaping the body by means of surgery, starvation diets and obsessive exercise failing to deliver its promise of wholesome health, fitness and self-esteem. Health and wellbeing is an industry that succeeds only in the maintenance of its own growth and concealment of a socially massive, steadfast focus on the vanishing point of the beautiful secured only by a deeply sublimated desire to become photogenic.

Hubert Damisch describes photography...

"...in its structure and in the ordered image of the world it achieves as complying with an especially familiar though very old and dilapidated system of spatial construction."\(^{95}\)

Damisch is referring to one point perspective. And, the perspective method originated from observation of the unique effect of camera obscura's transformation of three dimensions into two, transposed into the more portable mathematical formulation of the unique effect ‘in camera’ transformation of three dimensions into two. Flattening of the dimension of distance is a natural occurrence, first observed then contained within camera obscura as light-waves projected by means of aperture onto a reflective or transmissive plane. Initially the camera obscura serviced architecture but was soon incorporated as an aid to drawing and painting more widely, it seems now, than artists were prepared to admit. For the draughtsman, the camera obscura and camera lucida automatically rendered visible a traceable application of perspective whilst geometric calculation provided a method of accurately measured perspective. Photographs could only ever comply with the ‘dilapidated system of spatial construction’ that Damisch refers to, because the primary component around which the photographic assemblage had been constructed was the camera obscura. As a principle, the camera is a box that is light tight except for a pinhole or lens projected onto a screen, the complete contraption was designed to maximize the physical effect of filtered light projected onto a flat surface. Indeed, throughout one hundred and eighty years of analog photography the camera did not in principle change its fundamental condition of a quadrilateral framed black box pierced with pinhole or lens depiction of astonishing detail.

Within the photographic image, disparity in scale is read physically and pictorially purely as distance thereafter as realistic, and implicitly secular given that relative size no longer accounts for social or spiritual status. The modern mind sublimates its illusion of distance.

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\(^{95}\) Damisch, Five Notes for a Phenomenology of Photography, Note 3.
within the photographic image as an acquired act, requiring rapid mental reconstruction completing the legibility of each image. It is a thought process almost wholly subconscious, unless reminded of those who have not previously encountered photographs and who are not equipped to decipher that peculiar form of representation. They might see an event of shimmering screen as sunlight through trees on a bare patch of ground or an object that is a flat sheet with the finest edge, tonality and colour smudged on one side and on the other, blank.
CONCLUSION AND MAKING WORK WORK

Photography simply affords a brilliant description of the world. Each photograph reveals a discrete aspect of events reaped from the long observed response of a flat surface to projected streams of light. Within the complete photographic assemblage the reformation of light is the only element classifiable as essential, continuous and natural. From 1827 and Niepce’s first photograph, the ‘in camera’ containment of light and its absence as a latent image, along with all other components comprising the photographic assemblage, provide artifice intended to improve and control image quality confined within the visual range of the electromagnetic spectrum of four hundred to seven hundred nanometers\(^96\).

This magical drawing with light enfolds a minute cache of luminous reality that must be less than the normative perceptual domain of space and time, otherwise it would be unrecognizable as the discrete object that it is, or nameable as photograph. Any simulation that is equal to four dimensions cannot be objectified and vanishes into reality, whilst mimesis on a trajectory beyond the fourth dimension vanishes from all of reality\(^97\).

Within the photographic assemblage its frame enfolds three dimensions into two thus the

\(^{96}\) Close by the visible spectrum is Near-infrared, from 120 to 400 THz (2,500 to 750 nm); Ultraviolet (UV). This is radiation whose wavelength is shorter than the violet end of the visible spectrum, and longer than that of an X-ray; After UV come X-rays. Hard X-rays have shorter wavelengths than soft X-rays. As they can pass through most substances, X-rays can be used to ‘see through’ objects, most notably diagnostic X-ray images in medicine (a process known as radiography), as well as for high-energy physics and astronomy. Physical processes that are relevant for this range are similar to those for visible light.

“The electromagnetic spectrum is the range of all possible frequencies of electromagnetic radiation. The ‘electromagnetic spectrum’ of an object is the characteristic distribution of electromagnetic radiation emitted or absorbed by that particular object.

The electromagnetic spectrum extends from low frequencies used for modern radio to gamma radiation at the short-wavelength end, covering wavelengths from thousands of kilometers down to a fraction of the size of an atom. The long wavelength limit is the size of the universe itself, while it is thought that the short wavelength limit is in the vicinity of the Planck length, although in principle the spectrum is infinite and continuous.”


\(^{97}\) Duchamp discusses his Hatrack and shadow, and particularly his thought of the world as a projection problem: ‘... if a shadow is the projection of a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional surface, then the three-dimensional object is the projection of a four-dimensional entity in the three-dimensional space. Everything that exists in the three-dimensional world is only the ‘projection’, the ‘representation’, the ‘reflex’ of invisible things existing in another world with a higher dimension.’ Molderings, Herbert, Objects of Modern Skepticism, in The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp, ed. Thierry De Duve, MIT Press, p.254
third dimension, which is distance, becomes compressed to a flat plane so that upon a receptive surface of glass screen, film or print, relative scale - the larger being nearer and smaller further away - codifies space concealing the actual source and origin of perspective. That code was eventually made more compact and manageable by transcription into mathematics. The fourth dimension as time measured by length of exposure, replaces the third dimension delivering a fixed, portable and reproducible ‘still’ depiction, expanding a fraction of time across the material existence of the photographic object.

Each photographic image allows a learnt process of interplay between viewer, photographic material and context that, in the case of realist imagery means an acceleration of the subconscious into a subliminal reassembling of the third dimension as one element of an interference pattern triggered by the act of viewing. All depiction may then be opened to reveal a sub-structure of variable quality, mapping all parts of accident and intention. During the 15th century painterly depiction was influenced, in part, by the camera obscura in the development and appearance of a quadrilateral picture frame that ceased to parody cathedral window frames or the illusory opening of walls or roofs to heaven, earth and hell, in the manner that icons, altar-pieces, ceiling and wall painting had previously performed. Subsequently, photography of all formats commences

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98 Walter Benjamin’s description of photographic aura is: “…a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be...” Benjamin, Walter A Small History of Photography 1931, published in, One Way Street and Other Writings, Verso, London, 1985 op cit, p.250

99 “For it is another nature that speaks to the camera than to the eye, other in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious... It is through photography that we first discover this optical consciousness, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis.” Benjamin, Walter, A Small History of Photography, 1931, published in, One Way Street and Other Writings, Verso, London, 1985 p.243

100 Picture frames are generally square or rectangular, though circular and oval frames are not uncommon. Frames in more unusual shapes (often appropriately coloured) are usually frames intended for photographs, such as heart-shaped frames to go around wedding pictures and the like, and there have been shaped shadowboxes made, though these have generally been used to roughly follow the outlines of sports jerseys and other memorabilia rather than pictures. There are also picture frames designed to go around corners.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picture_frame#cite_note-8 (accessed 09 April 2011)

101 Movable frames appeared as early as the 13th century, but it was in Renaissance Italy, in the 14th and 15th centuries, that frame designs began to evolve as separate entities from the picture (though they remained clearly integrated with their surroundings). Framed religious paintings were built into altarpieces and ornamented with architectural elements that
every operation with an immutable parallelogrammic frame within cameras annexed to
devices and encased in all manner of artifice bringing to the photographic contraption
certain idiosyncrasies as well as advantages of physics related to optics and
incorporating focus, depth of field, magnification and distortion along with time and
motion blur, material and image resolution. All of the attendant irregularities of physics
were, through practice, made adaptable and convened as grammar to the language of
photographic depiction requiring, at best, a crafting of compositional signage
systematically indicating direction of view and controlling ambiguity across the surface of
the image, back and forth through the illusion of depth, layered and accurate, so that
depiction thinks with the viewer. Dependent upon the intelligence and quality of
composition the onlooker is guided with a precision that leaves scope for imaginative
completion of the author's intent for a single image or a sequence. Thereafter, the act of
looking becomes interactively creative and complicit with the act of making so that
meaningfulness may be revived, confirmed or reformed at every viewing.

The natural certainty of the latent image and faux-planar incorporation of the temporal
dimension draws the photograph closer to the chaos of reality, nature, more than any
other form of visual representation. Chance must be skilfully anticipated against certainty
in eloquent construction of meaning unique to photography and it's progeny film, whilst
the electronic era and digital manipulation tends to return realistic imagery to order or the
psychological impasse not of chaos, but the disorder of madness and surrealism.

echoed the exteriors of the great cathedrals.
As the role of the artist began to change, the art of frame making likewise evolved. The Italian Renaissance saw the rise of
the artist-patrons: wealthy noblemen (such as the Medici family) who commissioned allegorical, devotional and portrait
paintings. Frames were no longer all of one piece with the painting. Trained in many artistic disciplines, including gilding,
sculpture and architecture, it would not have been unusual for a painter to create his own gilded or painted frames. Fra
Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, Lorenzo Lotto, and Della Robbia all designed frames for their own works.
The early Italian tabernacle frame...dates from the time of the first portable frames. Interestingly, although the tabernacle
style may have religious connotations, the tabernacle frame format
was most likely used to create portraits of noblemen and therefore really is one of the earliest examples of the portable
frame as a decorative object. Studies of similar tabernacles in various museums indicate that this style frame was made in
France or Italy around 1560." (Gill, 2000, p85)
http://www.pictureframingmagazine.com/pdfs/FrameHistory/May00_Frameofobject.pdf
By 1880, photograph illustration, in the form of a half tone screen, arrived on the printing presses of journals, newspapers and books replacing lithographic images and was situated amongst a mass of descriptive text. As the photographic image adapted to the page it gradually modified adjacent language forms. Each photographic reproduction in its superior and authentic representation of an aspect of reality induced a modernizing of linguistic expression, so verbal text increasingly delivered meaning as context, in complicity with relevant images. As the technology improved, becoming lighter, faster with a better resolved outcome the affect of photography was to displace the need for decorous verbosity intended to reflect attention to detail and an authority typical of the literary style of nineteenth century written and thence oral English.

The evocative power of photographic realism can only be substantiated on the basis of its harvesting of light traces. Progress made on the fidelity of image in terms of resolution, tone and colour served to improve the photographic contraption along the way to becoming the first medium affecting mass communication as a compressed dimensionality. Eventually, the photographic medium whilst it retained aspects of its aesthetic as stillness prescient of contemplation was equaled and superseded in its applied as well as aesthetic dominance by its own realist progeny of film, television, video and digital imaging, collectively pluralized as media.

On reading Roland Barthes La Chambre Claire (Camera Lucida) in 1980, published in the year of his death, I personally recognized that my encounter with photography was similar to his claim of being:

"...overcome by an ‘ontological’ desire; I wanted to learn at all costs to what Photography was ‘in itself’, by what essential feature it was to be distinguished from the community of images." (Barthes, 1980, p3)

My commitment to learn of what photography was “in itself” has also been for me an existential inquiry and not simply a student project, so that an account of ontological
desire remains central to my understanding, observations and work with photography and consistent with the intent of this exegesis.

I had a mostly typical experience of photography before I went to art school, growing up with Box Brownie family snaps but with an exceptional gift of a toy film projector when very young\textsuperscript{102}. Throughout my childhood and secondary education I always had certain talent and a passionate interest in the making of objects, models and particularly drawing\textsuperscript{103}. Early in the course of my studies I encountered other forms of representation, notably photography and film that impressed me as equitable and/or complementary although anomalous methods of depiction. By the time I had completed secondary school and foundation art studies I had good grounding in a classic history of art from ‘Giotto to Cezanne’ then, knowledge of post-impressionism, cubism, surrealism, dada and abstract expressionism as well as all of the references to Asian and African art and so on. During the mid-sixties I went to see the first transatlantic pop art exhibitions arriving in London, replete with object and image works that referenced photography. Warhol’s films were a minor revelation assisting me to see film as a kind of sketchpad, the camera a marking device and, for my interest, the outcome concentrating on the mimetic rather than diegetic aspects of film, and, as it emerged later on my part, almost clinically devoid of narrative, functioning as uncompromising drafts of reflexive ideation. I was more interested in the conceptual extensiveness of, for example, Andy Warhol’s films, particularly \textit{Sleep} 1964 or \textit{Empire} 1964 rather than his filmic demolition of conventions of movie narrative whereby his sensitively lax scripting and direction may even be seen to foreshadow ‘reality TV’.

By 1969 I had enrolled in Fine Art, Painting at Brighton School of Art and after a six-week foundation experience of Sculpture, Painting and Film, we moved into individual studios

\textsuperscript{102} Essays in \textit{Letters to Photography} within this exegesis and immediately following this chapter include docu-fictions that cycle through ‘life-encounters’ for myself with photography and film and here I am thinking of \textit{Within an Illustrated Box} and \textit{A Clock for Seeing}.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Letters to Photography} - \textit{Sketch Everything}
and the program developed into a typical laissez faire program of occasional tutorial and assessment. My tutors were John Hilliard\textsuperscript{104}, Ted Hawkes\textsuperscript{105} and Roger Cutforth\textsuperscript{106} and I participated in workshops with Carolee Schneeman\textsuperscript{107} and Dan Graham\textsuperscript{108}.

A small group of my peers at the art school were equally as influential as any of our teachers, when we arrived in 1969 field painting, op art and minimalism were on the wane and conceptual art, art theory, electronic art, media art, performance and installation art were taking sure effect. A loose group formed around early projects comprising my student colleague Mick Duckworth\textsuperscript{109} and I then anything up to twelve students on the basis of which we cleared out a painting studio, painted the walls white and furnished it with a desk, chairs and a typewriter, establishing the Experimental Studies Group that eventually developed into the first art school Allied Media Department in the UK. As students, we were making short conceptual films that became part of a transatlantic/European ‘Structured Film’ movement and the Brighton group was rapidly in communication with artists making films internationally with similar intent such as William Raban\textsuperscript{110}, David Dye\textsuperscript{111} and my tutor John Hilliard\textsuperscript{112}.

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{104}] John Hilliard, (born 1945, Lancaster) is an English artist living and working in London; He studied at Lancaster College of Art and St Martins School of Art, London. Previously, Professor, Head of Graduate Fine Art Media, Director of Studies, Graduate Programmes, Graduate Tutor at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. An ongoing body of work addresses the specificity of photography as a medium: its uncertainty as a representational device and its status within the visual arts, especially in relation to painting, cinema and commercial photography \url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Hilliard_(artist)} (accessed 19 April 2011)
\item[\textsuperscript{105}] Ted Hawkes, \textit{Free Media Bulletin} (accessed 19 April 2011) \url{http://artistbooks.ning.com/profiles/blogs/free-media-bulletin}
\item[\textsuperscript{106}] Roger Cutforth very early conceptual works with Art Language, Mel Ramsden, Michael Baldwin, Ian North and Terry Atkinson as well as Joseph Kosuth \url{http://vimeo.com/user2180812} (accessed 19 April 2011)
\item[\textsuperscript{107}] Carolee Schneeman, \url{http://www.caroleeschneemann.com/bio.html} (accessed 19 April 2011)
\item[\textsuperscript{108}] Dan Graham (March 31, 1942, Urbana, Illinois) is a conceptual artist now working out of New York City. He is an influential figure in the field of contemporary art, both a practitioner of conceptual art and an art critic and theorist. His art career began in 1964 when he moved to New York and opened the John Daniels Gallery. Graham’s artistic talents have wide variety. His artistic fields consist of film, video, performance, photography, architectural models, and glass and mirror structure. Graham especially focuses on the relationship between his artwork and the viewer in his pieces. Graham made a name for himself in the 1980s as an architect of conceptual glass and mirrored pavilions. \url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Graham} (accessed 19 April 2011)
\item[\textsuperscript{109}] Mick Duckworth short films in Tate Gallery Collection (now the world’s most renowned writer on classic motorcycles) \url{http://www.angusrobertson.com.au/by/mick-duckworth/} (accessed 10 April 2011)
\item[\textsuperscript{110}] William Raban \url{http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/william_raban/index.html} (accessed April 19 2011)
\end{itemize}
Here are a few notes that I made in 1970 as an artist planning Standard 8mm short films:

The notes read as follows:

*Take a camera around full circle.*

  *records__*  
  *but a projector shows only one frame a time*  
  *audience  memorises__*  
  *some experiments__*  
  *throw a camera off a building attached to a rope*  
  *construct a swivel for a full circle (scaffolding)*  
  *construct a swivel for a sphere*  
  *attach a camera to end of a long pole*  
  *slow descent of camera on a rope*  
  *through a tree? etc.*  
  *experiment with camera on a rope*  
  *‘camera’ as an action of the hand-arm-body/rather than still or movie*  
  *the eye.*  
  *as an extension of the intelligence-direct/rather than the eye. mechanic.*

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My aim was sculptural and conceptual objectification not only of image but the complete filmic assemblage as camera, film, print and screen. By making work work, I was certainly aware at the time that I was addressing a desire to open up a certain essential condition of film, moving or still.

I made several short films excoriating diegesis and testing the liminalities of the mimetic condition of film including Camera/Spring, Camera/Thrown from a Roof, Camera/Box and Camera/Eighteen Month Old Person all of which were shown variously between the year of my graduation from five years of art school study in England, 1972, until I travelled to Australia and decided to stay in 1974. During that period I showed the films on invitation at an International Festival of Film by Artists Nova Scotia School of Art, Canada, A Survey of the Avante Garde in Britain, German Institute, London UK; Artist's Filmwork Exhibition, Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Holland; Post-Object Artists, Central Street Gallery, Sydney and Events And Structures, Ewing Gallery, Melbourne.

I continued making short films early in Australia, but lost interest in when Standard 8 film, a highly accessible medium able to be self-processed, was replaced with Super 8, the latter contained inaccessibly within a cassette during shooting and posted for processing - I currently have revived interest in the accessibility of digital filmmaking, for example HD video using the Canon 5D Mk II – so, I accessed still photography and with the encouragement of the director of the newly established Australian Centre for Photography, Bronwyn Thomas, I constructed a body of large structured still photographic installations Camera/Box, Camera/Bush, Camera/Walk-Wall for a solo exhibition. Between, 1977-78 I moved back to the UK, then settled permanently in Sydney from 1979 working at Sydney College of the Arts in Fine Art Photography until 1985, then Visual Communication and then full-time teaching at Charles Sturt University, Albury by which time as well as making my own art work became expert in photographing the works of artists, designers and architects. I photographed Something More the Tracy Moffat series of images and my encouragement was to make a parody of
the Australian movie *Jedda* 1955, made by the Australian director Charles Chauvel, employing high saturation colour techniques to large format long exposure transparency. It was work that worked, at least for Moffat.

Until the end of the twentieth century all of my exhibited film and photographic work had been ‘staged’, including *Another Major Breakthrough or I’m a Photograph and I’m Okay, I Sleep All Night and I Work All Day* 1981 comprising an installation of five mural size panels of myself framed in pure photographic space, where the axe hit, the frame and perspex were broken, in a survey show of contemporary art within Australian *Perspecta* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1983.

Here is a staged photographic work of my own *Technomorphic Head* 1984 1x1.5m exhibited at a Sydney Biennale in 1986 and published variously ever since. This was a work built pre-digitally using precise lighting to a white background, two exposure stops
higher than the foreground, giving half an exposure to the head and half to the wires, and where two halves meet, image exposure is retained where there only a half it is obliterated. What remains is a new ‘object’ that can only exist in photographic space.

I have never been concerned for a career as a photographer neither whether my exhibited work is recognized as art or not. I found art useful as a tool for observing the world as a validation of wonder. From the start of the twenty-first century I beginning to
recover from the shock of simulation and its reflexive affect on a human need to replicate
the world and self, and it is that moment of shift that this exegesis reviews.

The insidious dangers of the mimetic affect of photography are not to be underestimated
and that is reviewed in two ways in the preceding chapter. Firstly, photography’s
guileless complicity in generating and perpetrating a perspectival understanding of the
world and its distancing affect in armed conflict. Secondly, in photography’s equally
stealthy assumption of the ideal, the beautiful vacuuming up aspiration so that we
become that which we desire. I commenced a shift in my art practice from a fixation with
the mimetic condition of photography to testing narrative, diegetic aspects of the medium
by means of photographic projects. That move to document substantiated in the
photographic and filmic outcome of this doctoral research in a considered recycling of
principle photographic patois of framing, view, composition, timing, ubiquity,
monumentality, taxonomy, poetics, stasis, flatness and so on. This shift in my work is
backgrounded by a serious public desire to progress mimesis to the next phase of
simulation restoring the third dimension of distance to imagery.

Still, photography even in demise, at its most prosaic remains a spectacular thing.
Photographs harvest an inscription of the real and the resultant visual description is
overwhelming. Being such a powerful descriptor it historically displaced written and oral
language in all of modern and post-modern culture, so that now, when people write or
speak, they automatically account for the picture in the midst of narrative. Because of
photography’s certain connection with the real it maps closer to chaos than other forms
of representation, and this is where the photographic category of documentary is valued
for its easy relationship with chance. Any well-made photograph appears the finest of
detailed description thriving on its capacity for telling metaphor whilst accommodating a
fraction of a time to its own measure of existence delivering a strange, still, visual poetry,
an ‘elegiac art’ as Sontag expresses it\textsuperscript{113}. What we understand as documentary relies absolutely on a photographic assemblage comprising cultural elements in dynamic alignment, cultivating a natural event. The photographic image is shaped by the operator controlling idiosyncrasies of the mechanics of camera, physics of lens and chemistry of film, so that within this combination of devices, photography entrances the fictional and subjectivity. The same liminalities of photographic realism capable of symbol and metaphor make photography as prone as any narrative to an outcome ranged between dramatic truth or meaningful story, and fraud or deception. Ultimately, the vernacular of photography affects sentiment and anticipates a finely tuned, conditioned response, whereby, photography invites us to engage in the restoration and completion of meaning, so that today, we think \textit{with} the photograph.

In the UK in 1967 I hitchhiked back from Somerset to the Midlands. One lift took me up from Newport on the Welsh border towards Ross-on Wye. The kindly young driver explained that he was a photographer on commission for the Sunday Times Colour Supplement photographing the year after the Aberfan disaster\textsuperscript{114} in South Wales. I checked the magazine a week or two later and sure enough there was the article about that shameful industrial catastrophe in a beautiful countryside cut, scarred and dying from coalmining. One small consideration that stayed with me was the strange artifice of that project, ‘one year after’, seemed like a cross-section of time and place. It was the issue of defining projects, some are defined editorially and some by the photographer and I realised that a way to proceed was from a point of interest, something that revealed itself, was noticeable and able to be photographed, seemed simple enough.

\textsuperscript{113} “For Sontag photography is an ‘elegiac art’ (an elegy being a poem, usually about the dead). By freezing a moment photographs show the subject’s mortality and the inevitability of change.” (La Grange, 2005: 32)

\textsuperscript{114} Aberfan Disaster On the 21 October 1966, 144 people, 116 of them children, were killed when a tip of coal waste slid onto the village of Aberfan in South Wales: \url{http://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/politics/aberfan/home2.htm} (accessed 12 September 2009).
The project *Suburbia* 40 photographs was offered to me in 2000 as a commission by the then Director of the Sydney Museum, Dr Peter Emmett. It was incorporated as part of a show on Sydney suburbia that included painters, sculptors as well as various historical and representative artefacts, objects, memorabilia of suburbia. I had a month to complete the project, so I photographed and printed through that time. I worked with a medium format Hasselblad camera and colour negative film as standard procedure that I used up until about 2003, when I started my the shift over to digital. Compared with Asia, Sydney suburbs are an un-peopled event, it seems little occurs with any intensity on the street that hasn’t already happened and over long periods of time. My decision was to approach the place as a sculptural condition, its ‘built environment’ and from that point it can be seen that these suburbs, quite similar to those I had inhabited as a youth, in the UK, Nuneaton and various parts of Solihull, are odd and the bizarre begins at home.

In 2002 I lived for six months in mainland China supporting the development of a new photography program and English language centre whilst in Shenzhen and opening up for myself a whole new world of photographic projects. *Not Quite the Sydney Opera House* started with a visit to a theme park in the city of Shenzhen. *Window of the World* is a very active, well attended, huge folly of a park that displays scale down versions of the world’s monuments including a 1/3 sized Eiffel Tower, a model of Manahattan that still included the Twin Towers one year after 9/11, and a 1/16 version of the Sydney Opera House. One affect of monument is that it confirms place for resident and newcomer alike and theme parks like *Window of the World* with its simulations confuses the issue, though, usually in tame and amusing ways. *Window of the World* is visited by many foreigners, but mostly it is an entertainment for locals and they attend in droves.

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115 Peter Emmett’s curatorial practice at the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney between 1990 and 2000 achieved a profoundly different form of exhibition practice to the standard approaches within Australian museology at that time. His use of art and artifice within each of these museums, and all the possibilities which this generated for historical interpretation, exhibition narrative, design, space and visitor experience, has permeated subsequent approaches to exhibition development and heritage interpretation within Australia.”

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_6973/is_2_16/ai_n28520528/ (accessed, 19 November 2009)
The instructive intent of the venue is considerate but, really one of significant pathos, spoken aloud or not, it was clearly planned as a compensation for a community anticipating little opportunity to travel beyond China, so here was the opportunity to tour the world for a day ticket and no visa required. As China matures and wealth is spread so travel overseas becomes more accessible, the need for such theme parks dissipates. After photographing the Shenzhen version of the Opera House, wherever I travelled there appeared another then another, so it’s become an ongoing project. In 2005 eight prints from the series were shown at the Museum of Sydney in a solo show complementary to a concurrent exhibition of Jørn Utzon’s original drawings and plans for the Sydney Opera House.

In 2003 I had a suite of nine photographs that I’d taken in China and North West Tibet exhibited in a show of creative travel photography called Somewhere Else these were images that documented my experience of China since 2000 in places that were sometimes difficult to access for reasons of geography and sometimes politics. I had discovered that I was interested in photographing people, I liked the engagement and as my Chinese language improved it became easier. I always ask an individual permission to photograph and when I can, I try to get back with a print for the photographed, though its not always easy. The trip into the Hakka villages in the Fujian mountains entailed digging our way through mud slides down precipitous mountain tracks and the drive out of Tibet through the grasslands above three thousand metres overheated the radiator as a freezing night set in, smashed the rear axle of our bus and took fifteen hours to drive 200 kilometres. I like the narratives that occur with photographs, sometimes I can attach a fiction to them, also, I use the images in short films or for further exhibition. Even so, the actual story is usually invariably interesting, for instance, the title of one image in this set exhibited in Somewhere Else, ‘A One Hundred Year Old Hakka Lady in a Four Hundred Year Old Hakka Village’, is accurate, she was spry and the mountain village very active.
Sixteen Bearded Men of St Marys was a set of 15 images built for an exhibition M4, 2006 including three Western Sydney artists, one painter, a video artist and myself as an artist/photographer on communities in and around the M4 between Sydney and Western Sydney. My intention was to score a single strata through a community, revealing something deeper than the usual surface expectation of place. St Marys is known as a fairly tough suburb, it was previously an army garrison servicing the flood prone weapons training ground surrounding the town. It takes some nerve to ask bearded men on main street St Marys if you can photograph them, but most turned out to be generous and interested in the project. Although I had one impressive beard in the tattoo shop next to the railway station refuse to be photographed for fear of recognition. With this project It was requisite to work with appropriate model release, useful, also, so that I could deliver prints on request.

Catalogue cover M4 UWS Art Gallery 2006

“Dave Cubby’s photographic installation, Sixteen Bearded Men of St. Marys explores another kind relationship within the domain of the M4. At the juncture of the Great
Western Highway and the M4 a strip development named St Marys was the source Cubby chose to seek his Sixteen Bearded men. Not this time an analysis of a particular locale within the M4, but rather a photographic homage to a group of men whose facial hair marks them as part of the perimeter, just as their suburb of St. Marys physically marks a place of demarcation. For Cubby there is a visual connection to be drawn between the scrubby landscape of St. Marys and of many of the faces who reside within it. As Cubby describes:

‘Although part of greater Sydney, this suburb seems always to be on the perimeter, there is wasteland that becomes scrubland and new developments that back onto small farm land and quite wild, forgotten places.

It is here, in St Marys that many of the men with beards live, a lot of men with beards, some large and lush, others patterned and plaited, short and sharp, all of which appear as scrubland, part tame, part wild. Some overgrown, forgotten or cultivated on the edge of the face: the plain. It's a masculine thing. There are legendary bikie gangs based in St Marys and a prescient drug and alcohol culture. People live on here who know where the bodies are buried at the edge of town...The beard remains a contained chaos shown on the face.'

Two short films included as QuickTime Movies with this exegesis are represented with a script and a suite of stills from each of the films as well as DVD and both are short films/artworks from the SPECTACLE project shown at the Brenda May Gallery, Sydney 2008 and as a Solo Exhibition at AD Gallery UWS, Sydney 2009.

**Optical Scream** is a short movie/artwork examining the heightened sensitivity of the artist Francis Bacon to photographic imagery and its affinity with chaos as the medium inscribes the world with its realism, revealing the reason Bacon found such amusement in Eisenstein’s clever encoding of the same knowledge of film in the image of the screaming nurse within the movie Battleship Potemkin. And, it is this particular still of the

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116 Dr Pam James, Catalogue Introduction to the M4 Exhibition 2006
nurse from the movie that the artist used as a base for his paintings of the screaming popes.

I had previously made a short film in 1994 titled *Command f Add Noise* which consisted of a voice over with each word screened in correspondence with the same word spoken for a script of three thousand words. I was surprised with how hypnotic the method proved to be, so I used it in my current making of short films. I discovered fairly quickly that punctuation was a distraction, as a result none of the scripts are punctuated. Punctuation is a visual guide to vocal stress and release and becomes irrelevant, even distracting, when the written or typographic word is spoken simultaneously with its visual form.

The short film *Optic Lingo* means that all spoken words are, ultimately, onomatopoeic and all written words ideograms, language is so much more than grammar or literature would have us believe. So, it is a remote western perspective on Chinese language that infiltrates and colonized Britain through the Roman Military and Church by means of measurement, classification and order that has never been forgotten through the generations. All lyrics, imagery and music struggle with rationalized detachment from nature through syntax as, for example, Gaelic is overwhelmed but never completely contained by Latin\(^\text{117}\), because it’s only a very neat, portable package of twenty six modular symbols and sentence structure, whereas Gaelic is more like Chinese, wild, specific and subtle. The idea of this film is to ‘turn the tables’ on typical views of Chinese language back onto Latinate English and point out that its typography and word modules

\(^{117}\) I went to an English Grammar School wherein Latin was compulsory study for all pupils the first two years. Herewith an article from the English Weekly Telegraph 1996, ‘Latin and Greek vital, says curriculum chief – Schools should revive the teaching of Latin and Greek to give pupils a clearer sense of their cultural identity, says the Government’s chief political adviser...Dr Nicholas Tate said it should be fundamental to the purpose of schools to ‘transmit an appreciation of, and commitment to the best of the culture we have inherited’. Referring to possible changes to the national curriculum at the end of the decade, he said there was a need to correct a ‘romantic individualism’ in schools’ attitudes to the purpose of education. We are not in the business of simply developing young people’s skills, introducing them to an array of cultural delights and then leaving them to make their own cultural, or indeed moral, choices,’ he told an international conference of educationalists in London. ‘That would be to reinforce our current sense of rootlessness and confusion of identity’. Paul Marston reporting for the English Weekly Telegraph 17 February 1996
are far more onomatopoeic and ideogrammatic than usually imagined, take words like *phlegm* or *spit*, *home* or *cave* and observed imaginatively, somehow they appear increasingly indexical. Gaelic is a similar open-ended linguistic structure to Chinese, and a suppressed language within Britain, yet it survives, not only as a discrete language, but, in thinking and way of using other languages. So, that Gaelic thinkers are always seeking metaphors, puns, poetry and jokes to making meaning specific and subtle, bedded in the life around them, thus, like photography shaving close to chaos. That grand and never-ending struggle of the Gaelic with Latin to make sense of the world is the genus of the most important British writing and why literature is the prime art form in that culture\(^\text{118}\). Now English is becoming lingua franca in the world, all Chinese students amongst other many other national education systems study English as an essential second language during their school years, but, English carries within its modernizing package, a warm and dangerous colonizing effect.\(^\text{119}\)

\(^{118}\) The remarkable contributions that Anglo-Irish literature and drama have made to this world may be ascribed, at least in part to the cross-fertilization of these two cultures. Be this as it may, it is noteworthy that such a small country should have nurtured so much creative literary genius – men like the great satirist Jonathan Swift, the orator and political theorist Edmund Burke, the novelist George Augustus Moore, the poet William Butler Yeats, and modern prose masters James Joyce, Liam O’Flaherty, Frank O’Connor, Sean O’Faolain, and Samuel Beckett. In the theatre too, Irish talent has won world-wide acclaim in the persons of William Congreve, Oliver Goldsmith, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, and Sean O’Casey. *Encyclopedia Britannica* 9, p 888b 1984

\(^{119}\) In *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the undergraduate Stephen Dedalus engages in conversation with the Dean of Studies, an English Jesuit, ‘humble follower in the wake of clamorous conversions’...the Dean leads the conversation towards the ‘useful arts’ and, talking of filling a lamp with oil, uses the term ‘funnel’, which Stephen had not met in that context: his word is ‘tundish’, which the Dean does not know at all...Stephen feels a ‘smart dejection that the man to whom he is speaking was a countryman of Ben Johnson and says to himself: ‘The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine’...But the continuation of Stephen’s dejected musing bring us to the real point about Anglo-Irish linguistic differences: ‘How different are the words home, Christ, ale master on his lips and mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of the spirit. His language, so familiar and foreign, will always be for ever an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of this language.’ What makes Stephen’s soul fret are the simple differences between his own pronunciation of the words and that of the Dean of Studies. He feels the inferiority of a provincial in the presence of a metropolitan ruling class accent: his case is a little different from that of a Lancastrian or Northumbrian in the days when public school English had the power to frighten and humble. But, Stephen feels the weight of three kinds of authority in his Dean’s speech – the ruling class, the Imperial power, the international church. His accent is not only provincial, it is also that of a subject people. (Burgess, 1973: 27)
LETTERS TO PHOTOGRAPHY

Within an Illustrated Box

Within an illustrated box, a gift for a small boy, maybe four to five years old, a toy film projector. Removed from cut out placements in the box, a tall rather than wide casing, part polished, part brushed alloy. Tin spools and hand-turned loops of film containing diminutive, sequenced images. Can’t recall the power source, something like an old-fashioned bicycle lamp battery.

Dark behind the sofa, projected onto a light wall, as least trapezoid as possible, focus adjust back and forth to sharp frame edge. Played over and over again, sometimes slow at others fast; a monochrome cowboy in a white shirt gallops a horse, pursued by shadowy riders, around a winding, bushy track, horse keels over at a bend, a great spray of gravelled dust - end of reel.

Inevitably, the apparatus breaks down, screws loosen, filament blows or battery is needed elsewhere. Curiosity, a boy and screwdriver commence the adventure of a neophyte dismantling of machine with the honourable aim of repair, guided by a guileless desire to see what interior manifests such marvellous effect – where, inside, is the luminous cowboy? Clips plied open that never quite re-connect, a thread breaks, and lens and focusing rack tumble apart, vital screw or nut lost to the ether of the floor.

Opened and disassembled, disintegration can never reveal any anticipated inner magic, soul of machine, no secret glowing entities, but a damaged apparatus that, only in precise and distantly manufactured configuration impels a device casting light, focusing film, spooling animation and defining screen.

No harm intended, just inquisitiveness driven by potential and the fulsome, gentle beauty of it. In memoriam it becomes radiantly clear, the apparatus must be in dynamic, industrially proscribed alignment in order to see again the first projection of light and tiny,
sharp etched, moving images cast large onto a wall, an experience never lost to memory.

“The photographic situation cannot be defined, a priori, the division of its fundamental components from its merely contingent aspects cannot be undertaken in the absolute.”

(Damisch, 1963, note 3)

**A Clock for Seeing**

The first camera was, as usual, a family affair, Kodak Box Brownie and 620 roll film, a time machine, a ‘clock for seeing’, available in most chemists and shops at a seaside resort or nearby a national monument. This shadow box with a pebble rectangle of glass set at a corner, viewfinder adjunct to a simple, central lens and aperture, springs, levers and dials unlubricated in movement, brush metal on metal, such a large black interior with spool and lugs for replacement films. As a friend once remarked, photographic equipment can be so depressingly ugly. Waiting for film and print to return in pocketed envelope, images as an indicator, a pointer to days on holiday, lost to whatever industry made of family; steam trains, mums and dads, siblings and friends, half-remembered aunts and uncles, viaducts over beaches, city walls, ford prefects, forced smiles and side-glances, hand-knitted jumpers with peg wings, rubber swim hats and over-sized woolly swimmers transformed to palm-sized, monochrome, chemical odour, sometimes with a fancy-cut white border. Looking at them now, shutter released, they all move away from the camera frame as it moves from them; feel the water in the shallows, sand between toes, lilo re-shapes from being sat upon, pale blue sky and warmth of the sun, sea laps, children laugh, talk amongst each other of ice cream, lemonade, cornish pasties and afternoon tea. For an unspoken moment they sensed us, and without realising, wondered about us, whenever and wherever we may be, gazing back at them down this rudimentary time portal. I want, with all my heart, to go back there, just for a visit, please, watch it all again. Give me the machine, press the shutter, do all of the rest.
Sketch Everything

Schoolboys scatter as dark marks across the languid, summer field at the corner of the school grounds, large clips to board, cartridge paper and sharpened, soft pencil. He sketches in reverie, turns to the art teacher. “Sir” he implores with stark, immature intensity, “how can we draw every leaf on the tree?” A considerate response “You can’t, you can only make a representation, an impression.” Even so, the boy held firm to his conviction of the possible, what he saw through light, time and space may be captured whole and perfectly replicated.

The Breaking of Golden Rules

In nineteen sixty seven, his very first class at art school in photography, not equipped with camera, but forming serried rank at table, each armed with a fine, burnished set of technical drawing instruments; compass, dividers and ruler. Divide a line AB into two sections of equal length From B draw an arc from the midpoint of AB to C at right angles to AB. Draw in CB and CA. Then from C draw an arc with radius CB to cut AC at D. From A draw an arc with radius AD to cut AB at E. In proportion to EB is to AE as AE is to AB, A rectangle can now be drawn.

“There”, the respectful and the studious were advised, in weary triumph, by the well-meaning photography teacher, “you have it - the Golden Rule” (Smith 1984: 168) and, the instructor extemporised, “if you want to compose your photograph well, this is the most balanced way to do it, place your main point of interest about a third of a way in from the side of the frame of a rectangle rather than at the centre”. Handed down from Vitruvius De Architectura whereby the harmonious relationship between unequal parts of a whole is achieved if the smaller is in the same proportion to the larger as the larger is to the whole. It was good to hear all of this over again, step by step, he loved the swing of the compass as it traced an admirable arc in this direction or that against and across a straight line, and to actually execute the Golden Rule. But, in truth and humility, he already knew it, intuitively he knew where to place what in proportion to whatever within
the frame, it was instinct to him and a ‘rule’ to break. Where were the cameras? Where was Henri?

“In applying the Golden Rule, the only pair of compasses at the photographer’s disposal are his own pair of eyes. Any geometrical analysis, any reducing of picture to schema, can be done only (because of its very nature) after the photograph has been taken, developed and printed – and then it can be used only for a post-mortem examination of the picture. I hope I will never see the day when photo shops sell little schema grills clamped to our viewfinders; and the Golden Rule will never be found etched on our ground glass.” (Cartier-Bresson 1952: 34)

Art Schooling
Post-war western, state education, mass, industrial and modernized edification created the basis for a broadcast model of pedagogical disciplines, including culture. Art, was integrated within that prototype, encapsulated as, more or less, from the caves of Lascaux thence ancient arts, Byzantine, Greek, Roman, Gothic and so, Giotto to Cezanne, followed by abstraction, pop, minimalism, conceptual and arts that increasingly and contemporaneously replicate the substance and appearance of the instructional mould immediately shaping it. At about seventeen years of age, in nineteen sixty-seven, as an art student, he had already undergone schooling in municipally sanctioned art. So, when first loaned a school camera he went outdoors and photographed what he noted to himself as an ‘Edward Weston’; a macro image of tonally disparate and textured, weather-boards at the side of a shed and, on the same roll of monochrome negative film a ‘Moholy-Nagy’; framing himself reflected in the chrome hub cap of a car. The negatives and the prints long gone now, but, two decades later and since, this particular couple of historically accredited art photographers embodied for him certain deep and critical differences between American and European modernisms.
Drawn, literally as well as logically, into viewing an image over again fulfils the same need for listening to a song a thousand times and more, it’s what makes them popular - enchantment exacting meaning, mapped precisely by infinite and glorious, spiking and flickering tracers, this jumble of first love, until, gaze averted, all vanishes; shadows in shapeless absentia, dismal pathos all around. If I allow it, Cohen’s clever, ambiguous poetry crafted into one beautiful, sultry recording of ‘love itself’, can repeatedly make imaginable for me, whether it be personal or original, wonder at discovery of camera obscura, ‘in my little room’, formations of perfect identity dancing, swarming with delight chasing desire, in and out of flecks of dust from the window to the door, supremely radiant and fleeting.
**This Watchful Eye**

The photographic technician, a short, portly man, receding auburn hair, plain face buried, forgotten, in and between the certainties of the medium of his profession, late mid-twentieth century. “I’ll show you how it works” he deliberates to the two young art students in the room, finding a suitably tiny fissure, casting a ray of light, along the closed window blinds, first-floor, darkened studio. He manipulates the card, facing the aperture, walking back and forth until a jewel of an inverse image of the sunny, external world focuses at the face of his tiny, hand-made screen. Grand Parade, Brighton; vibrant and unblemished hues, distant figures scurry along, buses and cars pass by the impressive, timbered, black and white façade of the King and Queen pub opposite and between a green, treed island of park replete with richly coloured flowerbeds –this bright spell in the shadows signaling, perhaps, surveillance as an original notion – private and extremely beautiful, inside a darkened room, this watchful eye, this camera.

**A Pattern of Interference**

She dreams of a golden gallery hovering for milliseconds in pure white space, whereby an attendant angel enters the room and flicks a concealed light switch. She enters, a spectral visitor, floating and giving regard to the hard painting suspended against a shimmering wall, between the broken yellow flowers and glazed vase, it’s as though another control had been auto-relayed by her vision; simply looking completes the pictorial circuit, and all of the shimmering passion and thought springs up multi-dimensionally from an hitherto slumber sector of electro-magnetic spectrum. Between the once comatose spectator, the picture and the long-dead author resurrected, between ‘you’ and ‘I’, the glowing room fills up, gaseous glistening with spiral discharge, a pattern of interference, detonated between original intent and viewing. The symbol and apparition speak, shooting arcs, wild sprays and lightning rockets - the pyrotechnics of meaning.
Funny Perspective

What is so poignant and endlessly funny about Chic Murray’s 20th Century sublime, folksy, conceptual quip “I knew he was walking away from me, he was getting smaller” is that, in one clever phrase, literally from the sublime (subliminal) to the ridiculous, surfaces, ‘everyman’s’ confusion between medieval ways of seeing compared with consciousness of perspective, realism arriving with the renaissance subsequently drilled into the populace as-the-way-we-all-shall-see to fit the purpose of an exponentially expansive industrial existence. This joke calls up a Chaplinesque figure, innocently burdened by responsibility towards a new way of seeing, new ‘perspectives’ that threaten to overwhelm customary ‘primitive antecedents’ or childish pre-perspective depiction, whereby figures are scaled large or small dependent upon status as opposed to distance placement within a perspective structure, note that little and large configuration exists between Laurel and Hardy, unremediated by any new perspective, even though keen to take on the task. This is visual trope made verbal; the same event just as described, then, dependent on how you look at it either the figure is either disappearing off towards a vanishing point (renaissance – ‘I knew he was walking away from me’) or adjusting in relative status, shrinking (medieval – he was getting smaller) and all the contingent affect(s) those ways of seeing have upon the world and subjectivity in terms of distance, involvement, placement and/or location of view.

Significance

He explained to students, by means of projected slides of his photograph works, what enabled him to make the images that he did, private, discrete images of nothing-in-particular, rich-toned dark events of ether, tiny corners and edges of anonymity into the most beautifully crafted, fine photographic prints. One afternoon, as he was a younger teenager - an unwitting immigrant stranded by family on the western edge of Australia - friends of his elder sister had called by and asked them both out for a walk, they agreed. Birds sang, the sun warmed and sticks swung lazily at long blades of grass at the verge,
the friends had cameras, but what impressed him greatly, as they sauntered along
country paths and laneways, was that they photographed, what seemed to him, almost
anything and nothing of recognizable importance. This caused him to question hard
photographic significance, because, up to this point he had assumed that all
photographs were intended only to be something like a family portrait for the mantelpiece
or a landscape view. From that time he never let go of this sublime shock, it gave him the
confidence to question what and how to photograph and he never stopped doing so,
there was a lot of anonymity and unselfconscious manner out there, to be photographed,
and all of it poetic, always. He never queried that, perhaps he should, or, maybe not.

**Grand Passion and Bloody Pity**

The same for this poor author and most who care to read these words, all can insert their
own story. Be certain to picture this, though, the scale is biblical and just as holy, as, for
example, one sketched measure across time, from, perhaps, the first factory in the world
at Cromford in the Derbyshire Dales to, say, present-day Shenzhen, Guangdong
Province - such is the pain of all of our immediate ancestors it’s the same for ourselves -
for my own, torn from the land in Cumbria to dig canals in Lancashire, plied into the
cotton mills of Oldham, the same wrack for those peasants now drafted from peasant
farms all over PR China into the manufacturing hubs of ‘special economic zones’ for their
children and their children, hope bound for small, tinsel reward and absorption into a
mass industrial education - the same herded dreams, the same shoebox dwellings, the
same compliant madness – in grand passion and bloody pity, there are millions of similar
lines that can be drawn through as many different directions, bless all of them as they
cross. The subjugation of workers, wrenched from the old power order culled into novel,
decentralized array, social mechanisms for regulation and acquiescence of requisitely
shifting populations. As Foucault describes it “a certain policy of the body, a certain way
of rendering men docile and useful. This policy required the involvement of definite
relations of power; it called for a technique of overlapping subjection and objectification; it brought with it new procedures of individualization.” (Foucault, 1977, 305)

**A Rare and Extraordinary Lack of Visual Pollution**

Without, yet, delving deep now into the significance of synaesthesia but, in the context of profound, mass transformation of the structure of sensation, some slight imagining of a ‘slippage’ of the senses might be gained by a reading of German author Patrick Süskind’s novel *Das Parfum* (Süsskind, 1985) set in eighteenth century France, lead character *Jean-Baptiste Grenouille*, anti-hero/anti-Christ (‘grenouille’ translates as ‘frog’) disconcertingly carries no body odour but, in (re)vitalized animality, has an incomparable sense of smell. And, that’s the fundament of plot, however, without deep reference to the odd and compelling narrative of *Parfum* it is sufficient, immediate shock to learn of a (possible) man, mapping his entire location primarily by aroma, throughout space and time, creating a unique, pungent geography of scent. Otherwise, lying on a bed in the afternoon, closing eyes and picking an independent way across the surrounding terrain in one sense only, sonically, whereby birds sing, distant dog barks, the intermittent hum of traffic, breeze through wires and trees - all induce an inevitable, overall consciousness of harmony - meditative calm from re-engagement with lapsed sensation. At Raglan, along the road between Monmouth and Newport, aside the border of Gloucester and Wales is a late medieval castle, its origins from the twelfth century and remnant structure fifteenth century, put to ruin in 1646 through the longest siege laid on any castle twixt Roundhead and Cavalier. Now, maintained as a place for recreational day visits, it is possible to find a way down from the blighted great tower to an edge and section of the castle moat. On a good day in summer, glimpsing out athwart the cut, surrenders experience for all, again and again, to a strange, exquisite serenity, why? All that completes sensual experience here, faint to ear, dawdling water; at hand, soft grist of rubbed stone against fresh, damp grass; taste and scent breathe clean, balmy air. And, of vision, naught bides, beyond cool, darkened stream, moss folding over placid grey-
stone wall, comb of green lawn tidily caressing a soaring blue sky, reflected gently back as languorous light dancing a meandering watercourse. This very secluded place restores relief, dignifying tranquility with a rare and extraordinary lack of visual pollution.

**A Mechanical Lion**

It is quite precious this contemporary moment of ‘performance art’ and ‘installation art’ to not recognize with the respect due, such impressive propensity and scale of Renaissance and previous Medieval ‘presentation’, staging of events, inventive dramatic entertainment and, indeed, ‘installations’, that preceded, sometimes, exceeded in wit, craft and relative proportion current technologies, methods and outcome. According to Vasari, Leonardo Da Vinci, in 1482, created a silver lyre in the shape of a horses head presented as a peace offering between Lorenzo de Medici and Ludovico il Moro the Duke of Milan, the latter of whom Da Vinci worked for, on many different projects, including the preparation of splendid, magical floats and marvelous, grand pageants for special occasions. Late in life he was commissioned by Francis 1 France to make a mechanical lion able to walk forward and open its chest to reveal a cluster of lilies.

**Smile**

Of course, single images sustain deep attention as a monadic eye that expands and slows to a measurable fraction of time, for example, the sublime, fleeting and unidentifiable smile of Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* or the childish yet, possibly seductive glance of Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, consistently drawing the viewer into extra-diegetic musing on what happened before and after the sitter radiated momentary expression towards an eye that had knowledge enough to find harmony within chaos. It is painterly, but like a photographic sectioning of light it’s a paradox similar to that of a stop frame movie, expanding a moment of compressed actuality. Within photography, a fixed image means more or less one fraction of a second of light that is stabilized and in that act, temporally magnified, slowed to stasis in chronological distance relative to space shown as one plane, a trace, a print vibrant with luminance. Floods of time slowed to
imperceptible motion, fixed as glass that is, in truth, still liquid, flowing gravitationally at millennial speed to a magnetic core until it slips away like Dali’s liquid watch. Whilst decelerating, we must construct meaning beyond extant language, words as symbols tend to generalize, say ‘smile for the camera’ and the fixed response readies to become photograph, yet, ‘smile’ stands for an endless range of related expression. Even so, everyday we find some need to extend expression by means of linguistic invention or trope in order to make meaning that is specific and accurate, ‘smile’ covers a seemingly incalculable map of facial arrangement from expansive grin to flickering pout and still there are more and then there are nameless more.

Two Photographers

Two well-recognised photographers from within conventional and especially American, histories of photography, W Eugene Smith and Arnold Newman, work idiosyncratically with photographic space relative to time. The former, Smith, was a photojournalist and/or documentary photographer often working fast, often in difficult and dangerous situations and without variation, he applied a specific geometry, composing his images around a signature, diagonal accent across the frame, a marked slash or tick, occasionally a diamond, but, essentially a definite transverse ‘scaffold’ on which to suspend, a priori, in classic spatio-pictorial sense, ‘his’ image content. It’s as though Smith needs or seeks that ‘geometric’ or anticipated spatial gesture that ‘tick’, in order to track any and all of his images in apparently un-staged, ‘life circumstance’ photographs. He worked with small format cameras, tending to expose without the aid of a light meter and according to the operational maxim ‘if in doubt, overexpose’, given Smith’s legendary, compensatory hours in the darkroom adjusting exposure extremities and tonal nuance to intuitively crafted contrast. Smith worked intuitively both professionally and in technical application and as he lived life. The other, portrait photographer, Newman, used large format camera and film to capture an image of a subject within a carefully considered
environment signalling social role and persona to a knowledgeable audience with sufficiently high resolution film and format to endure considerable post-camera image cropping as management of space and image content, delivering meaning or relevant signification across the frame and throughout the illusion of depth; fore, middle and background dependent upon the narrative at play. Newman’s images all reveal a model of the economy of compositional editing, recalling the pictorial cliché ‘what’s left out is more important than what’s kept in’ a visual enactment akin to grammatical sentence structure comprising no more than two or three elements something like a noun, verb and adjective, along with linguistic shifters that’s sufficient to comprise one photographic image, to ‘speak a single, elegant sentence’ clearly rather than trying to cram a whole
paragraph and more into the envelope of one sentence that comes out, inevitably, garbled. Newman’s finished portraits are unfailingly eloquent.

The synchronic assemblage of time, space, light along with arbitrary, stubborn idiosyncratic ‘faults’ or liminalities of chemistry, optical and mechanical physics along with its materiality as a multi-dimensional object, a print or transparency, re-defines in expansive detail the photographic analogon and at that edge a kind of ‘grammar’ results from the use of framing, tonality, colour, film grain, depth-of-field, variable focus, focal length of lens, motion blur, image manipulation, print paper stock and more all providing extremely variable ‘play’ of vernacular; a photographic language and as the analogon is extended, re-shaped by means of technique, skill, creativity and accident, meaning becomes, by common agreement, replete with signs, increasingly sophisticated, subtle, flexible and yet classifiable in terms of clarity, style and intent. As one photographer emphasises coarse granularity for a ‘gritty’ documentary look, another may accentuate shallow depth of field to focus on a key detail, another, motion blur to stress speed or employ any and all combination of signs, compositional device, to express meaning with maximum impact, through photographic vernacular.

**Photographic veracity**

A known artwork by the UK artist with deep interest in semiotics, John Hilliard *Cause of Death* (1974) illustrates elegantly how a single word of text and a simple shift in view of the same referent drastically alters meaning¹²⁰. Hilliard’s photographic artworks, from the nineteen-seventies on, generally, function self-referentially as kind of meta-illustrations of

¹²⁰ “The meaning of the image is directly determined by what is included within the photographic frame. This meaning is shifted as the elements within the frame change. Automatically, a relationship among these elements is built, and this develops, mostly, independent of the contextual relations among these elements in reality. If the photographer selects only two of the people out of a crowd to include within the frame, a new relationship is formed among the two, which is valid for the new context of the elements, but does not exist in reality. John Hilliard’s well-known series, Cause of Death, is a proper example for the interaction of framing in a photograph and meaning of the image.” (Derman, İhsan (derman@bilkent.edu.tr), Transparency of the Photographic Frame 1995) [http://www.art.bilkent.edu.tr/studies/id-01-en.html](http://www.art.bilkent.edu.tr/studies/id-01-en.html) (accessed 16 April 2011)
semiotics of the photographic image, in this case image then text as context: Cause of Death visually sequences four cropped rectangles from the same photographic image intended to be read as a body beneath a sheet, the first cropping comprises the body, rocks and the word ‘crushed’; next; body, water’s edge and ‘drowned’; body, open fire and ‘burned’; finally; body, bridge and ‘fell’.

Assumption of truth within photographic image because of it’s nature as trace is qualified precisely in this work, whereby ‘appearances deceive’ even in real space and time by means of simple device or happenstance, that is to say, a slight adjustment of view with
the addition of even a minor signifier induces sufficient leverage to shift meaning, radically. So, given the truth inherent in photograph as trace, that is to say; there has to have been a body under a sheet, albeit enacted, on a rocky shoreline, at a riverbank, adjacent to a log fire, beneath a bridge for a photograph to have been made; it remains as possible for a photograph as it is equally possible in reality for a shift in view, for example an actual view ‘cropped’ by looking through from another nearby bridge, to believe the cause of death to have been by one force or another, dependent upon what can be seen in that location crop. In addition, whether it’s an indexical image or a ‘live’ view being experienced, a word spoken, read or overheard would tend to contextualize a scene as well as weigh or shift opinion in a particular direction. None of this detracts from the full quotient of photographic truth as trace in itself, but proves similar potential for deception, by design or accident, pertaining to an iconic, indexical image such as photograph, complicit with the sort ‘conjured up’ or staged vis-à-vis real time events.

Trust in the veracity of the photographic image, its accurate depiction of reality or the ‘truth claim’ (Gunning, 2004: 41) of photography, appears well-founded because of its indexicality as well as visual accuracy or iconicity. Given a limited analogon, one photographic image of a person, close and smoothly packed with detail, makes it easily recognisable as evidential depiction of a particular person compared to another for all who are able, in the simplest way, to read photographs. There’s an obviousness, a ‘common sense’ about that being the reason why there are passport photographs and why that’s the prime item changed on a false passport. Andre Bazin, describes the fidelity, reliability and objectivity of photography as free from the ‘sin’ of subjectivity (Bazin, 1958) so, five decades later, Paul Levinson explains the physical nature of the indexical relationship twixt reality and its optico-chemical retention producing a specific image as “a literal energy configuration from the real world” (Levinson, 1997: 37). Faith in the truth of photography fails at mostly all the same point(s) that it’s possible to orchestrate deception and/or plain circumstantial error occur in the real world; reality
being as prone to manipulation as the photograph itself. Events are staged, press
conferences, live debates or political stunts arranged as 'photo-opportunity' in such
cases what is manipulated is paradigmatic fidelity, the believability of photograph, but,
because it is a material object too, under the same rules and in accord with 'reality'.

Well Composed

When Berger refers to 'composition', in disabusing photography of art and the painterly,
he describes perennial confusion between photography and painting at the nexus of fine
art and composition applicable to painting as "an art of arrangement" but not of relevance
to photography, dismissing the kind of formal composition presented in every typical
“handbook of photography” that, really, relates to painting and similar forms of
representation, not the photograph. Nonetheless, there are views and principles of
spatial (as well as temporal) composition rarely, if ever, fully expressed in any handbook
of art, let alone photography, concerned with the physiology of perception and meaning.

Within his popular and useful guide on reading film and media, James Monaco explains
the basics of physiology of perception (Monaco 1981: 125) relevant, at the very least, to
the reading of a book or any image physically, based on an observation that human
receptor organs concentrate in the fovea of the retina and thereby, seeing consistently
focuses vision sharp at one point, staring directly ahead. That kind of vision, means that
the eyes must move, constantly and semiconsciously, on an object of any size from
foveate point to foveate point and, ostensibly, it appears in a disorderly scan, whether
real, dynamic and/or dimensional, an image or an illusion. As Monaco states, we
conventionally read a page in English, for example, from left to right and top to bottom
but we are rarely conscious, if ever, of the same process reading an image, though we
certainly do so, initially in a seemingly more anarchic fashion than we are conditioned to
read a book. To illustrate the way we see, Monaco uses the visual of a drawing of the
bust of Queen Nefertiti borrowed from experiment by Albert L. Yarbus (Yarbus/Monaco
complemented by a graph of ‘eye movements’, called saccades and captured electro-mechanically, whilst viewing the drawing.

The graph makes it clear that surveying the image follows recurrent patterns and is actually no random viewing; there appears, less and less a disorderly viewing, rather a certain concentration on the sensory areas of the face, particularly the eye, mouth and ear. The physiology of seeing, foveate and saccadic vision, underscores all spatial compositional notions, principles, theories and application, given that we scan a scene, an object, saccadically from foveate nodal point to nodal point, but to what end? This way of seeing, physiologically, coalesces naturally with the sublime and deeply human need to seek meaning, constantly, everywhere and in everything, the way we structure visual reality.

Illustration: Yarbus/Monaco 1981: 126

In an unwitting allusion to fractal geometry, Leonardo Da Vinci notes his habitual derivation of inspiration from ‘reading’ into cracks and stains, ashes and clouds:

“…look at walls splashed with a number of stains or stones of various mixed colours. If you have to invent some scene, you can see there resemblances to a number of landscapes, adorned in various ways with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, great plains, valley for you to stop sometimes and look into the stains of walls, or the ashes of a fire, or
clouds, or mud, or like things, in which, of you consider them well, you will find really
marvellous ideas. The mind of the painter is stimulated to new discoveries, the
composition of battles of animals and men, various compositions of landscapes and
monstrous things, such as devils and similar creations, which may bring you honour,
because the mind is stimulated to new inventions by obscure things." (McMahon 1956).

These are not recognition of pre-defined symbols or “identification of a perceived object
or substance” because the observed ‘things’ are “obscure” the cracks, stones or stains
constitute “non-signifying patterns” and are not “identifiable signifiers”. As the mind is
stimulated into discovery and invention out of obscurity what Da Vinci reveals “a mode of
thinking that is visual and not based on language” (Van Alphen 2005: 1) and for John
Berger; “in every act of looking there is an expectation of meaning” (Berger, 117)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes his own experience of the absorption of self by and
within viewing Paleolithic image(s) painted on the walls in the Caves of Lascaux
(Johnson, G. A. ed. 1999: 121-149) and painting of animals configured on the sides of
cave amongst crevice and surface inconsistency:

“The animals painted on the walls of Lascaux are not there in the same way as are the
fissures and limestone formations. Nor are they elsewhere. Pushed forward here, held
back there, supported by the wall’s mass they use so adroitly, they radiate about the wall
without ever braking their elusive moorings. I would be hard pressed to say where the
painting is I am looking at. For I do not look at it as one looks at a thing, fixing in its place.
My gaze wanders within it as in halos of Being. Rather than seeing it, I see according to,
or with it.” (Johnson, G. A. ed. 1999: 121-149)

Furthermore, Da Vinci makes reference in codex to his belief in a definite “geometric
underpinning” (Smith 1984: 169) to composition in order to give the image “strength and
unity” (Smith 1984: 169). Customarily, the classic school ‘art handbook’ image is Da
Vinci’s ‘Virgin of the Rocks’ or something like, and, as any art teacher might invariably
show, the compositional structure appears clearly, triangular. Within the depiction, we,
typically, scan saccadically, from one foveate point to the next, along the tracks of 'triangles', in this case, from the eyes of the virgin to St John, the Christ child and the angel, each face cleverly 'lifted' tonally to highlight, leading out to the lighter landscape at the background and making one final diagonal directional track a 'return ticket' for the audience. In looking at work, each time, the effort is to start from the work itself; it is a looking that needs to be unimpaired by name, title, status, value, history all is best put aside in order to observe the work as it stands, as a thing, an object; no more and no less than what is there, before us, and allow one’s eye to travel across the work, in and out of any illusion and note each aspect, each nodal point, major then minor feature(s) each point that is made, keep returning to the work, again and again until exhausted of meaning for the time being.

Leonardo Da Vinci ‘Virgin of the Rocks’

At this point, the process of looking is fundamentally practical and physiological, symbolic, but guides us through an espalier of connotation, nuance, hints, clues, gestures, indicators, intimations, pointers, traces, references implicating a ‘viewer’ in the completion of meaning, to make effect of denotation - the virgin’s cloak, taut and loose
forms a triangle offset by her outstretched hand leading, in part, to St John’s beatific
gaze, simultaneously commanding the Christ child in kind, maternal yet respectful
containment, a protection and homage of his head, his sense; this is a confident mother,
and, there are triangles that track meaning throughout, giving ‘solidity’ or gist to the
image, ‘read’ them. In a well-composed image, as is the case with ‘Virgin of the Rocks’,
structure is purposeful across the surface, into and out of illusion. It engages the viewer
precisely - no more and no less than to deliver intent on the part of the author, with
maximum impact - the nature of such meaning, though exact, is usually ‘implicit’ or,
rather, not necessarily quantifiable linguistically.

There may not always be words to convey what remains tantalizingly present, subtle and
coherent within an image – a rare piece of feeling or novel bit of thinking. This is true of
all images or objects whether discrete or convergent media intended to deliver a
message, edited and/or composed - or not, as Merleau-Ponty questions “where is the
painting I am looking at?” (Johnson, G. A. ed. 1999: 121-149). Otherwise, to paraphrase
Merleau-Ponty, “where is the painting or picture that I am unable to look at?” In the case
of a poorly composed and/or crafted image with, perhaps, insufficient tonality at one
edge or too ‘muddy’ a shadow, the scan ‘brakes and skids’, lost to a bland highlight
flowing meaninglessly onto a white border or duds at murk and shade disappearing into
pictorial oblivion; poorly crafted or absent geometrical and/or surface structure leads to
nowhere within the image, meaningless.

Generally speaking, the naïve artist will draft the object in a ‘literal’ sense as the object,
the whole object and nothing but the object, usually small to the page and centered
thereabouts. Charming, or, like living in a bad suburb, ‘camp’ art is okay, as far as a
sense of humour lasts. Whereas, a practitioner equipped with some sort of graphic
sensibility tends to work to the scale of paper/screen (ground and edge/frame), sensitive
to the myriad set(s) of eidetic images/models extant within any anticipated audience,
drafting significant elements rather than the whole. Why overload the viewer with what
they already know and maybe, more of that? Usually, the graphic ‘challenge’ is to see what economy of mark/presence/absence or how minimal a piece of information, sonic, spatial and/or temporal, needs to be drafted for re-cognition, interest, and, certainly, permit the audience/viewer ‘into the picture’ to engage with construction of a resemblance of the whole. Vilém Flusser describes a version of the process, “The significance of the image is on the surface. One can take them at a single glance yet this remains superficial. If one wishes to deepen the significance, i.e. to reconstruct the abstracted dimensions, one has to allow one’s gaze to wander over the surface feeling the way as one goes. This wandering over surface of the image is called ‘scanning’. In doing so, one’s gaze follows a complex path formed, on the one hand, by the structure of the image and, on the other, by the observer’s intentions. The significance of the image as revealed in the process of scanning therefore represents a synthesis of two intentions: one manifested in the image and the other belonging to the observer. It follows that images are not ‘denotative’ (unambiguous) complexes of symbols (like numbers for example) but ‘connotative’ (ambiguous) complexes of symbols. They provide space for interpretation.” (Flusser, 1983: 8)

In this case, ambiguity balances the release and retention of information rendering, usually, an intuitive, but, carefully considered gap between the known and unknown providing, at its most eloquent, a surgical opening for the completion of meaning, engaging the viewer in the creative act.

“Clearly some works of art beg for audiences to fill the gaps left open by artists. Creators like John Luc Godard, Samuel Beckett, Jackson Pollock, John Cage, and many others structure their art to reflect precisely on the cleavages, breaks, and discontinuities that images make possible At the same time, these artists know that viewers will make the difference. They know interaction is what entertainment is based on, just as the pleasures of viewing are also dependent upon an audience’s ability to generate and contribute to the richness of experiences they have.” (Burnett, 2005: 90).
The act of looking itself becomes imaginative and, often satisfyingly so, because it feels productive above consumptive.

The most perennial and interesting images/scenes are never overwhelmingly didactic, excessive or ever total in message delivery.

"I want to give the audience a hint of a scene. No more than that. Give them too much and they won't contribute anything themselves. Give them just a suggestion and you get them working with you. That's what gives the theatre meaning: when it becomes a social act." (Orson Welles 1941).

It is compositional structure both practical and physiological, image-object structured out of line, tone and/or colour, perspective, placement, focus, light and relative position giving traction, leading the viewer to their own version of restitution, subjectivity, thinking and at that ‘mid-point’ dispensing with the original object as stimulus until it’s needed once more and within micro-seconds or however much later, to ignite or re-ignite, working with an onlooker to restore meaning – see the picture, hear the poem, taste the dish, smell the scent, touch the body, listen to the song again and again.

Seeing an image meaningfully may be labeled as code, denotation and connotation as though replete with signs, but, can also be seen, experientially and visually, as a kind of interference pattern, a ‘meeting of mind’ between the author, and the viewer via the work, that is to say the interference pattern is the actual image obscuring, whilst drawing on its own vivid presence of work, idea, sensation, thinking, a discourse shared ‘direct’ from the author in absentia. The viewer’s active engagement with the construction of meaning along with the image is thinking, and completes intention. “The minute an image finds a spectator (i.e. from the moment its creator casts a wary eye on his or her creation), the ‘object’ is no longer the main focus. As a consequence, viewers are in a middle zone between seeing, materiality, understanding and feeling.” (Burnett, 2005: 89)
Contingent character

John Hilliard was one of my tutors at Brighton School of Art in the late sixties/early seventies. He studied at a local art school in Lancaster UK, then sculpture at St Martin’s School of Art during the nineteen sixties. It was whilst documenting photographically his own ‘transient sculpture installations’ that he became interested in the way that photographs replicate then supplant artwork and in 1970-71 he made work concerned with the mechanics of photography testing the liminalities of the medium, the camera itself. In his early work the only function of subject matter was in explicating its own condition, that is to say, as aperture through A Camera Recording Its Own Condition 1971 affecting its appearance as the final image - as with related Hilliard art pieces, the darkroom clock, the photographer – the only way to neutralize all image-content external to intent is to make the work totally self-reflexive - closed works precisely identifying photographic cause and effect. From 1972, his work shifted from the intrinsic function of photographic process towards exploration of photographic vernacular, devices that include cropping, focus and caption all of which direct the reading as well as interpretation of photographic images, as in the work Cause of Death 1974 (33). Art works from 1972 explored narrative and landscape chosen because both forms are commonly evocative, pictorial and in accord with Sartre, deceptive, but, Hilliard works didactically using, for example, preconceived landscape as diagrammatic sketches to be located and manipulated through subject matter as agency intended to reveal aspects of photographic practice. And, distancing photograph from photographed - looping back, in a sense, to the initial syndrome - photographing ephemeral sculptural installation within a landscape - the photograph in its indexical lucidity appropriates its own image content and becomes the artwork, the arbiter of meaning. (Hilliard,1981).

Matthew Fuller’s essay titled The Camera That Ate Itself (Fuller, 2005) reconsiders, in acerbic detail, John Hilliard’s A Camera Recording Its Own Condition (1971) and concludes:
“The asymmetry of forces embedded in the multiple layers of program within the apparatus of the camera are set to work on mapping their own asymmetry. Feedback in music in sound produced by bringing a microphone, guitar or other element of sound input into such relation of proximity with its output – a speaker – that the sound of the speaker itself becomes input begins to vibrate the diaphragm of the mic for example. The system becomes cyclical and positive – it begins to amplify its own amplifications. In A Camera Recording Its Own Condition we can view the iteration of that process occurring in visual terms. The presence of difference can be read in Hilliard’s flat assembly of visual data, but, it provides no access to it as an ongoing process. Mobilizing the potential disturbance of and within the nested and antagonistic programs of media now comes sliding into opportunity.” (Fuller, 2005)
‘Photography aspires to art each time, in practice, it calls into question its essence and its historical roles, each time it uncovers the contingent character of these things, soliciting in us the producer rather than the consumer of images.’ (Damisch 1963: Note 5)

**Photography Spoke to its Heart**

Photojournalism provides a document, a print, an image that we can, most of us, detect or presume to be authentic, dependent upon context and in what it depicts; not staged, not faked, not manipulated beyond framing and the usual syntax or language of photography. Documentary photographs constitute the greater body of photojournalistic work, and similar to all elements of journalism are still, mostly assembled, edited and made accessible through traditional broadcast publication.

Unlike other kinds of similar photography such as lifestyle, street or celebrity photography, photojournalism is characterized by relevance to the context of current public events and impartiality as a just and accurate depiction of events, consisting of images combined with complementary journalistic form to create certain meaning and narrative.

A photograph as a document usefully mediates from one reality revealing to another events not be seen in the normal concourse of daily life, making the term ‘document’ as appropriate as ‘note’ is to bank note, implying portability and exchange within an economy of images. So, documentary discloses as credible evidence, all manner of realities one to another. Because, photographs are superior descriptors, particularly in the light of a unique capacity for realism being, in fundament, a ‘trace’ of certain aspects of the actual, a verisimilitude of light and its absence.

Thus, photographs as inscription displaced earlier forms of description characterizing journalism such as text and illustration, changing written language so that journalists learnt to write meaningfully in ways that accounted for the co-presence of photographs with the aim of delivering specific messages with maximum impact. It was a similar
historical shift in form and technique from radio to television whereby presenters had to invent and learn to deliver oral accounts in conjunction with visual information.

For the print media, lithographic illustrations were, in short order, eliminated by the photograph and all other forms of visual representation banished to the editorial cartoon or graphic diagram, until digital manipulation and illustration revived representational images to a limited degree.

Otherwise, images, including photographs are similar to all forms of description, capable of being accurate but usually incomplete in meaning, in other words, subjective. Thus, photographs are dependent for completion of meaning upon contextualization residing within the thinking of the observer, so that sometimes photographs work successfully as discrete images and on other occasions need to function collaboratively with text in order to specify a message. The observer negotiates the completed message on trust anticipating prior and consistently honest delivery or confirmation of belief.

“The Mass Media Revolution, began in western Europe and the eastern United States during the middle of the nineteenth century, with the convergence of advances in paper production and printing press methods, and the invention of the telegraph, which changed the way that information was conveyed. For the first time, newspapers and magazines reached out to the common man with news about events near and far and packaged goods for sale. Photography spoke to its heart. Public schools and libraries dotted the countryside and the growing cities. For the masses, literacy came within reach.” (Fang, 1997: 89-92).

Photography spoke to its heart.

The most confrontational kind of photojournalistic depiction are images of war and catastrophe, usually the debate around broadcast photojournalism has revolved around moral principles of when to photograph or not to photograph, when to publish or not to publish. Those professional ethics shift from event to event and are, generally speaking,
within the best of broadcast media resilient enough to be operational, though not in all cases. Nonetheless, colloquial if not literate editing skills of educated and somewhat conditioned observers are honed enough these days to, at least, differentiate between the good and bad guys. So contemporaneously, the major field of ethical interest is at the end purpose of the photojournalistic image, that of viewing and readership. On an exponentially larger scale than broadcast media could ever have been, innovative electronic media fragment-casts new events and existing knowledge from its own technological base(s) whilst continuing to use the parent media as a platform.

It must be along this edge that already efficient individual editing and moral discrepancy for author and observer carries the responsibility of becoming correspondingly greater and wider spread, enhanced, intelligent, sophisticated, subtle, mature and, in short, wiser. Hopefully, equivalent to nothing less than the finest quality of professional values of journalism developed within the best of traditional broadcast and print media, Where images within the media have most impact is at the edge, ‘on the front line’, so to speak, and in their moment unprecedented and feral. These are the images we notice and remember, the same way the best lyrics for the most memorable songs come so easily from unselfconscious conversation, street talk. Thus, ‘wild photography’ throws up documentary images not yet controlled by the ‘powers that be’, as was the case in the American war in Vietnam war whereby professional news photographers were able, for a time, to deliver images of horror to a broadcast media, by means of mass-circulation magazines, newspapers and television, with relative freedom from state intervention. Since then, the British war in the Falklands/Malvinas provided a model returning journalism to the highest level of state and military control[121] followed in kind by the two

[121] Between 1966 and 1984, the British photographer Don McCullin worked as an overseas correspondent for the Sunday Times Magazine, recording ecological and man-made catastrophes such as war-zones, amongst them Biafra, in 1968 and victims of the African AIDS epidemic. His hard-hitting coverage of the Vietnam War and the Northern Ireland conflict is particularly highly regarded. McCullin’s work was considered so powerful and evocative that in 1982 the British Government refused to grant him a press pass to cover the Falklands War.
American invasions of Iraq, the so-called Gulf War whereby journalists of all kinds were ‘embedded’ that is to say, culled and organized within the mainstream of the state machine.

For now, where photography becomes wild is in the commoditized ubiquity of new media, mobile phones, digital still and video cameras, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and more. Media images having the most impact of recent times are not by professional photojournalists (who continue to produce the best and most beautiful photographs) but taken by participants previously known as bystanders, equipped with a mobile phone or digital camera producing short video or photographic stills. At Abu Ghraib prison staged digital snapshots of torture and prisoner abuse made by fellow military personnel and ‘guards’ of the photographed\textsuperscript{122}, the slew of mainly amateur images of 9/11\textsuperscript{123}, and the mobile phone video and stills of Nedi Soltani shot through heart during protests against the re-election of the government in Iran.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122} In a May 11, 2004 interview with Denver CBS affiliate television station KCNC-TV, Lynddie England reportedly said that she was "instructed by persons in higher ranks" to commit the acts of abuse for psyop (psychological operations) reasons, and that she should keep doing it, because it worked as intended. England noted that she felt "weird" when a commanding officer asked her to do such things as "stand there, give the thumbs up, and smile". However, England felt that she was doing "nothing out of the ordinary". \url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynndie_England} (accessed 17 October 2009)

\textsuperscript{123} An article by Garrison Keillor in the Sunday Book Review for the NY Times 3.09.2006: “David Friend, who was director of photography at the old Life magazine, writes: ‘As the morning crept on, New Yorkers poured into the streets, many to help, many in flight, all of them aghast. Out, too, came their cameras. Men and women by the hundreds, then thousands — bystanders with point-and-shoots, TV news teams, photojournalists by the score — felt compelled to snap history, fiery and cruel against the blue. People photographed from windows and parapets and landings. They photographed as they fled: in cars, across bridges, up avenues blanketed in drifts of ash and dust. They even photographed the images on their television sets as they watched the world changing, right there on the screen.’ And soon thereafter, rescue workers in dusty yellow slickers started showing up at the Time & Life Building in Midtown trying to sell pictures they had taken.” \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/03/books/review/Keillor.t.html} (accessed 19 October 2009)

\textsuperscript{124} Shortly after 5pm on Saturday -afternoon, Hamed, an Iranian asylum seeker in the -Netherlands, took a frantic call from a friend in Tehran. "A girl has just been killed right next to me," the friend said. It had all -happened quickly. A young woman, chatting on her mobile phone, had been shot in the chest. She faded before a doctor, who was on the scene, could do anything to help. There was more. Hamed's friend, who does not want to be named, filmed the incident on his phone. Within moments the footage had landed in Hamed's inbox. Five minutes later it was on YouTube and Facebook. Within hours it had become one of the most potent threats faced by the -Iranian regime in 30 years. \url{http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/22/neda-soltani-death-iran} (accessed 21 October 2009)
John Harris the cultural theorist expresses it now in finely broken sentences: “Everyone has cameras now, we are all powerful. No need for Magnum, reversal of power.”

Photography spoke to its heart.

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Images of Consolation

Here is a photographic image that I hate.

*William Lovelace 1972 'Bayoneting in Bangladesh'*

What do I hate?

I hate what it depicts.

But, do I hate the murderers or the victims as much as the murderers seem to do so?

Do I hate the crowd for collecting there and watching so apparently submissive?

Do I have reason to hate photographs and photographers, 'the media' for delivering this image to me?

Do I hate the patch of ground for carrying this murder?

Immediately, I can only say for certain, I hate what it depicts.

It is a photograph of a helpless man screaming in abject terror, about to be put to death by another running him through with a bayonet.
Just behind is, presumably, the next victim aware of what is occurring and what will be his horrible fate.

The perpetrators are in some kind of army uniform similar to a few observers within the crowd of onlookers; the murder appears sanctioned by some authority. Surrounding the event is the crowd and we can easily assume an encircling assembly implicating the unseen photographer, absorbing us into our act of observation of this utterly lewd event.

I feel that there too much in detail in this act, a moment lingering in its extension of life as a print, that overwhelms any suspicion of this image being a fake.

It was taken a long time ago and the victim is surely dead, perhaps even his killer(s) are gone, perhaps not.

Here is an explanation of the actual events surrounding the photograph, titled “Bayoneting in Bangladesh”:

“Bengali guerrillas who had fought in Bangladesh’s independence from Pakistan publicly bayoneted a number of local Bihari prisoners accused of helping the invading Pakistan army. The act took place in a sports field in Dacca in front of a large crowd and members of the world’s press who had been invited to attend. Some of the press, feeling that the event was being staged specifically for them, left, refusing to participate as witnesses. Some stayed, including photographers from Associated Press who were awarded Pulitzer Prizes for their photographs, and William Lovelace of the Daily Express (author of the photograph being discussed here) whose pictures later won a British Press award.”

(Steele-Perkins, 1972: 104)

Publication of this image and similar was followed by important and unprecedented questioning of this event ‘Bayoneting in Bangladesh’ of relevance to all mediated photographs, and asks was the event staged because the world’s press was in attendance? The response is unequivocal, and it is that politics of all shades and level of sophistication endeavour to manipulate the media to advantage. It’s going to happen, we
just need to sense where and when and the appropriate response, for the benefit of our own conscience, our independent understanding, we need to be able to edit the editing.

“It has been suggested that if all of the media people had left, the executions might never have taken place. It has also been stated that the executions were primarily for the local public and would have occurred regardless of the presence of the press. Undoubtedly, in the course of the war, other atrocities were committed which went unpublicised. But, should the event have been recorded to tell the world what was happening, possibly bring pressure to bear preventing further such acts? Or was it a matter of callous indifference to remain and photograph, possibly encouraging other barbarous demonstrations of power? If everyone had left might the guerrillas themselves have photographed it?” (Steele-Perkins, 1972: 104).

Then, a summary:

“You may have difficulty in looking at this picture. You are similarly powerless to prevent its conclusion. But it is no use to point an accusing finger at Lovelace and say, as some have done, “Was it worth it?” Intolerable events of horror and humanity continue throughout the world, witnessed or not. You have seen the photograph now. The finger is pointing at you.” (Steele-Perkins, 1972: 104).

Still, I hate the abject terror piled upon ultimate fear that I am drawn to witness here.

Whenever I see this image there is never any dilution of the misery I feel, my discomfiture, my empathy with the victim, my terrible sadness. It connects me completely to the same sensation of doom for every scene of horror I have witnessed directly, in dreams or in images. And, I am not ‘de-sensitized’ on the grounds that I have been a ‘witness to so many images of horror’. In truth, the pain intensifies the more I look into this image, the more I sense pure cruelty and agony.
I always need an antidote, a consolation, to the pain I feel from looking at this image ‘Bayoneting in Bangladesh’. In the same book, I turn the pages back to this image and alongside it an explanation.
“In some European countries it is customary to observe a moment of silence and stillness before departing on a major journey. It is unlikely that the child here has made or will actually undertake such a journey – except in her imagination as a magical adventure into which we are invited through the moment of exposure when these possibilities are briefly opened.” (Steele-Perkins, 1972: 104)

Once I recognized my own habit, as an observer, of seeking consolation countering one traumatic photograph with a meditative image I realized that serious photographers who offer themselves to war photography, documenting images of catastrophe invariably participate in the same syndrome as the viewer.

Two examples from the classic histories of danger-zone photography come to mind. First, Donald McCullin, the English photographer of the American war in Vietnam.
Donald McCullin, Hue, Vietnam 1968

Donald McCullin, Cambodia 1970
As McCullin from the war zone states in his monograph *The Destruction Business*: “I dream of this when I am in battle. I think of misty England...” (McCullin, 1973: 23)
Secondly, W Eugene Smith the American photographer of the American war in Korea and ecological disaster in Minamata, Japan.
On his return from Korea he photographs the very sentimental “Walk to Paradise Gardens”, a signature image in the influential UNESCO exhibition of documentary photography in the sixties, the “Family of Man”.

As observer and as photographer, we undergo a similar ‘distribution curve’ of emotion\(^\text{126}\). Meaning within photographs is reflexive, between the author, the image and the viewer, wherein author and viewer are an interchangeable exercise. If there is a truth in photography it is that, we are not invariably de-sensitized to the violence of what we may have learnt to recognize, but, where we are wounded is in our own inadequacy facing such a quality and quantity of horror.

\(^{126}\) Don McCullin: “I have been manipulated, and I have in turn manipulated others, by recording their response to suffering and misery. So there is guilt in every direction: guilt because I don't practice religion, guilt because I was able to walk away, while this man was dying of starvation or being murdered by another man with a gun. And I am tired of guilt, tired of saying to myself: "I didn't kill that man on that photograph, I didn't starve that child." That's why I want to photograph landscapes and flowers. I am sentencing myself to peace.” [link](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_McCullin#cite_note-9) (accessed 20 April 2010)
A Beautiful Object

A travelling retrospective exhibition of the New York art-photographer Robert Mapplethorpe’s photography was installed the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, Australia in 1995. Of underlying interest was layout of the show designed for an audience to walk through Mapplethorpe’s extensive body of artwork in biographic sequence from his earliest to more recent photography, with the idea that his approach and thinking might be better understood and defined.

“Robert Mapplethorpe was born in Queens, New York, 1946, and educated at the Pratt Institute of Art. After studying painting, drawing, and sculpture, he turned to photography. His first works in this field were collages made of photos cut from magazines and spray-painted. He then took his own photos, using a Polaroid camera. He had his first one-man show in 1976 then switched to a large-format press camera for his next. In 1977 he exhibited pictures of homosexual men in sexual acts or with sadomasochistic paraphernalia, set against conventional backdrops and in classical composition.” (ArtFactsNet, 2010).

In 1980 Mapplethorpe met the first World Women’s Bodybuilding Champion Lisa Lyon. Over the next few years they worked together on sequences of portraits as well as full-figure studies, a film and book titled Lady, Lisa Lyon. Prior to his photographs of Lisa Lyons all photographic images of body-builders, particularly female practitioners, were seen only in cheaply produced pornography, body-building ‘enthusiast’ magazines or ‘health and nature’ nudist journals often with a predilection to modernist and even fascist notions of body as machine. Lyons faceted shape fits perfectly into the photographic analogon, light and its absence, and Mapplethorpe tellingly processes medium-format negative from carefully lit studio enactment into full-toned monochromatic image, arranging a flowing drape to cover the model’s head smartly eliminating complexities of facial expression, leaving Lyons sculpted body to do its photographic work.
Mapplethorpe’s earliest work was art-influenced collage of By the time begins his photographing of Lyon he clearly understands that the difference between erotica and pornography can only be the skill and persistence that goes into the making of an object\textsuperscript{127}.

\textsuperscript{127} From his early works, “Mapplethorpe designed and constructed the wood-grain frame before he determined what it would contain—a process that again reveals his continued interest in making beautifully designed and crafted objects regardless of their function or contents… F. Holland Day’s subject matter, homoerotic themes, and framing especially intrigued him. Day’s self-portraits as the crucified Christ appealed to Mapplethorpe’s awareness of his own Catholicism.
Man in a Polyester Suit would simply not be regarded as art if it were not the finest of crafted photographs requiring quality reproduction. Mapplethorpe’s artwork commencing with collaged photographs torn from magazines is followed by his use of instant print film then incorporation of medium-format and fine print. Mapplethorpe, certainly had interest but no alternative other than to engage, apply and direct the highest quality of material technique into the construction of his works in order to achieve the re-commissioning of extreme, ‘explicit’ imagery from pornography into erotica so that the photograph itself must become a beautiful object.

“In an important essay, Photography and Representation in his book The Aesthetic Understanding, Roger Scruton closes his critique of photography and its status as art with

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and his use of the self as subject. In addition, Day’s strict insistence on designing the frame and controlling the presentation of his photographs was an important precedent for Mapplethorpe’s efforts to make the photograph a unique object.” [http://www.masters-of-photography.com/M/mapplethorpe/mapplethorpe_articles3.html](http://www.masters-of-photography.com/M/mapplethorpe/mapplethorpe_articles3.html) (accessed 11 April 2011)
the declaration; ‘The medium of photography, one might say, is inherently pornographic’ (Scruton, 1983:126). At the very least, the photographer of the nude who wants to avoid pornography is driven to use devices which seek to pull the spectator’s attention away from the subject-matter and towards the photographer’s art: for example, by securing a distorted image of the body Bill Brandt, or exploiting the possibilities of close-up Edward Weston, by etherealizing the image with soft focus, coloured lenses David Hamilton…” (Pateman, 1991).

Mapplethorpe had no intention of distracting from any ‘inherent pornography’ in photography if that alluded to the sexual allure of the subject of his portrait, Milton Morris, and whom he referred to as ‘god’128. Inevitably, though, the type of image content Mapplethorpe preferred meant that he worked against a historical ground monopolized by cheap shot pornography. He set about doing what has always been the case in allocating any material, let alone photography, in representing sexuality as erotica and that is to construct the finest finished object of mediation. Ultimately, it is art that Mapplethorpe successfully engages, positing brute and overt sexuality in the realm of intellect inexorably entertaining dangerously aggressive, religio-orgiastic attempts at suppression.

Subjugation of erotic or pornographic imagery is an act symptomatic of the psychological condition of a whole society wherein oppressors ingenuously participate more dangerously than any so accused of ‘perversion’. Accordingly, efforts to contain ‘sexual deviance’ open up the wildest gaffe of ignorance of the psychology of control central to all social order, that of domination and submission, so that “…the suppression of natural

128 “Robert Mapplethorpe found ‘god’ in a gay bar called Sneakers one drizzly September evening in 1980 after leaving Keller’s [a former S&M bar that was now a gathering place for men interested in biracial sex].” Robert saw Milton Moore pacing up and down West Street, and was instantly transfixed by his beautiful face and forlorn stare. Mapplethorpe invited Moore to his apartment. Upon learning of his ambition to become a model, Mapplethorpe agreed to create a portfolio. Mapplethorpe’s motives were mixed -- he was smitten. Morrisroe continues:

“Mapplethorpe’s love / obsession for Moore reached its fullest expression in the photograph some consider his masterpiece – Man in Polyester Suit. . . He cropped the photograph at Moore’s neck according to his agreement [with Moore], but by isolating the genitals he seemed to be pandering to the notion that blacks existed only as sex objects.” (Morrisoe, Patricia, Mapplethorpe, A Biography. De Capo Press Inc. USA 1997 p245)
sexual gratification leads to various kinds of substitute gratifications…” (Reich, 1933: 53)
…and, new fascisms surface to realize grand potential.

**The Naked Truth**

This famous media image taken by AP (Associated Press) photographer Huynh Cong 'Nick' Ut comes with a well-known background story and datable history.

It is a Pulitzer prize-winning photograph and after worldwide publication in 1972 it was taken up in Communist Vietnam propaganda, as well as marshalling western public opinion against the American war in Vietnam all at the closing stages of the American war in Vietnam.129

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129 The picture taken near the village of Trang Bang in South Vietnam on June 8, 1972, thrust the burned, screaming youngster into photographic history. The London "Observer" Sunday paper calls the photograph "the most haunting image of the horror of war since Goya" in their review of the exhibit (by science writer Deyan Sudjic). [http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng1.htm](http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng1.htm) (accessed 20 November 2009)
The central figure within the image was a, then, nine-year-old girl named Phan Thị Kim Phúc and in the foreground, her older brother Phan Thanh Tam. Facial expressions on the two children are unequivocal, showing unmitigated fright and pain. Kim Phúc is naked because she had torn her clothes off to relieve skin-contact with napalm and is screaming “nong qua! nong qua!”, “too hot! too hot!” The children are running for help along the road towards a straggle of American troops, away from their bombed village, Trang Bang, about 40kms from Saigon after an attack on North Vietnamese troops by the South Vietnamese Air Force indiscriminately took mostly civilian casualties and fatalities.

Thanks to efforts of the photographer, Nick Ut, Kim Phúc and her brother survived receiving prolonged medical treatment for their injuries. Eventually, Kim Phúc, who now lives in Toronto, Canada was named by the United Nations (UNESCO) as a Goodwill Ambassador for a Culture of Peace.

Connotative readings of this powerful photograph allow it to be experienced, set aside from its denotative story as universally expressive, and what marks it so is the posture of

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130 “At left, screaming in agony from an eye injury is Phan Thị Kim Phúc’s then 12-year old brother, Phan Thanh Tam. A bit behind is her youngest brother Phan Thanh Phuoc , then 5 years old and not seriously injured in the raid. At right are Kim Phuc's small cousins Ho Van Bo, a boy, and Ho Thi Ting, a girl.” http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng3.htm (accessed 20 November 2009)

131 “The two Skyraider aircraft of the VNAF bombed the edge of the village, near the Cai Dai pagoda, in a familiar pattern - first explosive bombs, then incendiary bombs - large containers with a mix of explosives, white phosphorus and the black oily napalm - and ending up with heavy machinegun fire during closing strafing runs. Then the planes disappeared - nobody had heard any anti-aircraft fire. And then the terrified, burned and wounded villagers came running from the village, towards the line of soldiers and reporters standing across the road.” http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng2.htm (accessed 20 November 2009)

132 Urged on by Kim Phuc's uncle, Nick commandeered his car, and being one of the few reporters able to communicate with the injured villagers he took over and carried Kim Phuc into the car. Then other members of her family - her younger brother Phan Thanh Phuoc (5), her older brother Tam (13), her uncle and an aunt rushed into the car. Ut climbed aboard the now overcrowded minibus last and asked the driver to speed towards the provincial Vietnamese hospital in Cu Chi, halfway to Saigon” http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng2.htm (accessed 20 November 2009)

133 Kim Phuc has become an anti-war symbol in the West. Vietnam had used her as an anti-American symbol before her defection in 1992…In November 1997 Kim Phuc was named by Director General Frederico Mayor a Goodwill Ambassador of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) “for a culture of peace”. The event took place during a plenary session of the UNESCO General Conference. http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng2.htm (accessed 20 November 2009)
the girl with her arms outstretched, reminiscent of a distressed and wounded bird, perhaps a damaged little airplane crazily maneuvering down a terrible runway, or a metaphor of universal suffering of an innocent, reminiscent of the image of Christ crucified.

Symbolic images of crucifix, whereby the cross shapes to the body or body to the cross suffering for all humankind, are perennial, and the meaning consistent.

Some thirty-two years after the photograph of Kim Phúc, one of many torture images from Abu Graib provoked immediate public affect, a symbol of revulsion and pathos and impossible to ignore this horrible moment, not the chemistry of napalm neither impaled to timber, but suffering by means of electricity, shrouded and capped for torture yet stark naked in vulnerability, arms spread in humiliating surrender to the current.

The descriptive power of all photographs carries the metaphor and the one message at the heart of the eulogistic images of Kim Phuc and Abu Graib is as it is for the Christian crucifix 'this is for mankind, but, it should not happen'.

In the Kim Phuc image the entire message decoded is: no-one should ever suffer this, napalm, even repackaged and renamed, should never be applied to anyone, let alone a child, in war or peace because it causes unspeakable wounding and horror.

And, the specific message within the Abu Graib image: no-one should ever suffer this, people must not be tortured because no person should suffer humiliation at the hand of another, such degradation reveals no secrets except a preference of the leaders of state sanctioned madness to hide their grubby psychosis behind acronymic euphemisms like 'psyops'.

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Immediately, at pre-publication, editorial questions were raised concerning the nakedness of Kim Phuc causing one AP editor to reject the image on the basis of full frontal nudity. However, AP journalists in Vietnam remonstrated with AP in America to publish the photograph. AP Head Office agreed and publication went ahead on the basis that “the ‘news value’ of the photograph overrode any reservations about nudity.” Since publication there are no further references to Kim Phuc’s nudity and it has never been

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135 … an editor at the AP rejected the photo of Kim Phuc running down the road without clothing because it showed frontal nudity. Pictures of nudes of all ages and sexes, and especially frontal views were an absolute no-no at the Associated Press in 1972. While the argument went on in the AP bureau, writer Peter Arnett and Horst Faas, then head of the Saigon photo department, came back from an assignment. Horst argued by telex with the New York head-office that an exception must be made, with the compromise that no close-up of the girl Kim Phuc alone would be transmitted…The New York photo editor, Hal Buell, agreed that the news value of the photograph overrode any reservations about nudity. http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng4.htm (accessed 20 November 2009)
raised as an issue by her, the photographer, the media nor the public because the image unmistakably represents another message altogether.

Except for those involved, the incident at Trang Bang was a routine skirmish in the overall scheme of the American war in Vietnam, 40kms from Saigon, not directly involving American troops and at the closing stages of the war. There would have been insufficient ‘news value’ in that image and its denotative story to countermand reservations of the girl’s nudity. True ‘news value’ that made this a prize-winning piece of photojournalism, lay at the punctum of Nick Ut’s 1972 image showing Kim Phuc’s nakedness and undeserved anguish become an iconic presence beyond other documents of that catastrophe at Trang Bang, and akin to the snapshot of torture at Abu Graib with the same connotation of crucifix distinguishing the image from hundreds of anonymous photographs of abuse captured within the same prison around 2003.

Similarly, Bill Henson’s photograph of naked youths in dramatic vulnerability appear to descend a muddy path downward from the cross at calvary, the central figure of a girl slumped with arms limply outstretched is carried by a male from behind and a soiled female supporting the feet stumbles backwards, the struggle is extensive, engaging empathy from the viewer.

Henson’s photograph is one of a suite of images and, unlike the journalistic image of Nick Ut’s, it is staged, there is no incident contingent upon final outcome other than the photographer’s ideation, skill, direction and interaction with the photographed.

In contrast, Ut’s photograph required considerable photojournalistic experience and skill to adequately compose a scene within a fast moving environment and press the shutter at the appropriate moment. The Abu Graib image was partially, staged, but, for the theatre of torture than camera frame, the victim stepped up on a box adds to an impression of suspension up on a cross, but it was an act performed as part of the ghoulish pragmatics of torture, localizing the effect of electrical current.
Henson's images intentionally evoke painterly depiction of fifteenth century baroque style with faux-religious themes, in his *Untitled 1992/93* work, light simulates tenebristic\(^{136}\) illumination, the only kind of artificial light available to fifteenth century artists, that is to say, candle, fire, direct or diverted window light. And, that explains Henson interest in photographing under late evening light or ‘gloaming’, during the early nineteen-nineties. In later works he incorporates backlit flash sometimes with diffuse single source fore-

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\(^{136}\) Tenebrism, from the Italian *tenèbre* ("murky"), (also called dramatic illumination) is a style of painting using very pronounced chiaroscuro, where there are violent contrasts of light and dark, and darkness becomes a dominating feature of the image. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenebrism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenebrism) (accessed 22 November 2009)
lighting, in those photographs Henson no longer uses long exposure and shallow depth of field softening of focus in order to lend painterly effect. Thereafter, taking on less of a kind of El Greco painterly effect in preference for realism similar to Carravagio’s chiarascuro, whereby the fifteenth century painter of numerous dramatic religious commissions used controlled single source or reflected lighting.

Under the lighting systems described, Henson’s figures enact allusion to a baroque moment of ambiguous drama replete with pseudo-religious narrative and symbolism. In Untitled 1992/93 the photographer retains his use of photographically foreshortened perspective by means of a long focal length lens, drawing figures in close to a darkened ground, suggestive of the way baroque artists worked with limited systems of luminosity compared with modern artificial lighting. Once Henson’s set and method is assembled then dramatis personae can roam the frame and perform as they wish or as directed. Nudity in the image dissociates the figure or portrait from specific or diversionary histories, if the clothes don’t distract from the baroque painterly authority that Henson arranges, they can stay on, the placing of youth in this art proscenium asserts respect for their actions and credibility to the drama, nudity does nothing more than reveal the unadorned, unadulterated beauty of youth, its vulnerability.

Of course, there are pedophiles and addicts of pornography who fetishize all manner of things including images incorporating nudity, torture or soiling. However, blaming the photojournalist, the lawyer or the artist for presumed or incidental attraction of the whole or aspects of an image to perversion, whilst the same depiction delivers messages of genuine social import and value, is the same as punishing the violated for attracting the attention of a rapist.

Herewith, the first obscenity would be to censor Nick Ut’s photograph because of nudity, truth is the peace embodied in the agonized nakedness of a very brave nine-year old girl who grew into a fine woman.
A second obscenity is to hide from public view the bizarre snapshot from Abu Graib, is truth in suffering, the nakedness of this wretched victim covered up in cloak and dunce’s cap in cruel mockery of his anonymity.

And, the third obscenity is the stupidity of the mob policing all nudity of children as pedophiliac incapable of respect for the truth of beauty in vulnerability of youth naked, struggling and caring as they are depicted within Henson’s untitled photograph.137

The means and intent encoding any photograph constitute the denotative aspects of the image, what remains in decoding is the outcome and its connotative value, stubbornly superseding what came before, providing a, sometimes unanticipated, element that can make an image universally valuable.

In these ways the key message of Henson’s staged photographs is no less potent than Ut’s photojournalistic document or the Abu Graib self-gratifying snapshot, the same principle applies whether an image is classified as art, journalism or evidence, where its value overrides any reservation about nudity.

137 Forty years ago, artist Martin Sharp was famously tried for obscenity because of a piece he wrote for Oz magazine. Last week he received an invitation to Henson’s exhibition, which features a topless 13-year-old. “It was a powerful image. I would call it very beautiful in its vulnerability rather than ‘revolting’ as the Prime Minister has done,” Sharp said. The photograph suggested the girl “gave her trust to Henson … and this trust has been violated by the police and Kevin Rudd’s Ms comments.”

PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECTS SUMMARY 2000-2011

Of the photographic based projects that I have pursued since 2000, six are represented in this exegesis and the summary resume below represents exhibitions and activities relevant to my doctoral studies since 2000.

2000

Exhibited in 'Australian Definition' at Shenzhen City Gallery.

Visited PR China Shenzhen, Guandong Province also Beijing. Coordinating workshops and presentations with the Shenzhen Photographic Association.

Appearance and interview Channel 9 'Sunday Show' Arts.

Exhibited Suburbia exhibition, Museum of Sydney. Forty (40) photographs of Sydney suburbia

Exhibited Solo, Foyer Gallery UWS Bankstown, works on time travel and a sequence titled 'Damp', photographing in wet weather

2001


‘In Scattered Company’ Huntingdon Gallery, Massachusetts College of Arts, Boston USA, 221 Gallery, List Centre and Brown University Providence Rhode Island USA

'China through Australian Eyes' group exhibition of Australians visiting China in September 2000, Shenzhen City Art Gallery a component of a major photography exhibition celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Shenzhen Photographic Association.

Visited Shenzhen and Fujian Province, photographing Hakka villages around Nanjing with the support of the Shenzhen Photographic Association.

Two images published in PostWest Arts Journal

Image published 'Technomorphic Head' as lead to article "Drawing the Thread' by Mike Leggett in ArtLink e-volution of new media issue vol. 21 #3 Also published as the flyer image for the ArtLink Annual Public Lecture on Contemporary Art October 21 "Art in the Age of Computers: how can culture survive global connectivity?"
2002

UWS Professional Development Program towards Doctoral Research including Photography, Teaching and Development work on Academic Agreements for Cooperation with PR China. Based in Shenzhen from late August 2002 until January 2003

This six month program also improved my colloquial Chinese language skills, Putonghua.

Developing a new Photography Course and a Centre for English Language at Shenzhen Senior Technical Institute

Travel and photography within Southern China, Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Heping, Central Western China, Sichuan, Chengdu, Aba, Hongyuan, Songpan also Shanghai.

Solo Exhibition Aba and Central West China, SSTI Foyer Gallery.

Five (5) images selected for the Fuji/ACMP Collection 8 Exhibition and Publication Coordinated PIEA Annual Convention, Darling Harbour, Sydney

Travel and photography in Northern India, Dhill, Himachal Pradesh and Dharamsala

Interviewed for SBS Television Documentary 'Painting with Light in a Dark World'

2003

Exhibition “Somewhere Else” Nine (9) China images selected for curated group exhibition at Phototechnica Gallery, Sydney. An exhibition on ‘creative travel photography’.

Photographers for CANTEEN, Customs House, Sydney.

Travel and photography within Southern China, Shenzhen and Northern China, Dalian and Shenyang

2004

Travel and Photography in Thailand and China, Guangdong and Anhui Province. Initiating an Internet project between UWS SoCA and Silpakorn University, Bangkok as a prelude to writing and developing academic agreements between the two schools.
2005

No War, Exhibition for Dave Burgess and Will Saunders" the two anti-Iraq invasion activists who scaled Sydney Opera House painted ‘No War’ in red on its largest sail, Mori Gallery, Sydney

Solo Exhibition “Not Quite the Sydney Opera House” Museum of Sydney. Eight (8) prints shown alongside and complementary to the Exhibition of Jørn Utzon’s original drawings and plans for the Sydney Opera House

UWS Art Gallery M4 Show Sixteen Bearded Men of St Marys

2006

Finalist, Dave Cubby & Michael Keighery, Citibank Photographic Portrait Art Gallery of New South Wales portrait of ‘Bernice Leach/Michael Keighery’


Conference Paper published, “The Dark Side of the Lens pt. 1” CAESS Scholarship and the Community Conference University of Western Sydney, Australia

2007

Curated ArtsWest & UWS Lunar New Year Dinner & Showcase ‘Six Western Sydney Artists Asian and influenced by Asia’ David Cubby, Bonita Ely, Vandana Ram, Shen Wednesday, Christopher Tozer and Vijaygiri Gauswami, Late 2007/early 2008 Travel and photography through Shenzhen, and Wuhu, Anhui Province, China, then London and the Midlands, UK

2008

“Watch This Space” group show, “The Spectacle Project 2008” Brenda May Gallery, 2 Danks Street, Waterloo, Sydney Australia

Curated ArtsWest & UWS Lunar New Year Dinner & Showcase ‘Five Western Sydney Artists Asian and influenced by Asia’ David Cubby, Uzma Siddiqui, Megan Sprague, Amanda Palmer, Kerrie Wood.
“The Spoken Bird” animation “All spoken words are, ultimately, onomatopoeic and all written words ideograms” 落霞与孤鹜齐飞, 秋水共长天一色 唐 王勃 “luo xia yu gu wu qi fei gui sui gong chang tian yi se” Wang Bo - Tang Dynasty projected at the Aurora Festival of Contemporary Music, Parramatta Riverside Theatre.

2009

Solo exhibition, “The Spectacle Project” AD Gallery University of Western Sydney

Curated Exhibition Watershed at Zed End Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia. Exhibiting two large prints of Letters to Photography.

2010

Conference paper Within an Illustrated Box 1 at Interventions & Intersections Communication Arts Postgraduate Conference UWS 9-10 June 2010

Conference paper, Within an Illustrated Box 2 5th International Conference of the Arts in Society 22-25 July 2010 UniSyd. Australia SocA grant of $600

Conference paper, Photography the Dominant Aesthetic, 1st International Conference on the Image UCLA 2-3 December 2010 UCLA Los Angeles USA. SoCA grant of $3000

2011


http://ijx.cgpublisher.com
Suburbia

The only way I could enter suburbia is as a sculptural event nameless, unanticipated occurrences, objects and space. I still don’t know why it’s like this.
Not Quite the Sydney Opera House

I first glimpsed the Sydney Opera House through a fine mist of rain, sparkling white through the green, lush trees of the Botanical Gardens. It is one of most inspired and beautiful buildings ever constructed: distinctive, elegant in shape and design, suffuse with metaphors of air, sea and light, sails and shells.

Seeing Sydney Opera House through a fine mist of rain, sparkling white, it defines ‘monument’ because it confirms our presence within the reality and mythology of Sydney, Australia. It is a secondary jolt, therefore, to discover so many manifestations of the Sydney Opera House around the world. Many structures do not acknowledge the original, yet each makes imitative reference in shape and form.

Sydney Opera House look-alikes are situated both prominently and discreetly, from Legoland in California to the northern beaches of Sydney, from Glasgow in Scotland to a theme park in Shenzhen in the People’s Republic of China.

This ongoing photographic project compiles images of structures that sometimes aspire to be monuments in themselves, models, imitations, allusions, fakes or copies that, whether acknowledged or not, pay homage to the famous original in Sydney, Australia. In forming such a taxonomy, the project investigates the language and meaning of monument, from the heart of originality to the limits of imitation.

All photographs courtesy of Dave Cubby © 2000 - 2010

Have you seen any other Sydney Opera House look-alikes?
Please email d.cubby@uws.edu.au
Window of the World Theme Park, Shenzhen, PR China
Bamboo Opera House, Gosford, New South Wales, Australia
Nightclub Entrance, Shenzhen, PR China
Baihai Temple, New Dheli, India
Traffic Island, Wuhu, PR China
Clearing the air with a waved hand, Zan stared hard at the paper on the desk, beneath the paper a photograph. On the paper, handwriting in Chinese, a clear script but too careful, more like a child, a novice or foreigner. Creamy tone of paper, dead white margin of the visible corner of a colour photograph then stained honey-brown of an untidy desk. Chalk virgin wall, at the corner a grey sheen of window frame, dusty white ledge and pastel blue window shade pulled down.

Outside the darkened afternoon apartment a sun burning ten billion and more little white ceramic tiles throughout Shenzhen, PR China infinitely rising up and up, shunting of freeway traffic, squawking horns, ten thousand un-oiled hell-shrieks and jokes from the opening and closing of the stainless steel security gate, forever hammering of workers or ‘escapes’ from somewhere else in the apartment building and the rigidly, regular sweep and hum of air-conditioner.

His bare foot slipped from chair rail to the cool concrete floor. At the foreigner’s toe the cream shell of a nut and yesterday’s toothpick.

Zan’s gaze travels to the small double bed, made over with a tired powder blue cover. From around the bed eight Chinese ghosts stare back; unkempt long, black hair, wide-eye, pale-face and small vacant smiles. The coterie watches over the foreigner’s sleeping and daydreaming moments, in an apartment steamy with simmering memory, burnt sentiment and smoky phantoms. Everyone existing, existed and will exist throughout all of time from different planes takes up a lot of room. A curled, breathing dragon rests on the ironing board. The apartment is dense and heaving with ghosts, empty of the living except for disinterested insects, a tiny albino lizard and the foreigner.

He must be advised, the foreigner, to place an orange offering at four corners and the centre of the apartment, light a handful of joss sticks and offer prayers to the compass points of this particular world. It might create some space.

Zan realises she is perched on the shoulder of him, the foreigner. Her hair trails long and mad, as dead alive as all the other presences in the room. She slowly mouths a blue writhing breath into his ear, the characters on the paper “Ao, Da, Li, Ya”, and the foreigner repeats “Ao, Da, Li Ya”. Two or three ghouls turn gently in surprised recognition towards the foreigner.

They inquire lazily in broken unison, “What had he, was going to see tomorrow seen yesterday, is now looking, Sunday?”

He floated gracefully, impressive for a corpulent, buffeted foreigner, down to the grassy knoll, attached to a taxi by a long string. Alighting next to the girl memory with a scarred face at Mount LianHua Park in the Kite Square wearing her hand knitted cyan blue and white jumper bearing the knitter’s version of Macdonald’s M on the chest with a corrupt spelling of ‘Macnlds’ stitched into the home-crafted version of the omnipresent logo. The foreigner wondered if the maker had exhausted needle and wool skill or ability to spell English leaving the nicest appearance in the whole world of the name of the American fast food purveyor? He concludes it’s neither, but a straightforward visual rendition of a word, the way he might attempt a graphic approximation of a Chinese character without knowing meaning.

And, why make this poignant homage to M?

The foreigner had asked cyan M for a photograph. She shyly, proudly let him. She hadn’t mislaid her innocence (this exceptional, precious, jumper showed so) making her kind and generous, still a peasant, the very best way to be, thanks to gods and ancestors. They are all here, brave and
wonderful, like fish beneath the manufactured ocean, M. And here is a sweet peasant’s response, Cyan M.

From the taxi, a string tugged, urged and lifted the foreigner fine and high, gentle towards the shoulder of the wind until he became a shady brush-mark for cyan M, spinning on invisible eddy between the sun and clouds.

Oh! Shenzhen, little fishing village, your valleys and mountains and forests and foreshores have shifted, bridged, tunnelled and paved wide around a reef in a double-decade economic trick; so super-instant, so materialistic, so modern, so shiny, so accelerated, so tacky, so wonderful. Fire fists and hammer-blows, drills and explosions, gigantic trucks and rocket-high cranes, cheap labour and desperate men, sweaty showers and lost women lean against ten thousand restaurant lecterns. As in all of new China, the worn down mountains of Anhui are re-created here many times over, flooded with shops and banks and freeways and footways and people from afar housed in new rooms full of millions of drowned and drowning ghosts awaiting new souls.

Take your choice, there are tiny, fine and dignified people here and below on the wavering lit, grassy and paved valley floor beautiful and graceful middle-aged women un-sheath through aging blows perfect silver swords with fine red tassles, perform in rows alongside ageing but bravely fluttering butterfly fan dancers. Tai chi punctuates the gloam like drawn violin and flute breath, circling waltzers and jigging fox trotters flow in and out of shado, gentle, careful hand poised in a polite deformity to guide and touch but not touch the high centre of a partner’s back.

Beautiful atheists and their fine scarred offspring must now be cursed and may know of no miracle other than material sleight of hand, count their goods and ancestors to be Versace and Dior or Macdownloads and KFC, shopping and being entertained, educated and shopped to death between toy and machine and weapon. Flit and fly in schools, best friend a mobile and in love with any new screen. Bleaching strong black Chinese hair western to make a strange speckled show of blond and brown, Korean karaoke crap.

Who can blame them? It passes the time. It surely does.

Overhead the foreigner can see the big silver orange disc of ocean where little boats and bigger junks make slight dark detailed marks and scratches on an impenetrable, lightly rippled glass surface along the South China Sea. Across the vista, a rich and venerable Pearl River flows wide and strong from the horizon into old Guangzhou. Below and below the fish swim ready for a million dinners.

Drifting and fading the foreigner pulls a signal on the string and being guided, guides the taxi through A-Best supermarket on Ca’ Tian Lu and home, “Zhege difang le, zhege men kou le!” Climbs endless stairs “tsi lao le!” breathing heavy now with shopping bags and key to the door.

All of the infernal inhabitants turn in anticipation.

“That’s what he is was seeing yesterday and for Sunday”, a very old and mysterious Chinese apparition with four alternating faces broke the impasse in a hushed gasp from behind the plastic portable wardrobe near the window, further across the room than seemed usual, opposite the desk from behind the foreigner’s chair.

In the mean time, Zan mused to herself in a long wispy flash like a snake in the field, sliding and slipping into her old village homelands. Deep green, lush magical rice grass buried in clean, iron black water hand-made rectangles studded with little, steep banked earth trails turning through watery growth.
"Heping", peace to the North of Guangdong.

A tremulous, humming, warm, light blue-green infinite jewel of a day in pastoral heaven. Four boys, now grown tall, land softly once more onto a mid-summer path they had walked all their short lives over again and again and turn to see the foreigner. Fan outwards from the front and one to the side, unsurpassably beautiful, black Chinese hair forming a clean, deep, soft, mat enticing the foreigner to run through pleasured fingers. Fine, well balanced faces, handsome, intelligent boys.

Where are they walking now?

"Where did they walk that day, the finest day of a two thousandth summer and, likely, the best day in the life of the foreigner, when his heart was open?" echoed a little angel from the corner of the ceiling, distracting Zan momentarily, "away from the wedding in the old house, to the temple" she muttered without grace (truthfully, that's part of her charm).

Then all of the gleeful children rattled at the bars of the classroom and burst as body from the school, for they had seen the two foreigners, both photographers, the foreigner and one called Stainless, followed by a small, neat Chinese man from the city, all led by a bold and happy Zan making a merry way up the hill towards the temple.

Zan fell soft into reminiscence and a contented phantasm of slumber lifting, dreaming a ghosts' dream gently, unfelt and unseen on the shoulder of the foreigner.

Two Hakka wraiths filtered into the room from the fourth floor veranda through the air conditioner slats, an unexpected change in temperature wavering as a fine mist above the desk. Ghoul eyes, beneath shady hat curtain sweep together around hands of the foreigner forming smoky bracelets lift the paper and reveal the photograph below.

He thinks he is thinking, the foreigner. He must be blessed.

A tiny splash of magic colour stains the photograph.

Zan nods sweetly. The photograph is a very long exposure, a guess by the foreigner, of the inside of the old temple. Long enough for the old warrior gods to enter the story and weave their kind, good spells in gratitude for offering attention. Children had wandered into frame agape at the foreigner and a blessed boy places his forefinger on the altar table as though touching the spinning globe of the very earth.

The foreigner smiled to himself and didn't feel Zan slide, arms around his neck, sighing asleep on his chest, murmuring "Heping, peace to the North of Guangdong".

From the ceiling fell ghostly blossom and flowers, petal, twigs, leaves of all fantastic kinds and pieces of stalk pale violet, grey green, stark orange, cornflower blue, snow crisp white, deep velvet vermillion and burning summer yellow, covering and defining the foreigner and all of the ghosts in a heaving, moaning, snoring, chuckling, coughing ill-defined floral mass.

Cellos and violins and a harp issue fractured, twining notes from all of the walls and a heavenly brilliance filtering up through petals shafting through the bed of flora in quivering laser pencils picking out all over the ceiling a shifting, diving myriad chroma and starlight. So that long forgotten faces and characters and patterns of a life become discernible one after the other for a wink.

Intermittently a ghoulish head shakes free the petal luminescence, hollow eyed frowns and gummy smiles gather to be so entertained, until many heads replaced the shimmering carpet.
transforming another Shenzhen light spectacle to shadow once more, except for one small, soft prismatic dancing reflection on the wall above the unseeing foreigner’s head like an accident of nature.

It occurs to the foreigner that his looking is being controlled, ordered. Something, somewhere else in the photograph itself that defines his seeing. Is it a ghost, a captured soul, burnt light pulling and pushing him around in a way that suggests a knowing?

Why is it photographs always appear to know something?
Songpan, Sichuan, PR China
Aba, Tibet
Nan Ao, Guangdong, PR China
Aba, Tibet
Heping, North Guangdong, PR China
Aba, Tibet
Shenzhen, PR China
Sichuan, PR China
Sichuan, PR China
Heping, North Guangdong, PR China
Aba, Tibet
100 year old Hakka lady in a 400 year old Hakka village, Fujian Province, PR China
Heping, North Guangdong, PR China
Heping, North Guangdong, PR China
Sixteen Bearded Men of St Marys

Heading west from the coastal metropolis of Sydney, beyond Vinegar Hill and Mount Druitt before Penrith, at a juncture of the Great Western Highway and the M4 Motorway, St Marys is a strip development suburb cutting north of the lazily parallel major routes ribboning west across the Sydney plain towards the Blue Mountains.

Queen Street, main-street leads to the railway station and the banks and real estate agents. As well as typical retail and service shops there are more than the usual count of brothels and competing ‘two-dollar’ shops, displays of plastic-ware countermanding wide pavements.

Street life in St Marys is closer to the way it would have been in the ‘inner suburbs’ some thirty and more years ago, before ‘gentrification’. There are no gelato shops in St Marys. Domestic disputes and loud opinion intermittently spill onto the main street making it all feel like an annexe to some home.

North St Marys industrial estate borders the fenced off tracts of the large, defunct agents. Kangaroos continue to graze, safely now, where army shells were once fired. Within downtown St Marys there is a block of small asbestos-fibro houses just off the corner of Queen Street and the rail-line that were all army dwellings, sold off and renovated, extended or decayed.

Although part of greater Sydney, this suburb seems always on the perimeter, there is wasteland that becomes scrubland and new developments that back onto small farmland neighboring wild, overgrown forgotten plots.

It is here, in St Marys, that many men with beards live, some large and lush, others patterned and plaited, short and sharp all of which appear as scrubland, part tame part wild, some overgrown, forgotten or cultivated on the edge of a plain face, a masculine thing. There are heavy-duty bikie gangs based in St Marys and a prescient drug and
alcohol culture, many who live here know where the bodies are buried at the edge of town.

The beards reflect two centuries ago, bushrangers, cowboys, pioneers, settlers and convicts. There was honour in that masculinity decayed now to romantic allusion, originally shaping manners and gentle, firm values building a secure way of life on the fringe, at the edge of relentless chaos. The beard is stubborn and remains, a contained chaos shown on the face.
optical scream

before the lens no pictures were out of focus all depiction was sharp without comparison images preceding the lens historically appear continuously retinal and conceptual containing no optical or lenticular referents as focus blur or other distortions of view idiosyncrasies of physics comprise the lens ground and polished hosting key syntax fundamental to photographic expression and aesthetic delusion full of meaning beauty and danger the english artist francis bacon found this image endlessly amusing giggling remorselessly at repeated viewing of eisenstein’s seminal film battleship potemkin scenes of moribund horror massacre on the odessa steps in pre-revolutionary russia from which the screaming nurse is one cityc still it was this famed image that provided the source along with photographic reproductions of velasquez portrait of pope innocent x for bacon’s own screaming popes bacon engaged in sado-masochistic sex and enjoyed and enjoyed bitterly cynical social relationships with drinking friends he was an ardent gambler as well as deeply insightful artist and raconteur bacon uses photography ravishly as the foremost for his painting scraps cut and torn from magazines snapshots pasted to his wall piles onto tables littered everywhere through the fomenting nest of his studio as an artist he saw the lexicon and affect of photography probably better than many a photographer all photographs suspend a momentary impress of light and its absence from the real mapping photograph closer chaos than other forms to representation including painting bacon surely valued chaos as a seasoned gambler in the disarray of his studio and as the lover of a midnight burglar who crashed through his skylight in malfieasant pursuit bacon duly invited him to bed he relished the scientistic taxonomy of eadward muybridge animal and human in symbiotic motion and the luxurious deadpan illustration of Parisian diseases of the mouth as he parodied drastic asymmetrical movement in paint through photographic blur and distortion eisenstein’s early movie is not a documentary but it is a dramatic narrative stemming from actual events in pre-revolutionary russia to which he applied his then revolutionary and subsequently universally influential notions of editing and montage meaning implicit in juxtaposition based upon Chinese language forms the impression of the screaming nurse is a fiction performed by the actress nina poltavseva yet it completely enfolds the meaning of optical contrasted with retinal seeing of trace and substance and it is this perfect insertion of code that amused bacon so as he got the message streaming blood one dead eye one knowing painful dying eye one smashed lens and one misted lens askew screaming shot through her right eye retinal seeing imagines rerum the corresponding right lens is cracked shot through her right eye retinal seeing picture rerum her left eye glimpses hovering at the awful point of death between retinal and optical seeing above the cock-eyed misted left-side lens there is a short fuse between shock and laughter of displacement of events and perception the lens distorts interposing between the impress of light and reality casting animal nature chaos potential onto a screen of oblivion a joke merged with dread lights up the spectacle of a room to muffled shrieks and giggles a filmy veil showing faith projected through pathos a refracted echo and a blurred after-image
artist

focus
sado-masochistic

everywhere
chaos

taxonomy
laughter
dread
who

not
lens

imagines rerum

seeing

picture rerum
raconteur

scraps
fomenting

photographic
after-image
Optic Lingo

Please take my song with you and leave your smile here tomorrow this song will be heard in every corner of the world tomorrow this smile will be flowers blossom in springtime all words sounds are onomatopoeic all written words are ideograms hear this word elbow el-bow L bow the shape of the L as it bends a supple hinge as a bow the world is dense and full of meaning so that language any language when it rises is always a flood of poetry overflowing with puns metaphors jokes and rhyme as well as the very best in lyrics as the universe is teeming with radio static shaping voices like mine and this from the ether and stars illuminated by light from the cracks and edges of frayed space and is perfection in waiting this is the nature of things and we have forgotten that mountain's gate viewed by li bai breaking mountain's gate the great river rolls through blue billows eastward flow and here turn to the north from both sides of the river thrusting out green cliffs leaving the sun behind a lonely sail comes forth the word optic is fitted with all manner of microscopes and telescopes as well as lenses and spectacle frames think of the word eye it has two eyes either side of the word nose look you can see eye two eyes water is eye wave mountains are like eyebrows if you ask where I am going to a place where there are glances and eyebrows now consider the word bird spoken as we write the word bird the spoken bird takes flight into deep woodland any truly multilingual mind does not consider itself skilled in two or more languages rather it just reacts in the midst of one very big forest if language he asked the boy beneath pine tree where is your hermit master now collecting herbs in the mountain above the clouds as little monks and chattering birds know within a cave lives the man who killed a snow leopard there are animal spirits here and healing herbs grow on the ground and between the edges and cracks of frayed rocks also this word cave has a cave already in it cave more than symbols this language english being used here this portable package of twenty-six elemental signs delivers the code of power and control a cipher so easily cut into stone and type maintains status and pretension as lingua franca as urdu is the persian word meaning army delivered as an invasive language imposing unification conquering disparate tribes and vernacular to north-west india so latin of the roman army and church pacifies and colonises its north and west marching east and south in grammatic continuum everyone wants to climb aboard and speak english it is currency technology and a modern economic miracle but it's a truck transporting its burden of conceit and between the cracks and edges of a frayed compass is forever engaged in war with itself to clip the wings and beak of the spoken bird cannot change its siren flight a mother song a long gaelic tongue as long as the han tongue propelling the imaginary tale the poetry and the spoken bird upwards as the prevailing wind between the cracks and edges of frayed empires and the celtic and the han arts before everything and is perfection in waiting this is the nature of things and we have forgotten that beannachd beannachd gaoth foghair duilleagan air an tuiteam bainne na ciche dha failleanan earrach blessing the blessing of the autumn wind fallen leaves mother's milk to the shoots of spring fallen petals are not ruthless for they will be fertilizing new shoots in spring
world

optic
breaking mount heaven’s gate the great river rolls through

blue billows eastward flow and here turn north
from both sides of the river thrusting out green cliffs

leaving the sun behind a lonely sail comes forth
水是眼波横
ripples are like glances of a young lady

山是眉峰聚
mountains are like eyebrows
若问行人去哪边
if you ask where I am going

眉眼盈盈处
to a place where there's glances and eyebrows
spoken

modern
trick专门来运货

control
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Gordon Grant, Mick Duckworth, Dave Cubby and Mike Venning torquing rubbish at the back of Brighton Art School

Photograph courtesy of Baz Atkinson 1969