Aisthesis

Photographic Manipulation and Photographic Deception[1]

Zsolt Bátori

(Budapest Metropolitan University)
zsolt.batori@gmail.com

Abstract. I consider how photographic image manipulation and deception influence both interpretation and evaluation of photographs. First I distinguish between image manipulation and deception by clarifying that image manipulation does not necessarily lead to deception in terms of forming false beliefs. I also argue that image manipulation is not the only way of using photographs deceptively, and I provide examples for photographic deception that do not rely on image manipulation. Then I examine what role the readability of photographic properties (including if and how they have been manipulated) plays in their interpretation. I introduce the concept of photographic illocutionary acts to account for the interpretation of photographic images, and I argue that the default interpretation of photographs is always based on our knowledge of the specific ontological and epistemic status of photographs in general, and which distinguishes them from non-photographic images. I conclude that our knowledge about the ease and frequency of analogue or digital image manipulation does not alter our default interpretation with which we approach photographs.

Keywords. Photography, manipulation, deception, photographic illocutionary acts, readability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Using photographs in ways that deceive the viewer is as old as the medium itself. It is merely the technology available for the

various kinds of deceptive techniques that has changed and, of course, the various contexts in which photographic deception may occur. There are considerably more contexts today in which people produce and use photographs than a hundred and fifty, a hundred or even fifty years ago, and hence there are also considerably more ways for using photographic images to deceive viewers.

Since digital photography has become available, laypersons and trained photographers alike have often commented on how easy it now is to manipulate photographs. Such remarks also often imply that due to the possibility of digital image manipulation we can trust photographic images less today than we could trust them earlier in the history of the medium. In this paper I do not claim that the ease or frequency of digital manipulation is especially important for how we approach photographs. On the contrary; I suggest that only reasonable doubt about the reliability of photographic content will change our default interpretation. The mere awareness of the possibility of image manipulation and deception is not sufficient for changing our default approach.

In what follows I first discuss the difference between the manipulation of photographic images and photographic deception, arguing that only some instances of the former constitute a subcategory of the latter. This discussion is embedded in the context of explicating photographic deception in terms of coming to have false beliefs about the depicted content of the image. Then, in section 3, I consider the role of readability of photographic properties in the process of the various forms of photographic deception. In section 4 I introduce the notion of photographic illocutionary acts for explaining the interpretation of photographic images and also for providing an account of the mechanisms of photographic deception. Finally, in section 5 I argue that our default photographic interpretation is not influenced by our knowledge about the ease or frequency of analogue or digital manipulation of photographic images.

2. THE VERACITY OF THE MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE MANIPULATION *VERSUS* PHOTOGRAPHIC DECEPTION

In order to understand the difference between photographic image manipulation and photographic deception we first need to explicate what is meant by photographic deception. Walden (2008) summarizes the basic questions concerning the veracity of the medium of photography as follows. It is apparent that while some photographs enable us to form true beliefs about the scene they depict, others might be deceptive in the sense that by looking at them we will come to have false beliefs about the depicted scene. The beliefs we form are perceptual (as opposed to language based symbolic beliefs)[2]. Walden refers to Fodor's (1983, 1990) two-staged theory of perception to explain the connection between looking at objects and scenes and looking at their images. In the first stage input to the modular visual system is processed without having access to information about the photographic or non-photographic nature of the image. Visual properties are processed, objects are recognised, etc. by the same visual system in the case of looking at them directly or looking at photographic or non-photographic images of them[3]. At this stage, however, we merely process the visual input without forming fully-fledged beliefs about the status (real scene, photographic or non-photographic image) of what we see.

Walden refers to the outputs of this first stage of the visual system as «proto-beliefs». I prefer to talk about these states as mental representations in connection to which we do not yet hold any psychological attitude such as belief or desire (see Bátori [2011]); but for our present purposes here the difference is terminological. For the formation of our fully-fledged perceptual beliefs, however, our other beliefs about the nature of our visual experience become crucial. During this second

---

[2] See Bátori (2011), for instance, for an explanation of the difference between perceptual and symbolic mental representations (beliefs and imaginings) in the context of looking at photographic images.
[3] See also Currie (1995).

stage we consider if we are seeing things directly or if we are looking at their pictorial representations. In the latter case the differences between photographic and non-photographic images will also be considered for further inferences (among others, about the reliability of the image). We are deceived only if we form false (fully-fledged) beliefs about the depicted scene on the basis of its image type (photograph, painting, etc.).

Walden argues that we generally believe that photographic images are more reliable sources of information about the visual properties of depicted scenes than non-photographic images because we know about the objective nature of the mechanical processes in photography. On the other hand, we also know about the subjectivity of the mental states that may affect the truthfulness of the image when artists produce non-photographic (hand-made) images. Finally, Walden also notes that, at least in the case of some photographic genres, there is a strong institutional and/or social pressure to safeguard the reliability of images. Photojournalists working for established news media, for instance, must observe and follow strict professional ethical standards, therefore even in the light of the ease of digital manipulation their photographs are still considered trustworthy.

Let us turn now to the connection between manipulation and deception, in order to see how we might come to have false beliefs when looking at photographs. Although various techniques for photographic image manipulation have been available from the early days of the medium, it is the digital age that has made people especially aware of, and worried about, the likelihood of encountering deceptive photographic images. It is not that before this era people did not know about the existence of such techniques; they did know about them. Nevertheless, they also knew that those techniques required highly specialised skills and laboratory equipment, and this prevented image manipulation from becoming an everyday occurrence. Today, however, nearly everyone has one or two electronic devices (smart phone, tablet, computer) that offer the possibility of some more or less sophisticated photographic image manipu-

lation process in a matter of a few minutes. As a result, it is not difficult to feel that image manipulation has become so easy and frequent that it might now be the standard, and not the exception, to the rule. It is not surprising, therefore, that there might also be a widespread feeling about the unreliability of photographs (especially about those produced digitally in the past two decades or so) in terms of misrepresenting the visual properties of the scene in front of the camera at the time of exposure.

Our pre-theoretical intuitions about the unreliability of photographs and about how their alleged unreliability influences our perception, use, and interpretation of them, however, may not be a good guide to understanding what in fact is the case. In order to tackle the question of interpretation in the forthcoming sections, we first need to explicate what constitutes manipulation and how photographic image manipulation relates to photographic deception. Let us consider photographic image manipulation first.

Although the term «photographic manipulation» often carries a negative connotation, there is, in fact, little sense in talking about unmanipulated photographic images. In analogue technology the visual properties of the developed negative images and of the enlarged prints depend on the specific details of the image taking, developing and enlarging processes. There are necessary steps that just cannot be avoided in these processes. For instance, you cannot develop a negative or enlarge a print without *adjusting* its contrast values, and doing so does not result in a deceptive image (at least not in any standard case). Of course, «adjusting» is just another term for «manipulating». In other words, the term «manipulating» in analogue photography does not necessarily carry the negative connotation of resulting in some sort of deception in terms of forming false beliefs.

If we turn to digital photography things may initially look different indeed, making digital photography more prone to deceptive uses. Our experience of digital images is that they are available immediately on the screen of our smart phone, camera or computer. If we decide to modify them

later with some image editing software, this will count as «manipulation». There are, however, two problems with this initial, pre-theoretical impression. First, it is not the case that the image we see immediately after it is taken is «unmanipulated» in any interesting sense of the word. There are many settings built into smart phone and camera software that determine the visual properties we see when we first look at the photograph we have just taken. Second, subsequent modifications with an image editing software are «manipulations», but they may also merely have the neutral status of «adjusting» image properties (for instance saturation and contrast level), without resulting in deception. In other words, we may have the same conclusion here as we had in the case of analogue photography; the term «manipulation» in digital photography does not necessarily carry the negative connotation of resulting in some sort of deception in terms of deceiving the viewer about the visual properties of the depicted scene.

If the above considerations are correct, then we need to distinguish between photographic manipulation that merely means adjusting image properties by analogue or digital means on the one hand, and deceptive photographic manipulation on the other hand. Examples for the former include the necessary setting of values (image properties), while examples for the latter (deceptive manipulation) include erasing persons or objects from a photograph or, on the contrary, adding persons or objects that were originally not in the photograph (because they were not in the photographed scene).

Having discussed that not all (analogue or digital) photographic image manipulations are deceptive, we also need to note that there are deceptive uses of photographic images that are not the result of image manipulation at all. In other words, while Walden only considers cases when we form false beliefs about the visual properties of the scene depicted, I think that photographic deception also includes deceptive *uses* of photographs, i.e. when the source of the false belief is something other than inaccurate visual information about the depicted scene. Consider, for instance, the 2009

Figure 1. José Luis Rodríguez: *The Storybook Wolf*, 2009 winning image of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition.

winning image of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition, taken by photographer José Luis Rodríguez (Figure 1). The image shows a wolf jumping over a fence at night. The photographer lost the prize later, not because the image was manipulated in any significant way (other than setting the values for colours, saturation, contrast, etc.), but because it turned out that the wolf depicted in the photograph was a trained animal. In other words, the photograph was staged, which is against the ethical rules of the wildlife photography genre in general, and the specific rules of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition in particular. Given that viewers approach and interpret wildlife photography assuming that the images presented to them are not staged, a photograph using trained animals clearly deceives its audiences about one of its most important (photographic) properties. The deception results in misinterpretation[4]. To summarise, it is not only the case that not all photographic image manipulations are deceptive, but there are also examples for photographic deception without deceptive image manipulation.

---

[4] There are similar rules against staging in street photography or photojournalism. It is also important to note, however, that there are numerous other photographic genres and practices (for instance fashion photography or fine art photography) where staging is allowed. There is no universal rule against staging photographic images.

3. HOW PHOTOGRAPHIC PROPERTIES MAY BECOME DECEPTIVE: READABLE AND NOT READABLE PHOTOGRAPHIC PROPERTIES

In order to tackle the difference between deceptive and non-deceptive uses of photographic images we need to consider what may or may not be readable from a photograph in the course of forming beliefs about the photographic content of the image. One might choose, for instance, to make image manipulations (such as erasures and additions by montage techniques) visible, that is, readable from the image. Similarly, there are images whose staged nature is evident just by looking at them[5]. In other words, the difference between deceptive and non-deceptive photographic images may often be located in whether or not the properties that are relevant for their interpretation are visible in them, and hence readable just by looking at them, in the context of their use. Let me explain this point further with some specific examples.

If a property of a photographic image that is relevant for its interpretation is deliberately hidden from the viewer, that is, the property is not readable from the image in the given context (and it is not available either in some other way from the context), then the interpretation will be flawed. This is because in this case the viewer relies on at least some false premises while forming beliefs about the content of the photograph. For instance, if the viewer does not know that it is a composite image, then she will approach it with some false premises. Misinterpretation occurs not because of any mistake on the part of the viewer, but because she has been deceived. The deception may be the result of the manipulation of image properties by analogue or digital means: part of the image may be erased or it might be a composite image of two or more different scenes. If the viewer cannot detect the image manipulation simply by looking at the image, or the nature of the manipulation is not available from the context (for instance from the title or description of

Figure 2. László Balogh: Bicske, Hungary, September 3, 2015. © Reuters.

the image), then the viewer will interpret it as an unmanipulated photograph[6].

As we have already seen, however, it is not the case that only properties resulting in image manipulation may be hidden from the viewer. Such unreadable image properties may include the staged or unstaged nature of the image, or even the meaning of their photographic content itself (in terms of what situation it depicts). Let me explain this latter type with a specific example. Figure 2 depicts a scene in a railway station in Bicske, Hungary, in September 2015, during the height of the refugee crisis. We see a young man and a woman with a baby, all of whom have fallen into the railway tracks. The man is embracing the women and is shouting desperately. The woman is trying to protect the baby while they are falling to the ground. One policeman is reaching towards them and another is standing by. There is a third policeman looking at the scene from some distance with his arms folded, apparently just observing the situation. Curiously, this image may be interpreted in at least two distinct ways in terms of what situation it depicts. According to one interpretation this family was about to be separated by the police, and the man was trying to hold on to and protect his wife and their

---

[5] Later we will also discuss some specific examples for these cases.

[6] See section 5 for the explication of the default photographic interpretation.

baby. According to another interpretation the man was not related to the woman and the baby. He in fact attacked them, running amok in a desperate attempt to convince the authorities to let him continue on his way to Austria. According to this latter interpretation the police were trying to protect the woman and baby from him. The visual photographic content is compatible with both interpretations, while only one of these might be correct in terms of describing the real situation, context and content of the image. A deceptive use of this image would be to present or publish it with the wrong interpretation, while knowing it to be false. This would constitute a deceptive use of a photographic image without altering any of its relevant visual properties. As with the wolf example, the falsity of the interpretation would not be readable from the image; the viewer may well be misled because she has been provided with an incorrect context and interpretation.

There are also, however, images whose visual properties do allow us to understand in what way they misrepresent the visual properties of the scene that had been in front of the camera at the time of exposure. Many composite photographs, for instance, straightforwardly present themselves as montages; their composite nature is readable just by observing their visual properties. Atencia-Linares (2012) and Woodwart (2016), for instance, discuss *Io Gatto* (1932) by Wanda Wulz (Figure 3). Atencia-Linares argues that this photograph represents a fictional entity by purely photographic means (multiple-exposure technique). In section 5 I will briefly discuss this position in terms of the possible interpretations of the image, but for our current purposes it is enough to observe that this photograph certainly does not deceive us about its composite nature: on the contrary, it is an important aspect of its interpretation to realise (to form a belief) that the image is a multiple exposure montage.

There are also other types of photographs that do not deceive us, even though they *do* in fact misrepresent the visual properties of the scene in front of the camera at the time of exposure. As I argue elsewhere (Bátori 2015), black and white photographs, for instance, (or even those with

Figure 3. Wanda Wulz: *Io Gatto*, 1932.

higher or lower levels of colour fidelity) do not represent colours faithfully: they represent colours, such as yellow or red, with shades of grey. The reason we are not deceived by black and white photographs about the colours of the scene depicted is that we are aware of the practice of black and white photography, and we use this knowledge when interpreting black and white photographic images. The fact that they do not represent colours faithfully is apparent when we look at them: that is, it is readable from black and white photographs how they misrepresent what they depict. We do not form false beliefs about the colours of the objects depicted in the photograph because we do not form any beliefs about their colours (other than what is readable from a black and white image; for instance that one is darker or lighter than the other).

The readability of which properties of the depicted scene photographs do, or do not repre-

sent faithfully is an important aspect of interpreting all photographic images. This is precisely what distinguishes deceptive and non-deceptive photographic images in terms of whether they mislead us about some aspect of the scene they depict. In some cases, however, this is more than merely an epistemic concern about all kinds of photographs. An example is fine art photographs, where readability also has the function of informing our interpretation of aesthetically relevant properties.

Take, for instance, the aforementioned example of black and white photography. While being black and white (or, more precisely, monochrome) was a standard property of photographic images during most of the history of the medium, today monochrome is a contra-standard artistic choice. I use «standard» and «contra-standard» as specific terms here as explicated by Walton (1970). Standard properties are the ones that establish a work in a given category (medium, genre etc.); recognising standard properties means that we recognise a work as belonging to a specific category. Flatness and motionlessness, for instance, are standard properties of photographic images. Contra-standard properties, however, either disqualify a work from a category (being drawn disqualifies an image from the category of photography) or they are interpreted as aesthetically relevant artistic choices[7]. Being monochrome today does not disqualify images from the category of photography, but because of its now contra-standard nature, it is to be interpreted. For instance, if we look at a monochrome photograph that was taken in the first part of the 20th century, we will assume that the photographer used a black and white negative simply because that is what was available to her. In other words, her use of monochrome was the technological default of her time, not an artistic choice that would need to be interpreted and evaluated aesthetically. Today, however, we know that colour technology is not only readily available, but it is the standard now. Monochrome has become contra-standard, and as such, to be interpreted as

Figure 4. Gregory Crewdson: *Untitled*, 2003-2005. © Gregory Crewdson. Courtesy Gagosian.

an artistic choice[8]. From the point of view of the readability of what visual properties are represented realistically by a photograph, this is significant because in the case of monochrome photographic images the artistic choice of not representing colours realistically is readable, and hence it becomes an important aspect in the interpretation and evaluation of the photograph.

Finally, let us consider another example of the connection between readability and the interpretation of the aesthetically relevant properties of photographic images. Staged fine art photography is a broad category that includes numerous different types of artistic communication with staged photographs, from still life to directorial photography. Gregory Crewdson, for instance, creates staged images that depict scenes that (considering their content) often resemble spontaneous snapshots of captured moments[9]. This, however, does not result in deception and misinterpretation, for viewers can clearly recognise (and form true beliefs about) the staged nature of these images just by looking at them (see Figure 4, for instance). Staging may be recognised by noticing visual clues, such as the often artificially lethargic bodily postures of the persons in the photographs

---

[7] For a detailed discussion of standard, variable and contra-standard aesthetic properties see Walton (1970).

[8] I first discussed how monochrome has become contra-standard in Bátori (2016).

[9] For a discussion on Crewdson photography see also Bátori (2016).

and the unnatural, filmic lighting. The readability of staging is an important aspect of the interpretation and aesthetic evaluation of these images, because staging is one of the important aesthetic properties of the works. It is precisely the tension between the created and recognisably false spontaneity and the elaborated staging that adds a layer of artistic meaning to the images, which would be lost or misunderstood without the readability of the staged nature of the images. These photographs do not mislead us about their properties: on the contrary, their transparency about them is an important condition of their interpretation and evaluation, both as photographic images and as artworks.

4. PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS AND DECEPTION

In the previous section I discussed the role of readability in photographic communication in general and in fine art photography in particular. Let us now turn to a closer examination of the processes of interpretation, to see the mechanisms in which readability and forming true beliefs play such a crucial role. In order to do so we will rely on the theory of pictorial illocutionary acts that was first suggested by Kjørup (1974, 1978) and Novitz (1975, 1977), extending the original speech act theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Let us first examine pictorial illocutionary acts in general. Then we will turn to photographic illocutionary acts as a specific subcategory of pictorial illocutionary acts[10].

4.1. Pictorial illocutionary acts

According to Kjørup (1974, 1978) and Novitz (1975, 1977) we perform actions not only with words and sentences as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) suggested, but also with pictures. In other words, producing and presenting a picture to others constitutes a pictorial locutionary act that is functionally analogous to verbal locutionary acts. Of course, linguistic and pictorial locutionary acts are considerably different from the point of view of the nature of their literal meanings and the structure of their complex meanings. Pictures do not have components that are analogous to words and syntax, therefore the literal meaning of pictorial locutionary acts must be explicated in a different way. While in the case of natural languages we need to learn the conventional (symbolic) semantic meaning of words and the syntactic structure of the specific language, when looking at pictures we rely on our standard visual recognition capacities (object recognition, face recognition, etc.) that we use in ordinary seeing. (By «ordinary seeing» I merely mean looking at objects and scenes.) As Currie (1995) argues, natural (literal) pictorial meaning is based on our visual recognition capacities. It is «natural» (as opposed to «symbolic») because we do not have to learn the literal semantic meaning of a (photographic or non-photographic) picture of a giraffe, for instance; we recognize giraffes, drawings of giraffes, photographs of giraffes, etc. after seeing just a few giraffes or images of giraffes. The recognition of giraffe pictures is based on our ability to recognize the visual properties of giraffes, not on our ability to learn the conventional (symbolic) meaning of the words of natural languages[11].

Once a pictorial locutionary act is produced and (based on our visual recognition capacities) we understand its literal pictorial meaning, we also interpret the image to understand what pictorial illocutionary act was performed with the picture in the given context. This includes (with the exception of deception) the understanding that the picture was intended to be interpreted that way. For instance, we interpret a picture of a running deer on a traffic sign next to the road as a locutionary act for the illocutionary act of warning us about the possibility that deer might cross the road.

---

[10] For pictorial and photographic illocutionary acts see also Bátori (2015).

[11] See also section 2.

4.2. Photographic illocutionary acts

Photographic illocutionary acts constitute a specific case of pictorial illocutionary acts (Bátori [2015]). The photographic image itself (in any visible printed or digital form) is a photographic locutionary act. As in the case of other pictorial illocutionary acts, we rely on our visual recognition capacities to understand the literal meaning of photographic images (see the discussion above). The literal meaning of the photographic locutionary act gets interpreted in the specific context to understand what photographic illocutionary act was performed by producing and presenting the photographic image (as a locutionary act). Although this is a general characteristic of all pictorial illocutionary acts, the interpretation of photographic locutionary acts is considerably more specific, and it diverges from the interpretation of non-photographic images. I suggest that photographic locutionary acts are always interpreted *as the result of (analogue or digital) photographic processes*, even if the viewer only has a very superficial knowledge about the technical details of those processes. In other words, photographic images produced and presented as photographic locutionary acts always get interpreted *qua* photographs, as opposed to drawings, paintings or any other non-photographic images. Viewers are aware of (have beliefs about) the specific ontological and epistemic status of photographic images, and this knowledge plays a significant role in the interpretation process of photographic illocutionary acts. Let us see now what this specific ontological and epistemic status consists in.

The indexical nature of photographic images has been explicated in several ways. Kendall Walton's (1984, 1986, 1997), for instance, argues that because of the causal mechanical nature of the photographic processes, the visual properties of photographic images counterfactually depend on the visual properties of the scene depicted. Should the visual properties of the scene be different, the visual properties of the image would also be different. Viewers do not have to (and in fact they usually do not) have much knowledge about the technical details of the photographic processes in order to grasp the significance of the casual physical connection between the visual properties of the scene and the visual properties of the photographic image. Furthermore, they also know that there is no such mechanical causal connection between the visual properties of scenes and the visual properties of non-photographic images, such as paintings or drawings. Viewers know that intentionally preserving counterfactual dependence is possible, that is, a painter may decide to paint the visual properties of a scene realistically, but it is an artistic choice, not the result of a causal chain of mechanical processes.

The mind-independent, natural counterfactual dependence of the visual properties of a photographic image on the visual properties of the scene depicted, however, is not an artistic choice. In order to understand the ontological and epistemic status of photographic images, it is sufficient merely to have a vague, pre-theoretical knowledge about how photographic processes involve the mechanical recording of light values, and how those processes differ from the decisions of artists of hand-produced, non-photographic images. In other words, when people interpret photographic images they have a sufficient understanding of (beliefs about) what kind of images photographs are, as opposed to non-photographic images (ontological status) and also what type of knowledge they may expect to gain about the scene depicted by photographs (epistemic status). Since the specific epistemic status of photographic images is a consequence of their ontological status, it is also understood that information about the visual properties of the depicted scene has a different epistemic status in the case of photographic compared with non-photographic images. Viewers know that if the photographic image is not manipulated in ways that conceal how counterfactual dependence was altered, then they may expect to learn mind-independent information about the visual properties of the scene depicted.

To summarise, I suggest that photographic illocutionary acts differ from other, non-photo-

graphic, pictorial illocutionary acts because in the case of photographic illocutionary acts the photographic nature of the locutionary act is always part of the interpretation process. Viewers know that the visual properties of photographs counterfactually depend on the visual properties of the depicted scene, and their interpretation of photographs (photographic locutionary acts) is based on this knowledge. It is also important to note that our knowledge about the ontological and epistemic status of photographic images is a necessary component of this process. If we mistake a painting for a photograph, for instance, then we misinterpret it. If we mistake a photograph for a painting, then we misinterpret it as well. In the next section we will examine how these observations are compatible with the fact that viewers also know about the possible ways they may be deceived with photographs.

5. DEFAULT PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION

Let us now return to photographic manipulation and deception in the light of our observations about readability and photographic illocutionary acts. I think that now we are in a better position to consider if and how our knowledge about the possibility of photographic manipulation and deception may influence our interpretation of photographic images. I will argue that it has no more influence than does our (analogous) knowledge about the possibility of being lied to, on our interpretation of verbal utterances.

In verbal communication our default interpretation of verbal locutionary acts is based on our attitude that we consider them sincere and truthful in the sense that they are not uttered with the intention to deceive us. We maintain this attitude at least until we have some reason to suspect that we might be deceived. We know that the person might be mistaken (and hence the utterance might be false), and we also know that sometimes people deliberately tell lies in order to deceive others. Nevertheless, this is not what we expect to

be the case, and being suspicious about possible deceptions is not our default attitude towards verbal locutionary acts. I suggest that we approach photographic locutionary acts in a similar manner. We know that many photographic images are manipulated; in fact I argued earlier that all photographic images are manipulated in the sense of adjusting some of the settings for the visual properties of the image. However, as we have seen, manipulation may simply mean adjusting visual properties of the image without deceiving the viewer about the properties of the depicted scene. We know, however, both that some manipulations may result in misrepresenting the visual properties of the scene, and also that there are deceptive uses of photographic images even if their visual properties are not manipulated to misrepresent the depicted scene. Nevertheless, with photographic images, as with verbal communication, our default interpretation is not based on a suspicion that we might be deceived.

I would like to conclude that the default interpretation of photographic images primarily relies on our more, or less, precise knowledge about the difference between the ontological and epistemic status of photographic images on the one hand, and drawings, paintings, and other non-photographic images on the other. The relevant difference is that photographic images are indexical: the visual properties of the image counterfactually depend on the visual properties of the depicted scene. In the case of photographs counterfactual dependence is natural, that is, the result of a causal physical connection between the scene and the image. In the case of non-photographic images, however, intentionally preserving counterfactual dependence is always an artistic choice[12].

When interpreting verbal locutionary acts, we assume that they are to be interpreted as sincere and truthful until we have some reason to suspect that the contrary is the case. Analogously to verbal communication, when looking at photographs we also maintain our default interpretation

---

[12] On the default photographic interpretation see also Bátori (2016).

until we have reason to abandon it. For instance, if we can visually detect a type of image editing that would alter its photographic nature, then our default interpretation is replaced by another interpretation in which indexicality and counterfactual dependence are not assumed. In the case of a compound image, such as the aforementioned collage *Io Gatto* by Wanda Wulz, we can know (by looking at it) that the visual properties of the image do not depend counterfactually on the visual properties of a single original scene. Atencia-Linares (2012) argues that since only traditional photographic processes were involved in its creation, *Io Gatto* is a photograph of a fictional entity (cat-woman). I think this position is mistaken precisely because we do not approach *Io Gatto* with our default photographic interpretation. Its composite nature is readable, we know that there was no such scene (entity) to be photographed, and we replace our default photographic interpretation with another one that is suitable for collages. In other words, we do not interpret collages (even collages composed solely of photographic images) as photographs, but as collages (of photographic images). We would only approach *Io Gatto* with our default photographic interpretation if we were in fact deceived into believing that the image is a photograph of cat-woman. That belief, however, would also involve (false) belief in the existence of cat-woman.

My suggestion for the default photographic interpretation discussed in this section is consistent with the observation that there are also contexts in which we are likely to suspend our default photographic interpretation. In these cases it is not the readability of image modification that prevents us from being deceived (as in the case of readable montages), but our contextual knowledge, including the information that the image belongs to a specific genre, and our knowledge about the genre itself. For instance, while photo-realist paintings look like photographic images, we do not approach them with the default photographic interpretation. We interpret them as paintings, and it is one of their aesthetically relevant (contra-standard) properties that they

look like photographs. On the other hand, if we encounter a photograph that looks like a painting, once we learn that it is a photograph, we will approach it with the default photographic interpretation. One of its aesthetically relevant (contra-standard) properties will be that it looks like a painting. Looking like a photograph is a standard feature of photographic images. Looking like a painting is a contra-standard feature to be interpreted. Furthermore, we also suspend the default photographic interpretation for the fictional use of photographs: we understand them as photographs of actors playing roles, not as photographs of fictional characters. In the light of our knowledge about the extensive modification of the visual properties of photographs of fashion models, we are also cautious about considering fashion photographs to be faithful representations of the visual properties of models. While we know about the professional ethical rules of photojournalism, we also know that no such rules have been established in fashion photography.

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper I first considered the connection between photographic image manipulation and photographic deception. I argued that image manipulations are only deceptive if they cause us to form false beliefs about the depicted scene when looking at the manipulated image. In order to clarify the status and role of image manipulation I suggested that we need to distinguish between photographic manipulations that deceive the viewers about the visual properties of the depicted scene, and manipulations that merely adjust some of the visual properties of the image without being deceptive. I suggested that we are only deceived into forming false beliefs about the depicted scene if the nature of the image manipulation is not readable from the image, or if we do not know all the relevant information about the image from the context. In order to show that photographic deception is not confined to image manipulation I also presented examples of the

deceptive uses of photographs whose visual properties were not manipulated in any way that would cause the viewer to form false beliefs about the depicted scene.

In the second part of the paper I offered a theory of photographic illocutionary acts to account for the interpretive processes involved in understanding and evaluating photographs. A photographic illocutionary act is a specific type of pictorial illocutionary act that takes into account the ontological and epistemic status of photographs, as opposed to non-photographic images. I argued that even superficial knowledge about the nature of the mechanical photographic processes is sufficient to form the pre-theoretical understanding of the difference between the «objectivity» of the photographic images and the «subjectivity» of hand-produced non-photographic images. The «objectivity» of photographs has been explicated in terms of the natural counterfactual dependence of the visual properties of the photographs on the visual properties of the depicted scene. The «subjectivity» of non-photographic images means that while counterfactual dependence of the visual properties of non-photographic images on the visual properties of the depicted scene is also possible, it is always an artistic choice, that is, a mind-dependent, intentional counterfactual dependence.

Finally I suggested that our default interpretation of photographic images relies on our knowledge of the ontological and epistemic status of photographs, and not on the possibility of photographic deception. I argued that photographic illocutionary acts are similar to speech acts with respect to our default assumption of sincere, non-deceptive communication until we have reason to think otherwise. Although the ease of digital image manipulation has made us acutely aware of the possibility of deception, I think that the default interpretation of photographic images is still based on their specific ontological and epistemic status. We interpret and appreciate photographs as photographic images, not as hand-produced images or montages, and our default photographic interpretation is independent of the spe-cific analogue or digital technology by which the images are produced.

REFERENCES

Atencia-Linares, P., 2012: *Fiction, Nonfiction, and Deceptive Photographic Representation*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism" 70, pp. 19-30.

Austin, J.L., 1962: *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Bátori, Zs., 2011: *Image and Imagination*, "Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics" 3, pp. 67-80.

Bátori, Zs., 2015: *Photographic Deception*, "Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics" 7, pp. 68-78.

Bátori, Zs., 2016: *Categories of Photography*, "Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics" 8, pp. 79-88.

Currie, G., 1995: *Image and mind: Film, philosophy and cognitive science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Fodor, J., 1983: *The Modularity of Mind*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Fodor, J., 1990: *Observation Reconsidered*, in *A Theory of Content and Other Essays*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1990.

Kjørup, S., 1974: *George Inness and the Battle at Hastings, or Doing Things with Pictures*, "The Monist" 58 (2), pp. 216-235.

Kjørup, S., 1978: *Pictorial Speech Acts*, "Erkenntnis" 12, pp. 55-71.

Novitz, D., 1975: *Picturing*, "Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism" 34 (2), pp. 145-155.

Novitz, D., 1977: *Pictures and their Use in Communication: A Philosophical Essay*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.

Searle, J.R., 1969: *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Walden, S., 2008: *Truth in Photography*, in *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, ed. by S. Walden, Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, New Jersey.

Walton, K., 1970: *Categories of Art*, "The Philosophical Review" 79, pp. 334-367.

Walton, K., 1984: *Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism*, "Critical Inquiry" 11 (2), pp. 246-277.

Walton, K., 1986: *Looking Again through Photographs: A Response to Edwin Martin*, "Critical Inquiry" 12 (4), pp. 801-808.

Walton, K., 1997: *On Pictures and Photographs: Objections Answered*, in Allen, R., Smith, M. (eds.), *Film Theory and Philosophy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997, pp. 60-75.

Woodwart, R., 2016: *Fictionality and Photography*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism" 74 (3), pp. 279-289.