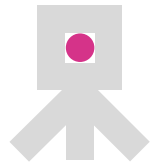


# PhotoResearcher



ESHPh European Society for the History of Photography

## Photography in the Marketplace

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*Atelier de Stéréoscopie à Paris*

# Editorial

## Photography in the Marketplace: on the Material History of Business

In the last decade, a renaissance of interest in industrial, political and business histories of photography has led to a noticeable increase in the number of exhibitions on such topics: *Songs of the Future* at the Art Gallery of Ontario, *A Hard Merciless Light* in Madrid, *Arbeit. Fotografien 1860-2015* in Zurich, all shown within the last six years.<sup>1</sup> Online resources like the Industrial Life Photograph Collection at the Harvard Business School or the site *Das Auge des Arbeiters* are providing increasingly diverse access to both professional and amateur photography in the area.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps as a result of the increased visibility of industrial photography, conferences like *Workers and Consumers: The Photographic Industry 1860-1950* at the PHRC, De Montfort University (2013), *The Business of War Photography: Producing and Consuming Images of Conflict* at the Centre for Visual Arts and Culture at Durham University (2014) and a special edition of *Fotogeschichte* on photography and class struggle (2013) signal an interest in expanding traditional categories, attending to new methods of interrogating photographic history and uniting some formerly disparate parts of the history of photographic business and industry.<sup>3</sup>

Very often, photographs of industry are reduced merely to image content. Inherent in the dialogue of modernist angles, strong formal composition and the juxtaposition of man and machine is the implicit disappearance of the material dimension of these photographs. There is no doubt that there are certain iconic types of industry photography that seem instantly recognizable. The sleek advertising attractiveness of this image of the National ACME Manufacturing Company's Product Department (fig. 1) encapsulates perhaps what is best known about industrial photography. However recently, authors like Steve Edwards, Elspeth Brown, Estelle Blaschke, Jorge Ribalta and Wolfgang Hesse among others have (re)exposed photography's deep and continuous ties with industrial movements, globalisation and politics of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Tucker and Jennifer Mnookin have additionally turned the spotlight on photography in the law.<sup>5</sup> There is also in Blaschke's work and in *The Business of War Photography* conference, an element of seeing the market forces at work behind the images commonly used to tell history. What is notable about this diversity of recent examples is the broad sweep of the category of 'work' or 'industry' into which these photographs fall and the dialogue they strike up when their materiality is taken into account. The field is increasingly complex, and increasingly seen as a 'complex' of the same ilk as Hevia's 'photography complex'<sup>6</sup> of investment, collaboration, research, production, delivery of raw

1. Exhibitions *Songs of the Future: Canadian Industrial Photographs 1858 to today*, Art Gallery of Ontario, August 2011; *Arbeit. Fotografien 1860-2015* (Work. Photographs 1860-2015) Landesmuseum, Zurich, September 2015 to January 2016; *A Hard Merciless Light: The Worker Photographer's Movement 1926-1939*, Reina Sophia, Madrid, 2011.

2. <<http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/pc/large/industrial-life.html>> and <<http://www.arbeiterfotografie-sachsen.de/literatur/>> [February 2016].

3. *Workers and Consumers: The Photographic Industry 1860-1950* at the PHRC, De Montfort University (24-25 June 2013), *The Business of War Photography: Producing and Consuming Images of Conflict* at the Centre for Visual Arts and Culture at Durham University, (31 July - 1 August 2014), Wolfgang Hesse (ed.), 'Fotographie im Klassenkampf: Arbeiterfotografie in Deutschland, Österreich, und der Schweiz', in: *Fotogeschichte* vol. 127, 2013.

4. Both Edwards and Brown emphasize the platform of Tagg, Sekula, Benjamin

and Foucault on which their own thinking was built, and which must be acknowledged. Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*, University Park, 2006; and Elspeth Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture*, Baltimore, 2005.

5. Jennifer Mnookin, "'The Image of Truth': Photographic Evidence and the Power of Analogy', in: *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities*, vol. 10 iss. 1, article 1. [Available at: <<http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/yjth/vol10/iss1/1/>>]; Jennifer Tucker, 'Moving Pictures: Photographs on Trial in the Sir Roger Tichborne Affair', in: Gregg Mitman and Kelley Wilder (eds), *Documenting the World: Film, Photography and the Scientific Record*, Chicago 2016 (in press).

6. James L. Hevia, 'The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China (1900-1901) Making Civilization', in: in Rosalind Morris, ed. *Photographies East: The Camera and its Histories in East and Southeast Asia*, Durham 2009, 79-119.

Figure 1  
Unknown photographer,  
*Product Dept. - Fourth Floor, 51-515 & 52 Machines,*  
from the National Acme Manufacturing  
Company Photograph Album,  
Cleveland, Ohio c. 1915.  
Baker Library, Harvard Business School.



materials, patent activity, circulation and consumption. This special issue is an exploration of the broader and more material photographic marketplace including raw materials, legal activities, research, patronage, propaganda, and labour relations. It is a call to reinsert the agency of the material objects in order to see the category of ‘photography and industry’ differently.

From its earliest days, photography was deeply embedded in capitalism and all its trappings: patents, copyright, mining, glass production, gelatine production, paper manufacture and many other industrial and commercial markets. With the lucrative promise of money to be made, it was the subject of investment, speculation and litigation on a grand scale. It leeches into politics, worker relations and revolution. Eugène Marey, Marquis de Bassano, and Miles Berry are perhaps the two best-known early photographic entrepreneurs. Miles Berry took out the English patent for the Daguerreotype and attempted to exploit it, and the Marquis de Bassano leased the French rights of the Calotype from Talbot for ten or more years.<sup>7</sup> The

presence of such agreements can completely change the way we view history. Steve Edwards reminds us that in the eyes of the law, Miles Berry was the inventor of the Daguerreotype.<sup>8</sup> To the eyes of a photographic historian this assertion seems absurd, but as the twentieth century progressed, many companies asserted their rights to be named as inventors of products developed by individuals in their research laboratories. Kim Timby and Nicolas Le Guern demonstrate in their articles that the idea of patenting, the law and legal concerns inflect the history of photography consistently, whether in legal disputes about stereos or in the patenting of innovations in photographic research. Progression to the market, Le Guern demonstrates, is not merely a matter of individual (or group) genius, but of a number of factors ranging from political events and individual nationality to geographic location. To assert this means that we need to reconsider the way we acknowledge and write histories about photographic 'invention' not only in the first half of the nineteenth century, but throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries.

For this enterprise, the notion of the marketplace is more useful than one of 'industry'. A market is full of things like animals and food and objects. It is a place where transactions happen and where money changes hands. It is a place to see and be seen. Photographic marketplaces take in the broad sweep of production and consumption, the workplace and the worker, the inventor and the entrepreneur. Talking about the marketplace allows us to begin to take into account the production, the materials, the making, the publishing, the exchange and the use of photographs as a 'material performance' of business and industry.<sup>9</sup>

Since 1997, Deborah Poole's influential book *Vision, Race and Modernity* has been a touchstone for research into the visual economy of photography.<sup>10</sup> The way we are connected by images and by the circulation of images is no doubt part of the broader photographic marketplace. However, even that image marketplace is found within a powerful market of materials. Gelatine, glass, and paper; silver, gold and platinum, and many other markets are inextricably linked to the history of photography. Reese Jenkins noticed and wrote about these sorts of market pressures when he detailed the careful negotiations concerning Kodak's purchase of raw photographic paper stock.<sup>11</sup> The significance of paper to Kodak and the industry more broadly is, however, only the very tip of the iceberg.

**Kim Timby** takes up another material, that most innocuous of surfaces, glass, and shows how it weaves through the history of lantern slides and stereo views, exhibitions of industry and darkroom practice. Glass, she asserts, was not only circulated widely among photographers and viewers, but almost invisibly, allowing the literally and metaphorically transparent

7. For Berry see Steve Edwards, "'Beard Patentee" Daguerreotype Property and Authorship', in: *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2013, 369-394; 371. For more on Bassano and the Société Calotypique see Estelle Blaschke, *Photography and the Commodification of Images: From the Bettmann Archive to Corbis (ca. 1924-2010)* PhD dissertation, Paris, EHESS, 2011 and Nancy Keeler, 'Inventors and Entrepreneurs', in: *History of Photography*, vol.26 no.1, Spring 2002, 26-33.

8. Edwards 2013, [reference 7], 371.

9. Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photography and the Material Performance of the Past', in: in *History and Theory Theme Issue 48* [December 2009], 130-150.

10. Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*, Princeton, 1997.

11. Reese Jenkins, *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry 1839 to 1925*, Baltimore, 1975, 196-197.

medium to flourish in unimaginable ways both technically and culturally. She takes her readers on a journey to the intersection of different markets – the studio and the instrument maker, the viewer of lantern slides and the landscape photographer. Glass, it seems, was everywhere and it defines a large portion of photography that we often ignore. Timby shows how the studio ceiling was connected to the camera back and how both these are connected to the negatives and positives that formed nearly half a century of photography. Her paper works together with **Clara von Waldthausen**, who takes up gelatine and its history in photography as a material agent with its own characteristics and which eventually combined both with glass and then with paper to inflect most of the analogue photographs we know today (fig. 2). From manufacturing to purifying to flowing on glass or coating on paper, gelatine also belongs to a marketplace at once both agricultural and industrial. Alongside paper and silver, gelatine and glass are two of the most prevalent materials found in analogue photography and yet both authors point out how invisible they have been in image history. They disappear historically even as they disappear under their photographic images. But as van Waldthausen points out, every surface has physical and material characteristics that work for or against photographers to make images of a specific kind. From the print surface, to the projected image, Timby and van Waldthausen situate their histories as contingent upon, and active agents in the broader market of raw materials.

**Nicolas Le Guern** takes this notion of the materials market further, situating colour photography within a complex exchange negotiated between industry and science. We should understand, asserts Le Guern, that the complexities of knowledge exchange are constantly in play behind what historians write about as success or failure in photographic history. Indeed, the complicated life of photography *before* it reaches the commercial marketplace is a telling reminder of the size of the hidden history of which we are not yet aware. These are the many innovations patented or kept from patent that have disappeared in the routine decisions about viability within large companies who determined to a great extent how photography looked in the twentieth century. Le Guern uses the intriguing case of Rodolphe Berthon at the Pathé laboratory, to demonstrate vividly the demanding and intricate processes of invention in terms of scientific knowledge exchange, personal idiosyncrasy and patronage. The network of legal and personal concerns that envelopes ‘invention’ in Le Guern’s article makes clear the precarious nature of that category, ‘invention’ and disproves the simple teleological narrative so often associated with the histories of colour photography.

**Noeme Santana** also takes up the economy of technology, images and industrial practices in her analysis of the photographs used by British civil engineering contractors Samuel



Figure 2

Josef Sikora, *Rella Company, Vienna*,  
ca. 1930, photographic fine print  
on silver gelatine paper, 50 x 30 cm.

Austrian National Library, Picture Archives  
and Graphics Department inv. no. PK 4921,7.

tions about current events, he reminds us that propaganda is as much about what is not seen as what is seen.

It is exactly the lacunae, the overlooked, the 'not seen' that preoccupies **Wolfgang Hesse** in his consideration of worker photography from a personal album. Although worker photography of the overtly political sort – from demonstrations and other public activism – has been collected, private albums, like the one Hesse discusses, remain a neglected source for interrogating not only worker photography but also the photographic marketplace as a whole. Hesse's article, like Allbeson's, contemplates the negotiated sphere between public and private, showing how the one inflects the other through photographic practices like exhibition, publication and the making of a personal album. To understand the politics of the worker

Pearson & Son. Not only does she examine the use of photography in business communication, she also introduces photography as a business practice. Extending her study from the making of photographically illustrated reports to the construction of presentation albums, Santana presents a complicated network of photographic exchange between engineers and central managers, between insurance agents and engineers and between the company and outside agents like customers or dignitaries. Santana takes the analysis one step further, beyond the photographic collection in active use up to 1930, into its life as a repository of company history at the Science Museum. She asserts that the photographs that were once business practice are now maintained as business history, becoming evidence of Pearson's activities. This role of photographs as a mediator between business and the public is critical to our understanding of the broader marketplace of photography in the twentieth century.

**Tom Allbeson** recognizes this mediation as part of the business of public relations. In a study about the publications released by the Ministry of Information during WWII, Allbeson takes a close look at the management of information about the British bombing campaign, treating the publications collectively as a group of businesses with commercial as well as political interests. Negotiating the division between public 'physical representations' and the creation of private, mental representa-

photography movement or, in Allbeson's case, the politics of the Ministry of Information's publications, requires more than just scrutiny of the photographs circulated publicly. It requires that we take seriously the image taken and consumed in private.

Researching 'industry' with more latitude as we have done here, allows the drawing together of similar impulses even when they are found in diverse places. More to the point, it diversifies the sorts of images that we can interrogate for meaningful business histories. The materiality of the markets in which photography takes part, the communications networks in which they circulate, and the circumstances in which they are preserved as history enrich the narratives of 'industry' beyond its current confines. Photography 'in the marketplace' is thus not only a matter of industrial advertising photography, or corporate branding, but is a political, material and above all, commercial enterprise that inflects the taking, circulating, collection and recirculation of photographs.<sup>12</sup>

Kelley Wilder, Ulla Fischer-Westhauser, Uwe Schögl  
Vienna, April 2016

12. See Gregg Mitman and Kelley Wilder, 'Introduction', in: Mitman and Wilder 2016 (reference 5) (in press).