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Preface

Dark Impact

Steven Humblet

The first meaning of 'impact' refers to a forceful striking of two bodies against each other—a collision, simply put. It derives from the verb 'impinge', which in turn comes from the Latin '*impingere*', meaning 'to push, to bump into, to strike, to hit, to impose'. All very physical actions, all executed with a certain amount of bodily violence. This, of course, is not what photographers mean when they say they want to have an impact. They use the term in a more figurative way, as 'having a strong effect of one thing, person, action, etc. on another'. In this subdued definition, photographs function as vehicles through which photographers hope to realise a strong effect on others. If violence there is, it's (safely) encapsulated in the images themselves. If they hit us, it's only our moral imaginations that they strike.

The aspiration for impact seems indestructible. Even after the demise of the printed press and acknowledging that the impact of photographic images is uncertain, unmeasurable and highly unpredictable, photographers still (cl) aim to make images that have an impact. How is it that this impossible desire is still alive and kicking? Part of it is fuelled by a general movement in the artworld that's taking up a more activist role, with the photographer as a procurer of vivid examples of the evil that men do. Another part has to do with a lingering attachment to the role documentary photography once played in our visual understanding of the world. Here, the longing for impact takes on the form of a desire to become relevant once more—to be a witness of our times. And last but not least, some of this desire can even be attributed to mere calculation on the part of the photographer. Having an impact is a sure-fire way of getting noticed and could therefore become the starting point of a successful career.

The desire to have an impact is the desire to act upon the world. Included in this definition is the presumption that the one who wants to have an impact is in a position of power from which it is possible to influence worldly events. The wish to have an impact posits the photographer as an agent of change and the world in which he acts as his subordinate object. To strive for impact is to assert control, to state how the world ought to be, not how it is. The photographer understands having an impact as a moment of empowerment, whereas the recipient who absorbs the blow of the image often feels powerless. How to react to this injustice? How to answer the plea of the image? The image confronts us with an intolerable situation but shows us no way out. In the end, we're left to simply utter our moral indignation. Nevertheless, there's a (rather important) difference between moral indignation and acting morally. The former boils down to simply speaking up, to accusing, while the latter requires an imaginative leap.

The question then becomes: how can photography help us attain this imaginative leap? Traditionally, the desire of the photographer who wants to have an impact starts from a genuine belief in the power of images to sway public opinion. Photographs are here supposed to function as visual arguments by simply showing what needs to be addressed. As such, they are fully determined by the intentions of those who produce and disseminate them. They stress a human worldview and always fit neatly in the different scientific and intellectual frameworks we've developed to make sense of the world: they never veer off-script (which makes them ultimately quite predictable). Considered within the duality of the photographic process as a meeting between optics and chemistry, these argumentative images stress the optical side of photography. Clarity, readability, and sharpness are the most important formal qualities of these images.

But if we go back to the original meaning of the word 'impact'—as a forceful collision of two bodies—then another way of thinking about photographic impact becomes possible. Instead of the optical (theatrical) side of photography, this other kind of photography stresses the photo-chemical element as the (material) point of contact between us and the world. Thinking about impact in this way suggests that photographic images, precisely because they are the result of a semi-automatic process in which the influence of the human operator is rather limited, can open us to a different relationship to the world. Initiated by a human action, these images are nevertheless attentive to the agency of the world itself and all the non-human elements in it. Maybe we need more of these non-human perspectives to tilt us out of our self-indulgent, anthropocentric worldview. If we want more images with impact, maybe we should stop proselytising the public with trite truths and stale arguments and instead use photography as a tool to give presence to the spirits lurking in the dark, silent world.

Imperial Impact

Ariella Azoulay

This article first appeared on Still Searching, where Ariella Azoulay published a series of essays called *Unlearning Decisive Moments of Photography*.[1] In this series, Azoulay sought to invert common assumptions about the moment of the emergence of photography that present it as a *sui generis* practice and locate said moment in the mid-nineteenth century and in relation to technological developments and male inventors. Instead, she proposes to locate the origins of photography in the 'New World', to use the early phrasing of European colonial enterprise, and to study photographs alongside early accounts of imperial expeditions. The essays are based on her forthcoming book *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, which is out through Verso in fall 2019.

Two concepts play a fundamental role in this new work and thus in the essay below; these are 'unlearning' and 'imperial rights'. In order to acknowledge that photography's origins are in 1492, Azoulay posits that we have to unlearn the expertise and knowledge that call upon us to account for photography as having its own origins, histories, practices or futures. She wants to re-write that history: photography does not represent a domain apart, and you cannot hence simply situate it in the early nineteenth century. Her critical – 'unlearning' – approach makes us want to explore photography as part of the imperial world in which we, as scholars, photographers, or curators, operate. According to her, photography, like other technologies, is rooted in imperial formations of power and the legitimisation of violence in the form of rights exercised over others.[2]

The second point she makes is, that when photography really emerged, it didn't halt this process of plunder that made others and their worlds available to the few[3]. It rather accelerated and provided further opportunities and modalities for pursuing it. The right to take a photograph of objects, art, wealth etc., 'we' brought back from new discovered territories, is based on 'the right to appropriate others' wealth, resources, and labor'.[4] These new rights, the exercise of which involved mass destruction, were manufactured under the pretext of the promotion of knowledge involved in the discovery of 'new worlds'. Rather than conceiving of photography as a means to document discrete cases of destruction, we need to ask ourselves how photography participated in this destruction and ultimately examine if and how it can play a part in imagining ways out of it.[5] All this implies that photography didn't so much initiate a new world as it was built upon and benefitted from imperial looting, divisions and rights that were operative in the colonisation of the world to which photography was assigned the role of documenting, recording or contemplating what was already there.

Even as photography becomes more and more specialised, with its own division of 'experts', it tends to 'structurally' deny its impact when taking for granted these imperial rights. That's Azoulay overall strategy: to lay bare 'the set of imperial rights that continue to lie at the basis of our political regimes'. The unlearning she proposes re-envisions the impact photography in a non-imperial way: taking photos differently means really including the other(s).[6] In order to do that, 'one has to [first] engage with the imperial world from a non-imperial perspective and be committed to the idea of revoking rather than ignoring or denying imperial rights manufactured and distributed as part of the destruction of diverse worlds'.

Through [a] combined activity of destroying and manufacturing 'new'[7] worlds, people were deprived of an active life and their different activities reduced and mobilised to fit larger schemes of production and world-engineering. Through these schemes, different groups of governed peoples were crafted and assigned access to certain occupations, mainly non-skilled labour, that in turn enabled the creation of a distinct strata of professions with the vocational purpose of architecting 'new' worlds and furnishing them with new technologies. Such professions housed experts in distinct domains—economics, law, politics, culture, art, health, scholarship and so on—that were differentiated and kept separate in racialised worlds engendered by imperialism. Experts in each domain enjoy 'the right to shape societies' according to their vision or will, to study them and craft visionary templates in order to provide solutions to problems generated by other experts.

Photography was shaped into such a model, with its own strata of experts. This class of expert professionals denied their implication in the constitution and perpetuation of the imperial regime and quickly convinced themselves that they weren't exercising imperial rights but rather documenting and reporting the wrongs of the regime, thereby acting for the common good. This is epitomised in the notion of the 'concerned photographer', which is also the title of an influential exhibition, one among others in which the figure of the photographer is construed as a hero.

However, in exchange for some of its exclusive rights, not necessarily those that were financially rewarding, photographers have been mobilised to represent those imperial rights as if they were disconnected from the regime of violence. It's out of this structural denial that the tradition of engaged photography could invent the protocol of the documentary as a means of accounting for objects that were violently fabricated by imperial actors, a mode of being morally concerned among one's peers.

Thus, for example, Magnum/ICP photographers such as David Seymour or Robert Capa could depict the plunder of Palestine as the creation of a new state or world in which Jewish sovereignty could triumph, conflating the plight of the Palestinians with the difficulties encountered by the migrant Jews, who at that point were made guardians of the new sovereignty. Misled by the documentary protocols that they were using, and thus becoming implicated in what was misleading about them, acting as if lived worlds are reducible to their real estate components and nation-building campaigns, these photographers dismiss the plight of the indigenous population as well as the destruction of the common. Differences between situations were blurred in such a way that perpetrators could be depicted as victims or law enforcers even though they were responsible for the destruction of the existing world and the plight of others.

These three 1956 photos taken by Burt Glinn in the same place—a destroyed Palestine, or the newly declared State of Israel—and shown last year in Paris were displayed only with their minimalist original caption: 'Palestinian Prisoners'. Both the display and the captions take the imperial narrative for granted and assume that there's no harm in reiterating it nor any need to question the authority of those who acquired their imperial rights and sovereignty against the Palestinians, whom they expelled from their homes. These Palestinians are not 'prisoners'. In the photos taken in 1956 in Gaza, they are rather brutalised, either as they attempt to return to their homes or when the Israeli occupying forces invade their homes. Either way, they were expelled from their homeland, Palestine, six years earlier, and when they insisted on their right to return to their homes, they were forced to embody imperial categories such as 'refugee' or 'infiltrator', which endow modern citizenship with a set of imperial rights to keep them in this role. They were made into the unacknowledged participants in such photographs: those whose spaces have been invaded through the exercise of imperial rights so that their images can continue to circulate, tagged with imperial categories that photographers often use as if they were spokespersons of imperial regimes. Contrary to certain rights that people enjoy within their communities, imperial rights don't emanate from the community in which people are members, on behalf of their membership, or for the sake of a shared world. On the contrary, such rights are derived from the invasion of others' communities and the destruction of the worlds in which those others enjoy certain rights. Not surprisingly, these imperially unrecognised subjects reject the meaning of photographs as private property subject to copyright.

Thus, on the website Palestine Remembered, for example, Palestinians insist on the rights they have to these photographs, on their being part of the common, and by using them without permission, they challenge the idea of photographs as objects reducible to private property and owned exclusively. The photographer isn't the one who expelled them, but as long as his permission to photograph is conditioned by those who did expel them and by the regime they established, his right is not universal but imperial.

1
Still Searching is a separate blog of Fotomuseum Winterthur, 'offering an intellectually challenging and interactive discussion on all aspects of the photographic.' This essay was originally published as 'Unlearning Expertise Knowledge and Unsettling Expertise Positions' (9 September 2018), which was the third blog within a five piece series under the heading of *Unlearning Decisive Moments of Photography*.https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/155301_unlearning_expertise_knowledge_and_unsettling_expertise_positions

2
Among these rights Azoulay specifies 'the right to destroy existing worlds, the right to manufacture a new world in their place, the rights over others whose worlds are destroyed together with the rights they enjoyed in their communities and the right to declare what is new and consequently what is obsolete.'

3
The 'few' can stand for the explorers of new worlds, the settlers, colonial metropoles, officials and representatives of imperial powers, and in some cases even, as becomes clear in this essay, the so-called 'concerned photographers'.

4
As such, explorers like Amerigo Vespucci for instance, proclaimed and enacted certain 'imperial rights' in early letters written at the turn of the fifteenth century.

5
Azoulay's critical assumption, stated in the original essay, is 'that the ubiquity of destruction both precedes and enables the ubiquity of photographs. The latter is derivative of the former and should be read in connection with it.

6
See her fourth blog/essay for this.

7
In the introduction of her first essay, Azoulay defines this moment of the 'new': 'The attachment of the meaning "new" to whatever imperialism imposes is constitutive of imperial violence: it turns opposition to its actions, inventions, and the distribution of rights into a conservative, primitive, or hopeless "race against time"—i.e., progress—rather than as a race against imperialism. The murder of five thousand Egyptians who struggled against Napoleon's invasion of their sacred places and the looting of old treasures, which were to be "salvaged" and displayed in Napoleon's new museum in Paris, is just one example of this. In the imperial histories of new technologies of visualization, both the resistance and the murder of these people are nonexistent, while the depictions of Egypt's looted treasures, which were rendered in almost photographic detail, establish a benchmark, indicating what photography came to improve.'

Relations and Representations of Artistic 'Impact' in Rio's Favelas

Simone Kalkman

From Gordon Parks to JR, and from Hélio Oiticica to Vik Muniz, a large number of Brazilian and international artists have worked in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro over in recent decades. Partly because of this, Brazilian favelas—low-income neighbourhoods that are mostly built informally—are now well-known across the world. The irregular, ad-hoc architecture of favelas, their supposed community life and the scenic hillside location of some in Rio have all contributed to what might be called a global favela 'aesthetics' or 'imagery' found in cinema, design, advertising, photography and visual art. However, favelas are primarily a manifestation of the deep-seated socioeconomic inequality that forms the city of Rio, the country of Brazil and, indeed, the rest of the world. There is a strong stigma attached to living in a favela, and diverse forms of urban violence are recurring problems in many neighbourhoods.

Navigating this complex landscape, artists and photographers often try to have some form of social 'impact' with their work in or about favelas. Fighting stereotypes and creating opportunities for residents are the oft-heard goals. In this essay, I take a closer look at how the social impact of artistic projects is commonly imagined by local and foreign arts professionals, trying to answer the question of what artistic projects can actually hope to do in and for Rio de Janeiro's favelas.

Naturally, Brazil isn't the only location in which artists and photographers have tried to bring about social change through their work. In fact, this is now a common motive across the world. Very often, it's linked to practices in the so-called marginalised or disadvantaged areas to which the artist may or may not have a personal connection. Under the aegis of terms like 'socially engaged' or 'participatory art', many artists conduct projects with a social component, working with a marginalised group of people to produce some form of artistic output. After this, the documentation of such projects tends to be displayed in exhibitions, documentary films or books. These documentations often tell a story of transformation in which the artistic intervention increases or reveals the beauty and potential of a previously neglected area. The Oscar-nominated documentary *Waste Land*, showing Vik Muniz's work in Jardim Gramacho, a Rio landfill and adjacent favela, is a well-known example. In my view, however, such narratives often do more harm than good. Poverty and marginalisation become a spectacle consumed by privileged audiences of the arts as feel-good narratives, while this particular conceptualisation of artistic impact also—and paradoxically— both *exaggerates* and *downplays* the struggles faced by Rio de Janeiro's favelas.

On the one hand, poverty, injustice and violence are central to these narratives of transformation. For example, a commonly heard goal for artistic projects is to 'keep youngsters out of the drug traffic' by enhancing their self-esteem and exposing them to different opportunities. Nevertheless, research has shown that less than one percent of favela residents are actively involved in the drug trade, which means the vast majority of residents are engaged in 'honest' work or study. To frame an artistic project in this manner presents favela residents as (potential) criminals, which affirms societal stereotypes that affect poor, Black men in particular. Of course, this isn't to say that drug-related violence is not an issue in favelas; rather, it's to question how artistic projects act in relation to this phenomenon. More generally, the oft-trumpeted goal of 'bringing art to favelas', as something previously unknown or as unlocking some hidden potential, seems to assume that favelas are spaces in which valuable cultural expressions are absent. This denies the wide range of local, cultural projects and artists that exist in favelas, which often serve as crucial mediators for outsider artists (e.g., by providing a space to work, reaching local participants or through translation).

On the other hand, the transformative narrative of artistic impact tends to *overstate* what art can do. Marginalisation, poverty and urban violence are deep-seated and widespread societal problems, the causes of which range from racism to low-quality public education and from widespread police violence to global capitalism. The scale of these phenomena necessarily implies that we need to be critical and modest about what art projects can achieve. Returning to the example of criminality and drug trafficking, for example, we see that the involvement in criminal activities is motivated by a complex pushing and pulling of social and financial factors that may change over time. This suggests that the idea that simply participating in an artistic project—particularly an unpaid and short-term one—can 'get youngsters out' or prevent them from entering the drug trade is somewhat simplistic. Finally, we must keep in mind that despite noble motives, the desire to work in Rio's favelas is often connected to their current worldwide fame and aesthetic validation.

Despite these critiques, my goal isn't to dismiss art as inconsequential. Rather, I hope to redefine what we understand by impact in a more nuanced and productive manner, because how we imagine and define this term determines how projects are put into practice. To do so, two starting points are crucial. First, building on the above, it's necessary to acknowledge that social, economic and spatial inequality are extremely complex phenomena to which a variety of historical and contemporary factors contribute. Second, we must foreground the inherent inequalities of the so-called 'art world' itself—i.e., art's production and display—on both a local and global scale. In Rio, museums and exhibitions continue to be—with few notable exceptions—located primarily outside of favelas, which has important implications for the kinds of audiences they target. The very idea of challenging favela stereotypes implies an audience that does not know the reality of favelas and needs its prejudiced views changed. Similarly, the identity of artists born and raised in favelas often hinges on this background, reducing them to supposedly authentic spokespersons qualified only to talk about their local reality.

In my view, rather than the immediate local impact of a specific project, more attention should be paid to how art can work towards changing structural inequalities on different scales. In conversations with artists and photographers from Rio's favelas, three points surfaced as being particularly important in this respect. The first is the necessity of a long(er)-term perspective, because to be effective, continuity is key. Foreign artists, in particular, tend to conduct temporary projects in favelas, staying only for a few months, which raises the question of what happens after the artist leaves. Considering time constraints, it might be more productive for an artist to contribute to or support an already-existing project or organisation than to start a new initiative. Not only would this publicly acknowledge the local structures and facilities already in place—challenging the idea of favelas as derelict places without social or cultural organisation—it would also contribute to the long-term presence of such local initiatives, which are hard to sustain without continuously renewed support and resources.

Second, disrupting the dominant and unequal formats of art production and display needs to be a primary and continuous goal, which includes asking critical questions about who the art audience is and what role it plays. We often see an implicit distinction between 'favela participants' who act only in the first stage of the project and a secondary 'global art public' that observes the overall project . No matter how nuanced and impactful a project may be, this ultimately results in the consumption of images of poverty by a more privileged, outside audience. A notable exhibition that disrupts this pattern is *Travessias*, organised regularly since 2011 in Rio de Janeiro's Maré favela complex. Here, the organisers actively aim to attract both local and outside visitors to the exhibition as well as the participatory workshops organised in relation to it. In other words, rather than changing the images/artworks shown, they hope to change the habits through which the images are circulated.

Finally, considering the scale and complexity of socioeconomic inequality, as well as the multitude of favela images that circulate the world, what one project can do is necessarily limited. For this reason, I argue for changing the focus from *individual* to *collective* impact. Rather than one, sweeping transformation, it's the continued, collective presence of a multitude of diverse cultural projects in different favela neighbourhoods that can ameliorate lived experiences and work towards challenging societal stigma. As such, instead of asking how well one photograph represents the 'reality' of Rio's favelas, it might be more relevant to investigate how that image works with or against the plethora of favela representations already out there, while also keeping in mind its commercial potential. Moreover, while one project might be helpful to one individual or a small group of participants, we must keep in mind the hundreds of thousands of favela residents who aren't participating in the project, not to set unrealistic expectations, but rather to be honest and upfront about what one project can and cannot do.

Unfortunately, such an approach doesn't sit well with the art world's validation of newness, originality and individual genius, as well as the narratives of transformation outlined above. That being said, many artists in Rio are doing valuable work that contributes to the kind of impact outlined herein. A good example is Ratão Diniz, a photographer from Rio de Janeiro's Maré favela complex. His work focuses on the depiction and representation of Rio de Janeiro's favelas and also on graffiti, popular culture and the Brazilian countryside. His photographs have been shown in exhibitions within and outside favelas; they've also been published in a monograph and appeared in print and online newspapers. He shares his work on more accessible digital platforms, like Flickr and Instagram, and he participates in a number of photography collectives (e.g., Imagens do Povo, Favela em Foco).

Over the years, Diniz has created a diverse archive of images showing favelas and their inhabitants that foregrounds the highly different experiences that form part of living in these spaces. Depicting daily life, acts of protest and cultural festivities, his work reveals the favela as a place inhabited by regular people who suffer many injustices (e.g., police violence, forced home evictions) but that also work, play and enjoy life. Put differently, there is no such thing as *the* quintessential favela, and it should not be represented as such. Again, my point here isn't that local photographers automatically provide a more 'real' or 'authentic' depiction, and it's important to repeat here that Diniz's oeuvre also comprises other topics. Nevertheless, living in closer proximity often makes a long-term and reciprocal engagement easier, and the very presence of a successful artist *from* Rio de Janeiro's periphery is meaningful both within and outside of Rio's favelas because it challenges the dominant relations of artistic production and display mentioned above.

Finally, Diniz engages in a variety of social and educational activities around his photographic work, for example giving lectures and courses, participating in debates at photography festivals and art events and giving interviews in Brazil and abroad. Naturally, many contemporary artists participate in such events, but I argue in favour of seeing these as primary and central parts of the 'impact' of his work, rather than as secondary promotion or explanation. To focus on these activities foregrounds artistic work *and* favela representation as a process of exchange that takes place in different locations in Rio de Janeiro and worldwide, which to most artists from favelas I spoke with is more important than the actual artworks produced. Again, this is largely about recognising the need to change the unequal structures of this circuit of knowledge and image production, and Diniz is but one artist whose work is gradually transforming this field. In other words, rather than in providing additional, new or 'more accurate' images of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, true impact lies in changing the habits and structures through which we see, frame and make sense of these depictions.

Shine a Light in Dark Places

Donald Weber

With light, we illuminate and dispel. Rebecca Solnit wrote that invisibility is a type of shield, while democracy is founded on visibility. In polite concision, this is just what a photographer or journalist does: claim visibility, counter hidden motives, yank corruption front and centre and confront power. In other words, this light is a form of democracy in action—and a fundamental pillar of journalistic integrity.

And yet, how is this light shaped? What forces enable us to confront power? As society changes, so too do the political and social infrastructures that create the space in which we photograph. We need to ask what it means to 'do' photography? How can understanding political, economic and cultural interests play a role in sculpting not only a photographic process but also the environment in which we find ourselves working?

We are very good at positioning the photographic discipline within issues of representation, but we must also look into the conditions of photography's production and begin to see what's inscribed in the image. Today's condition is a deep-seated confluence of corporate, military and bureaucratic mechanisms, all determining our daily existence and influencing our choices. This is what visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff calls the 'Anthropocene-aesthetic-capitalist complex of modern visuality',[8] and it's deeply embedded both in how we produce images and within the images themselves.

Exploiting photography

As a subset of mass communication, photography is a piece of what the Egyptian-French Marxist economist Samir Amin called the five monopolistic elements of capitalism, alongside technology, finance, resource exploitation and weapons of mass destruction. It's paramount that we, as photographers, begin to understand and investigate the conditions of politics and economics within which we practice.[9] No longer can we separate the political and the representational, nor can we turn a blind eye to other social, cultural and economic influences. Corporate enterprise increasingly sees information as the principal vector for the production of wealth, and capitalism bases its future largely on the commodification of this information. Photography, a product of the mental labour that generates information, is the perfect means of extraction.

This form of wealth-building is called 'cognitive capitalism',[10] and it's embodied in a relatively small set of knowledge workers on the one hand, and, on the other, in the commodification of all culture, thought and media through the ever-quickening consolidation of corporate enterprise and Silicon Valley whiz-bang geniuses.

Photography matured simultaneously with the advent of corporate capitalism and mass media enterprise. Capitalism functions as an exclusionary process, a relentless sorting mechanism creating institutions to serve and legitimise a strict hierarchy of power relations, and it ultimately seeks to unify the globe in a single system of commodity production and exchange. Capitalism has always consumed photography and exploited it as a means of knowledge production and value creation—from mass media to the commercial gallery to the museum.

The new currency today isn't a reasonable expectation of remuneration but rather knowledge-based labour that demands compensation by exposure or virtual recognition.[11] Increasingly, the greatest need for any contemporary photographer situated in such a cultural environment is that of incessant self-promotion. This, in turn, forces the practitioner of today to manage the aura of the personal 'brand' as a product line, converting the intellectual and creative practice of photography into a tradable asset for the institutional exploitation of profit.

This is clearly reflected in the vast nexus of global photography festivals that promote auteurism as well as in the era of self-publishing enabled by the Internet and educational institutions flourishing with assorted programs and workshops. These are generally altruistic endeavours, marketed to the photographer as a way of building exposure and recognition with the aim of helping to secure a career in a precarious field. And yet, these endeavours do nothing but create a privileged commodity, underwritten by the forces of capitalism and situated in the dominant cultural and economic centres of the globe, such as London, New York and Paris.

Paris Photo is a key event that primarily speaks to capital and exerts great influence. Situated under the glass canopy of the Grand Palais, it's the world's largest and most exclusive photography-dedicated fair. Paris Photo and similar events emanate from and perpetuate power, giving voice to institutional authority and reinforcing a system of oppression and precarity rather than promoting independence. These are places of power, where photographers, in their perfectly understandable desire for stability, ironically strive to reposition themselves as artists, trading the traditional, measured labour of journalism for the intangible.

For philosophers Yann Moulier Boutang and Maurizio Lazzarato, there's been a transformation of capitalism regarding creative work. 'The essential point is no longer the expenditure of human labor-power, but that of invention power,' Boutang wrote. To me, this simply sounds like a new manner of exploitation—instead of the photographer being paid by the client for assigned work, as it once was, today the photographer is asked to do all manner of other things in exchange for exposure, without knowing if any of it will actually pay off.

All of this leads to the separation of photography from the social and civic conditions of its making and toward the necessities of commerce. This erosion of social practice in favour of commodification can be seen most clearly in documentary practice in which the co-opting of social value for commercial gain began decades ago. Capitalism has helped transform images

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intended to be common artefacts into privileged objects. This change of focus to the status of images as objects of a higher calling thus legitimises the documentary photographer as the genius or auteur, the creator of a valuable commodity and thus a person who's risen to a new position of privilege.

Reputation economy

But when a photojournalist is no longer a medium of mass communication and has instead become a privileged commodity, the act of the photographer changes as well, transitioning to working in service of capitalistic forces and no longer speaking truth to power. As photojournalism bends to the pressures of capitalism, a predictable cult of authorship has taken hold. In order to survive—to thrive—it's become necessary to place this authorship above the nearly mundane usage in which documentary and journalism is usually placed, driving a mannerist, aesthetic and subjective response.

What gets created, then, is a professionalising influence on photography through the creation of a 'reputation economy', subservient to the ever-expanding industry of branding, self-promotion and careerism. The photographer is now professionalised by market conditions and colonised by finance such that inclusion becomes the prized goal in one's work. Thus, the photographer becomes professional. Concerned with the ways of the market as dictated from on high within corporate hierarchies, reconfirming and legitimising existing power relations, the professional photographer resides in the status quo, where labour is cheaply extracted in exchange for a line on a CV or a humbled mention on social media.

To pick up on Solnit's comment about democracy as a form of visibility,[12] this encroaching professionalisation ironically shuts out others, including other artistic disciplines, minorities, women and gender identities, from opportunities photography should offer, sorting and classifying winners and losers through exclusion and selectivity.

But all is not lost. We must start by asking simple questions. Questions enable us to challenge the assumptions of photography as a form of cultural production and see it entangled within complex notions of a living social context, constantly on the move, fluid as an organism. This allows us to get at the deeper crises of the social, political and economic infrastructures that preconfigure the conditions of producing work, making it possible to reposition photography and reclaim visibility as a means to confront power.

One of the simple questions we should all be asking is: how are our lives invented for us by those in power? Perhaps a response might begin with the command from German philosopher Hannah Arendt: to 'think what we are doing'.[13] What she means is that being able to think freely leads to action. What we do as photographers is profoundly political, and we must engage in messy debate as equals—among our peers first, and then, if need be, with powerful institutions—to begin reconciling twenty-first century image-making as a complete process of knowledge, practice, aesthetics and politics contained—embedded—within the act of image-making itself. This allows us to demand a perspective of the power relationships that remain hidden behind the image, pointing out the morally indefensible, politically incoherent and sustainably destructive.

We become amateur

We must become intruders into the professional field so as to dispel corporate, political and moral entanglements. Photographers can dismantle from the inside and out to act as Edward Snowden-like creatures, disabling and confronting, subverting and disrupting. We do not shun awkwardness and unconventionality, anathema in the professional world. We embrace what we don't know, allowing ourselves to take risks, make mistakes and engage with the pleasure of creation (there's nothing to lose). In effect, we behave as the scorn of the professional—we become amateur. Writer Andy Merrifield notes that 'the politics of amateurism is about dismantling our giant professional machine, stripping it of its legitimacy, of its functioning credibility.'[14]

By embracing the practice of the amateur, we situate ourselves as autonomous beings, freely capable of building relationships outside the vectors of power and capital. Our amateurism realigns pleasure and worth, and it acts as a conduit between realms of experience usually sequestered in tight control behind the walls and barriers of gatekeepers and institutions. American artist and writer Claire Pentecost calls this the 'public amateur'[15], someone who's able to acquire knowledge in a non-institutionally sanctioned way, living and working outside the dictated norms and freely exposed to scrutiny.

Let's not confuse the 'amateur' with someone who's a dilettante, unprofessional. No, an amateur is someone who finds joy—love—in what they do. Perhaps the best way to condition yourself as an amateur is to look at the word's etymology. '*Amator*' is Latin for lover. Don't you want to do something you love, something that fulfils you, that provides meaning? To me, the world of possibility is open. I can drift across disciplines and collaborate with others; I can engage with institutions and challenge their power; the freedom to work outside the constricted norms provides sudden portals for a future I could never imagine. Do what you love. Others will want to participate, allowing opportunities to reengage and reposition a field that's more closely aligned to the needs of community. This will send the powers that be into a convulsion as the formations of a future practice reform in a state of inclusion, diversity and equality.

In other words, become educated. Empower yourself—and others—to make informed political decisions. Aim to engage with 'prizes' that seek social justice and sustainability as adequate

12
Paglen, T., and Solnit, R. 2010. *Invisible covert operations and classified landscapes*. New York: Aperture.
13
To Think What We are Doing | New Compass. Accessed September 11, 2019. http://new-compass.net/articles/think-what-we-are-doing.
14
Merrifield, Andy. *The Amateur: the Pleasures of Doing What You Love*. London: Verso, 2018.
15
'Oh! the Public Amateur Is Not Afraid to Let on That She Just Figured It out'. *The Public Amateur*, May 4, 2008. https://publicamateur.wordpress.com/about/.

reflections of democratic society. Generously enter into other discourses and disciplines to allow an informed process for yourself while opening up the conditions of making. Do not step back from the crises of the moment; rather, examine the deeper-seated issues of capitalism, consumer society and political engagement. If you're to challenge the assumptions of the system, then you cannot accept its creatures. This means the prizes, awards, reviews and other byproducts of the professional system must be pushed back into a public discourse so we know what the heck is going on and can all participate. We can pursue alternative courses and resources that support independent and competing infrastructures; many such people and places exist in the photographic and communication world today.

This is about challenging the status quo from within to effectively operate independently and be free to challenge and subvert, demystify and empower, and ultimately unite the everyday practices of consumers, producers and citizens.

It's about opening up, rather than being buried under common assumptions.

So You Want to Change the World

Lewis Bush

Impact. This is what most people working in what can be called photojournalism[16] want to have, however reticently they might admit it. They confess this desire guardedly because, like adults admitting they still believe in magic, the suggestion that photography can change the world is regarded as naïve, an irrational belief that flies in the face of logic and history.

This widely held cynicism isn't unjustified. We live in a time more comprehensively imaged than at any other in history, and it becomes more so every day. A panoply of wrongs and horrors is accessible to almost anyone, at any time, through a few taps and swipes of a smartphone screen. Humankind's inhumanity has never been more fully portrayed, but despite this visibility, our world seems to be getting worse. It hasn't been demonstrated that photography has slowed, much less halted, the global rise of authoritarianism, a resurgent far right, ever-deepening inequality or the destruction of the environment.

In the face of this, why do so many of us still cling to the idea that making photographs of problems can help to fix them? Maybe it's partly because, as photographers, we've been reared on tales of our forebearers who seemed to do exactly this: the selfless crusaders recounted in the lore who were able to move mountains with their images. Yet we, their descendants, seem unable to do the same, despite having many advantages these forebearers lacked, from immense advances in photographic technology to the far more numerous platforms available for disseminating our images.

So why does photography no longer seem to work the way we've been taught it used to? Maybe part of the challenge in answering this is that whether they position themselves as critics or advocates of the idea, relatively few photographers can explain how photography was ever supposed to achieve the change we spend so much time debating. Photographs are just patterns of light and dark scattered across a surface. Photography has no mobility, no voice and no agency of its own. In and of itself, it isn't able to achieve a thing, and so in that sense, at least, the idea that photography can change the world is indeed naive. The question to ask is what other forces and institutions did photography once work in concert with in order to achieve its remarkable, world-making acts, and what happened to those relationships that brought about their end? To answer that, we need to go back to where the idea of photographic journalism as a force for change first arose.

Imagining change

Photojournalism encompasses two practices with much in common but significant differences, and for these reasons they deserve to be discussed at least briefly on their own terms. The emergence of the first, documentary photography, is hard to date, but something that resembles its characteristics predates John Grierson's 1925 coining of the term by roughly thirty years.[17] At least in its early stages, what we might now recognise as documentary was typified by its self-initiated nature, the lengthy period of engagement with its subject matter and its diverse means of distribution. Early practitioners often relied on strategies like speaking tours, magic lantern shows, books and public displays we might now recognise as exhibitions, each form combining multiple images to build a sustained argument. Jacob Riis's work on New York slums is a good example of many of these aspects.[18]

By contrast, photojournalism would seem by name and nature to demand the use of the printed page as its medium of distribution. If we take this as a definition, then its origins date back to around 1872, when the halftone process first made it feasible for newspapers to be illustrated with photographs on a large scale. Photojournalism was to a significant degree driven by external, impersonal imperatives, motivated by complex interactions with the news agenda and economic and political concerns; these factors left fewer opportunities for the sort of long-term engagement that characterised documentary. Perhaps consequently, photojournalism also often dealt with things more singularly, and in its relationship with text, it often acted as an accompaniment to words rather than their equal.[19] There are of course exceptions to these definitions, as there are to any that encompass such huge fields; for example, several historically significant documentary projects, including Lewis Hine's work on child labour, were not self-initiated.[20] More important is what unified these two practices: their shared use of photography as a form of didactic communication, which could serve to inform and edify audiences.

So how were these related practices ever imagined as a force of change? The answer lies in the time period from which both fields began to emerge, an era when democracy was on the march and a growing number of people were being enfranchised. Photojournalism worked in concert with expanding democracies by communicating information to audiences, which aided in the creation of an informed citizenry, an essential part of a healthy democracy.[21] Only a citizenry equipped with accurate and impartial information about the essential issues of the day could properly debate them and reach rational conclusions in the free rhetorical space of what Jurgen Habermas called 'the public sphere'.[22] These conclusions could then be used to make decisions as part of democratic institutions and practices, most obviously at the ballot box. Politicians would in turn take note and, once elected, would enact the will of the people, or else risk their wrath at the next poll.

While seldom explicitly explained to us as students or trainees, the assumptions inherent in this model about the functioning of journalism and democracy are programmed into photojournalists at an early stage. The consequence of that programming is that we take this model to be incontrovertible and unchallengeable. We never stop to ask if it makes sense because it is largely invisible to us, and we regard what are actually

16
'Photojournalism' is here used as a shorthand to encompass both photojournalism and documentary photography for reasons explained later in the text.

17
Grierson, John. 1966. *Grierson on Documentary*. California: University of California Press.

18
Riis, Jacob. 1890. *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York*.

19
Bush, Lewis. 'Photojournalism's First Century'. *Witness*, 24 January 2019. https://witness.worldpressphoto.org/photojournalisms-first-century-79645873e363

20
Sampsell-Willmann, Kate. 2009. *Lewis Hine as Social Critic*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

21
Sampson, Anthony. 1993. *The Essential Anatomy of Britain: Democracy in Crisis*, San Diego, Harcourt Publishers Ltd College Publishers

22
Habermas, Jurgen. 1962. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, The MIT Press

'Men Dancing in a Coffee House', an illustration from Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (London, 1793), Vol. 1

choices as the exact opposite: we see them as the only sensible way of doing things. An obvious example of this is the way this model influences the idea that a successful photograph reaches millions of people, while one which reaches a handful is a failure, irrespective of who those handful are.

Old assumptions

Now, we face a situation in which photojournalism that reaches millions seems to have little effect, and this is a model we need to urgently scrutinise. We need to revisit its assumptions about the way journalism, audiences and democracy all function, assumptions formed in an age before digital technologies. If these assumptions prove outdated or false, then in turn the choices we make based on them may also be wrong. For reasons of brevity, I'll draw attention to just three major assumptions, but there are many others worth probing.

A first, striking assumption, and one we can't seem to avoid, is the claim that photographs have any influence on people at all. We can argue this to be the case at least in so far as photographs are carriers of information and that we may sometimes use that information to make conscious choices. For example, many people demonstrably changed the language they use regarding the mass movement of people in the wake of Alan Kurdi's death, and politicians appeared to at least briefly echo these sentiments.[23] Also important to note is that photographs change us in ways we are sometimes not even aware of. Studies have shown changes ranging from the distortion of our memories[24] to more profound changes in brain chemistry caused by regular exposure to certain types of photographs.[25]

Even if we accept that photography has the power to consciously or unconsciously influence us—in other words, to change us on an individual level—we still need to accept certain caveats. One is that this power is certainly challenged by issues that were less prevalent in photojournalism's early days. These include the massive increase in the quantity of available photography as well as the widespread loss of faith in the veracity of images and in the practice of journalism more broadly.[26] It is also important to note that photographs can be forces of bad change just as readily as they can good. The photojournalist Gordon Parks, noting his success in changing lives with his photographs, said that, 'in hindsight, I sometimes wonder if it might not have been wiser to have left those lives untouched'.[27]

A second significant assumption in this model is the way it sees the citizenry engaging with the information derived from photojournalism. The arrival of the digital public sphere has upended much of what was understood about its analogue predecessor. The notion of a citizenry meeting in public spaces to debate the news now seems remarkably quaint, replaced as it has been by the sympathetic echo chambers and vitriolic silos of social media. We are now far more likely to debate virtually; we are algorithmically forced together with ideological compatriots from whom we hear little dissent and who will often reinforce rather than challenge our interpretations of the information journalism provides.[28] The original techno-optimism about the global village of the Internet has given rise instead to highly insular and adversarial tribes that challenge democracy rather than empower it.

Even for those intent on serious debates of the news, discourse is made challenging by the digital fragmentation of the media environment, a landscape where news, opinion and entertainment are increasingly indistinguishable. When rigorously researched news mixes readily with churnalism[29], fake news and conspiracy theories, citizen discourse and debate of the form previously understood become almost impossible. The recent success of political micro-targeting of social media suggests a future in which the news media might take up a similar tactic that could see each citizen experiencing a news cycle algorithmically tailored to their profile, eroding still further that notion of common references critical to democratic debate.[30]

A third and final assumption, then, is that, as an electorate, we can reach some consensus and turn to the institutions of democracy to address the issues that concern us. As already noted, democracy emerged in lockstep with journalism; the golden age of journalism occurred at a time of ever widening enfranchisement, and it should be little surprise that a decline in one is mirrored in the other. Today, democracy looks distinctly unsteady, itself undermined by digital technologies that have evolved far more quickly than democracy itself. This has combined, perhaps again not coincidently, with the polarisation of the electorate in many countries, a growing decline in confidence that democracy works and politicians serve our interest and the apparently irresistible global rise of plutocrats, kleptocrats and autocrats.[31]

Can democracy still address the problems that the electorate identifies as pressing? This is a question demanding far greater discussion than this text permits, and in any case, it's probably too soon to tell. But if in the coming years we reach the unhappy conclusion that it increasingly can't, then this may demand further reconsideration of the model most photojournalists subscribe to. In an era of authoritarian demagogues, themselves subject to the often demagogic influence of contemporary media, we may have to reassess the core journalistic tenet that producing work that reaches millions of people is the way to create change. It's a dark admission, but maybe we've entered a stage in which many seemingly robust democracies are now subject to only a handful of people, or perhaps even just one person, wielding the power to make the changes that we want to see.

This question, like so many, comes down to a matter of whether we believe means or ends are most important. For too long, photojournalists have relied on formulas of action derived from a very old model of how photojournalism creates

23
Vis, Farida, Faulkner, Simon, D'Orazio, Francesco, and Proitz, Lin. 2005. 'The Iconic Image on Social Media'. In *Picturing the Social: Transforming Our Understanding of Images in Social Media and Big Data Research*. http://visualsocialmedialab.org/projects/the-iconic-image-on-social-media

24
Sacchi, D. L. M., Agnoli, F., and Loftus, E. F. 2007. 'Changing history: Doctored photographs affect memory for past public events'. *Applied Cognitive Psychology 21* no.8: 1005-1022.

25
Huesmann, L. Rowell. 2010. 'Psychological Processes Promoting the Relation Between Exposure to Media Violence and Aggressive Behavior by the Viewer'. *Journal of Social Issues 42*: 125–39.

26
Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report 2019. https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-03/2019_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=global_report&utm_campaign=downloads

27
Parks, Gordon. 1978. *Flavio*. New York, Norton

28
Barberá, Pablo, Jost, John T, Nagler, Jonathan, Tucker, Joshua A. Bonneau, Richard, 2015. 'Tweeting from left to right: Is online political communication more than an echo chamber?' *Psychological Science* 26, no.10: 1531–1542

29
A British media neologism coined by Waseem Zakir and used to describe journalism as largely consisting of repackaging press releases, entertainment and other material into news articles with minimal fact checking.

30
Bush, Lewis. 'The Algorithmic Photojournalist'. *Witness,* 20 January 2017. https://witness.worldpressphoto.org/the-algorithmic-photojournalist-4f217d727101

31
https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/31/the-countries-where-people-are-most-dissatisfied-with-how-democracy-is-working/

'Discussing the War in a Paris Café', The Illustrated London News, 17 September 1870

change. We've too often regarded the means as sacrosanct, with the result that the ultimate ends we want to achieve go unfulfilled. W. Eugene Smith, one of the illuminating lights of photojournalism and another figure whose photographs can demonstrably be shown to have created change, once famously responded to criticism of his use of manipulation by pointing out that he did not create the rules of photojournalism and was under no obligation to follow them.[32] In these desperate times, I think we need to recognise that abiding by inherited dogmas about the function of photojournalism does more to betray our forebearers than honour them. If we want to create the sort of change that the documentary photographers and photojournalists of the past achieved, then perhaps we need to stop emulating them.

32
Smith, Eugene W. 'I Didn't Write the Rules, Why Should I Follow Them?' *Lens* (blog), 3 January 2013. https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/03/w-eugene-smith-i-didnt-write-the-rules-why-should-i-follow-them/

The Reliable Image: Impact and Contemporary Documentary Photography

Wilco Versteeg

It started with a shoe. In June 2017, Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Fund uploaded a long video outlining the supposed corruption of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to their website and YouTube[33] (figures 1 and 2). The probe of the Anti-Corruption Fund originated in the release by hackers of the underwhelming contents of Medvedev's mobile telephone. No incriminating material was found; instead, the phone contained a plethora of mundane images showing the politician going about his daily routine. An informal photo of the PM sporting a colourful shirt, a large watch and fancy trainers, however, caught the attention of Navalny's team as a possible inroad to a larger investigation. The visual detectives simply asked which credit card was used to buy these items. This unremarkable image served as the starting point for research that uncovered a large and widespread network of illegal transactions, false identities, questionable real-estate holdings and financial cover-ups that incriminated many high-ranking officials and businessmen. Navalny's resulting video helped spark anti-Medvedev protests that caught Russia's ruling classes off guard. Never before has such an unassuming image had such a large impact: it doesn't pretend to be an aesthetic representation of an exceptional situation, and it doesn't maintain a privileged relationship to truth, like previous forms of documentary photography. Medvedev's holiday snap illustrates a new paradigm in documentary photography in which aesthetics, truth and artistry are replaced by reliability.

Figure 1
Screenshot from 'Don't' Call him "Dimon"'

Figure 2
Screenshot from 'Don't Call him "Dimon"'. The text read 'How Medvedev's trainers prove to be his downfall'.

Traditional documentary photography is undeniably in crisis. The most important documentary images of the twenty-first century have not been made by documentary photographers per se. Visuals of important events are provided by civilians who happen to pass by; victims of human rights abuses are increasingly able to document their own plights; and activist groups have branched out into documentation through photographic imagery to make their cases in courts and public forums. Meanwhile, traditional documentary photography seems to have found a safe harbour in cultural institutions, gallery spaces or in the service of NGOs, but in doing so it has retreated from the public forums in which it most logically serves its informative societal function. This retreat is exemplified by commemorative exhibitions and 'the photobook' as the preferred locus of state-of-the-art discussions on what heretofore used to be a public, diverse documentary culture.[34] This self-sequestration might be the logical result of a medium that has struggled to remain relevant in our political culture and might slip further into artistic niches if it continues to turn a blind eye to the documentary demands of our sceptical, digitising epoch.[35]

What are these demands, and how can documentary photography, in all its diversity, continue to impact society? This article proposes a paradigm that safeguards documentary photography from the trappings of scepticism, irrelevance and political obscurity by seeking to cut it loose from the millstone that has been hanging from its neck for almost a century: the insistence on its privileged relationship with the truth and, having been discouraged by relativistic theories, with its equally deceptive claim of raising awareness as the *nec plus ultra* of a medium that can be much more. By freeing documentary photography from the demand to tell the truth, we do more justice to the early history of the medium—in which photography was instrumental in science and other pursuits of knowledge—and create a future in which it can play a role of political importance. To do this, we might have to accept photography's subordinate place in larger constructions of evidence. This article is a call to rethink the medium through the concept of reliability. In our sceptical day and age, claims to the truth are outdated; the reliability of an image within a clearly defined context is more important. In fact, these practices have deep roots in the history of the medium: late nineteenth and early twentieth century science and police photography never considered the medium the alpha and omega but always as a tool to achieve clearly defined goals. While these histories are often overlooked or considered as mere stepping stones in the medium's progress to artistic, self-referential maturity, they show an awareness of the limits of the medium and use these limits to construct reliable narratives based on facts instead of affects, emotions, aesthetics or the author's *ex cathedra* exclamations of his or her own work.

33
This video was uploaded to multiple websites in order to secure a large and uninterrupted circulation. The video is called Он вам не Димон (Don't Call him Dimon) and can be viewed here: https://dimon.navalny.com

34
For a dissection of contemporary documentary culture, see Roberts, John. 2009. 'Photography after the Photograph: Event, Archive, and the Non-Symbolic'. *Oxford Art Journal 32*, no.2; and Brunet, François. 2017. *La photographie: Histoire et contre-histoire*, Paris : PUF.

35
See Versteeg, Wilco. 2018. *The Reliable Image. Documenting Contemporary Warfare with Photography*, Paris Diderot (unpublished); and 'Fotografie als bewijslast in tijden van ongeloof'. *rekto:verso* 7 August, 2015. https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/fotografie-als-bewijslast-tijden-van-ongeloof

Let's do away with some perceived ideas of photography: most photographs do not circulate widely or, frankly, at all; even our most gripping images have close to zero impact on political and societal developments. The impact of photography can hardly be overestimated, but the impact of individual photographs is usually grossly overstated. This is most easily demonstrated by looking at war photography, the forum in which most state-of-the art discussions on documentary photography play out. The ideal that documentary photography reveals 'everything' and that its iconic images impact the hearts and minds of the people as well as actual policy is recent, originating from the Vietnam War. This so-called Uncensored War is repeatedly said to have been shortened if not outright ended because of a handful of iconic images. While this is an appealing discourse that serves as the ultimate *apologia* of a medium that's suffered accusations of indecency and voyeurism, it simply isn't true.[36] Even today, we wish that images such as that of a Syrian boy face-down on a Turkish beach can and do change the world we live in, but the harsher reality is that these images are seen and remembered merely as icons of photography's failure to do more than depict reality. The hope that documentary photographs mobilize people proves to be as persistent as it is futile.

Exceptional forms of power

Considering recent technological developments, the story becomes more complex. Since the late 1980s, developments in automated and autonomous image-based technology have taken flight, especially outside the traditional realms of photography and its academic and critical study. Instead, the intersections of science, technological start-ups and state power have created more interesting developments in photography and image-making. Trevor Paglen is a notable exception. In an alarmist article for *The New Inquiry,*[37] he asserted that images no longer need human agency to operate and cannot be understood within our current human-centred critical apparatus. Paglen states that '(a)ll computer vision systems produce mathematical abstractions from the images they're analyzing, and the qualities of those abstractions are guided by the kind of metadata the algorithm is trying to read.'. This leads to a reversal in which, according to Paglen, '(w)e no longer look at images—images look at us. They no longer simply represent things, but actively intervene in everyday life.' Paglen sees this as a threat and says that 'we must begin to understand these changes if we are to challenge the exceptional forms of power flowing through the invisible visual culture that we find ourselves enmeshed within.' These developments include Chinese face-recognition programmes that autonomously attribute value to certain behaviours, billboards that track our eye movement and change messages depending on our personal histories and unmanned killer drones that act when patterns on the ground indicate hostility.

Paglen's article is a call to arms to update our perceived ideas on visual culture in this volatile technological reality.

A decisive date in the history of our visual culture and an early example of this autonomisation of images is 3 July 1988. On this date, the United States Navy Cruiser USS Vincennes shot down Iran Air Flight 655, killing all 290 passengers on board. A tragic mistake for which President Ronald Reagan immediately apologised, this incident is rooted in the deceptive power of images. The cruiser's onboard computers misidentified the commercial plane as a fighter jet and autonomously set in motion its pre-programmed response to imminent threats. While human supervision over this automated process yielded substantial doubts as to the supposed belligerent identity of the aircraft, the chain of command chose to ignore their own observations and instincts, instead trusting 'what the computer was telling them.'[38]

While Paglen is right to worry, warn and wake us from our complacency, we should equally guard against technological determinism, which is nothing more than a facile offshoot of the economical determinism that's chased academic photo theory to the brink of irrelevance and has harmed the diversity of political expression in the artistic and academic worlds. While it's true that technological developments give states and other powerful parties new and different means of control, many of these are or will become available to the public at large even if often used in a mundane way. In this paradigm, the technologies and networks of the powerful can be used by those who wish to protest, as a great judo player will use the power of her opponent to bring him to his knees.

A telling example is provided by satellite photography. Technology from the Cold War, in which satellites served to control and intimidate the enemy, is now within easy reach of non-state organisations and, through Google Earth, to civilians. For example, a PhD student using imagery from Google Earth proved that the U.S. prison at Guantanamo, Cuba, expanded between April 2003 and February 2008, thus providing the first overview of the complex itself and also belying statements that the facility was slowly closing. The student downloaded hi-resolution images that enabled him to interpret their details and compare them to and corroborate them with other sources, such as leaked government reports on the hermetically sealed prison.[39] Another high-profile satellite-based initiative is Amnesty International's Sudan Project. The organisation invites public scrutiny of satellite images in order to investigate human rights violations in the Northeast African Count (figures 3, 4, 5). Notwithstanding a pixel cap for private satellites that prevents viewers from distinguishing details smaller than the average human being, the future use of this form of photography will further uncover what some want to remain hidden.

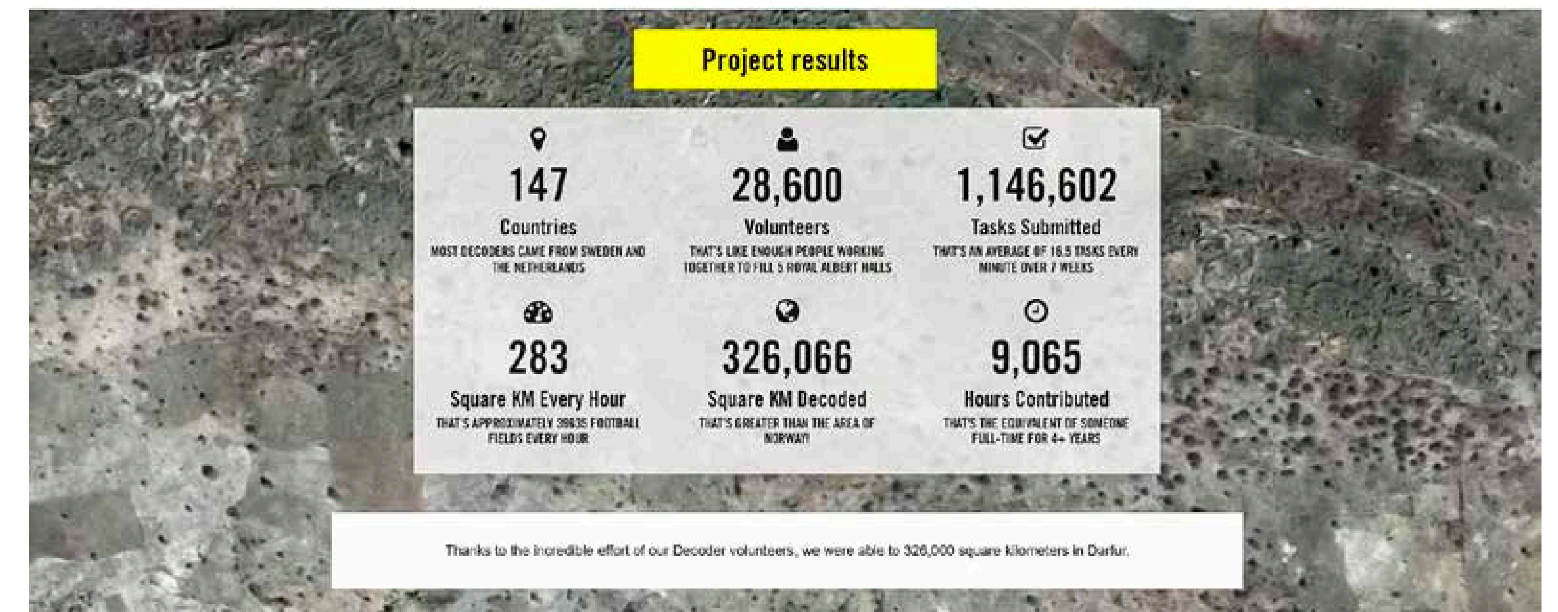
Other examples of documentary practices in which photography plays a role but isn't the sole

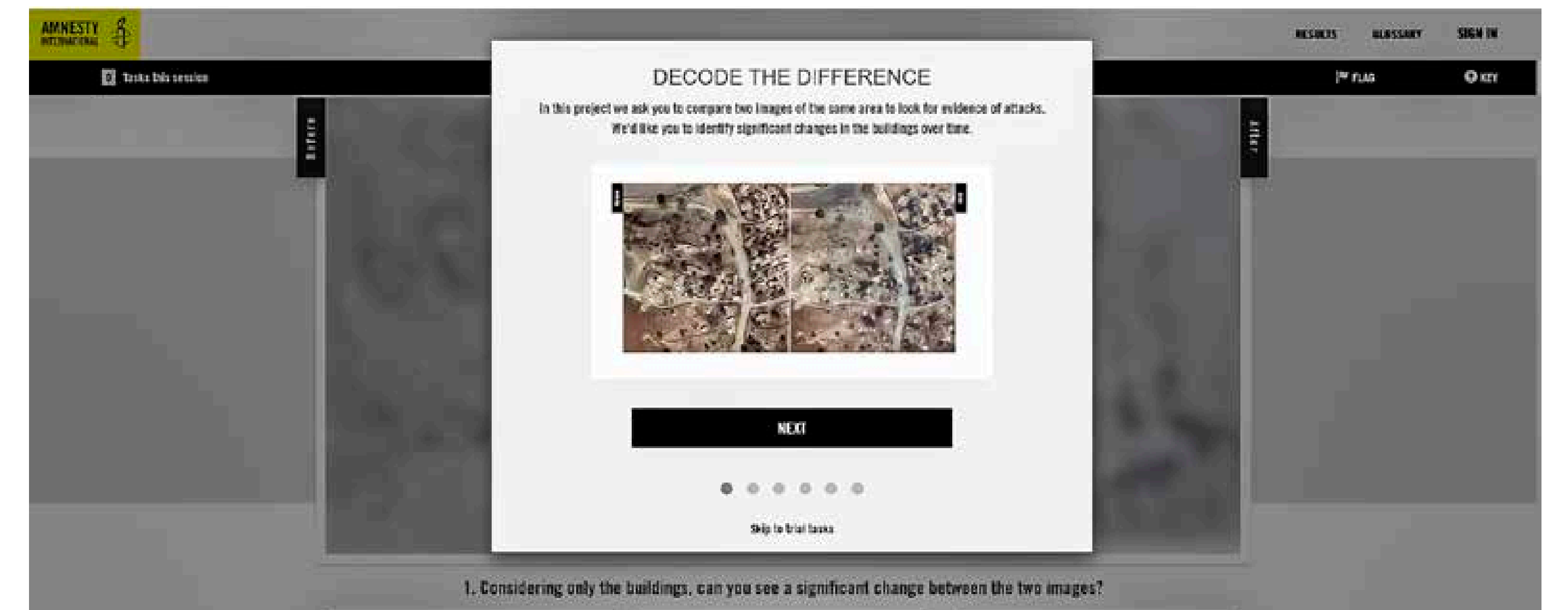
36
This myth is persistent despite its debunking by, among others, Wyatt, Clarence. 1993. *Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press and Griffin, Michael. 1999. 'The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism'. In *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, edited by Hanno Hardt & Bonnie Brennen. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

37
Paglen, Trevor. 2016. 'Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)'. *The New Inquiry*, Dec., 2016.

38
Singer, Peter W. 2009. *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*. 125. London: Penguin Press.

39
Pringle, Heather. 2010. 'Google Earth Shows Clandestine Worlds'. *Science* 329, no.5995.





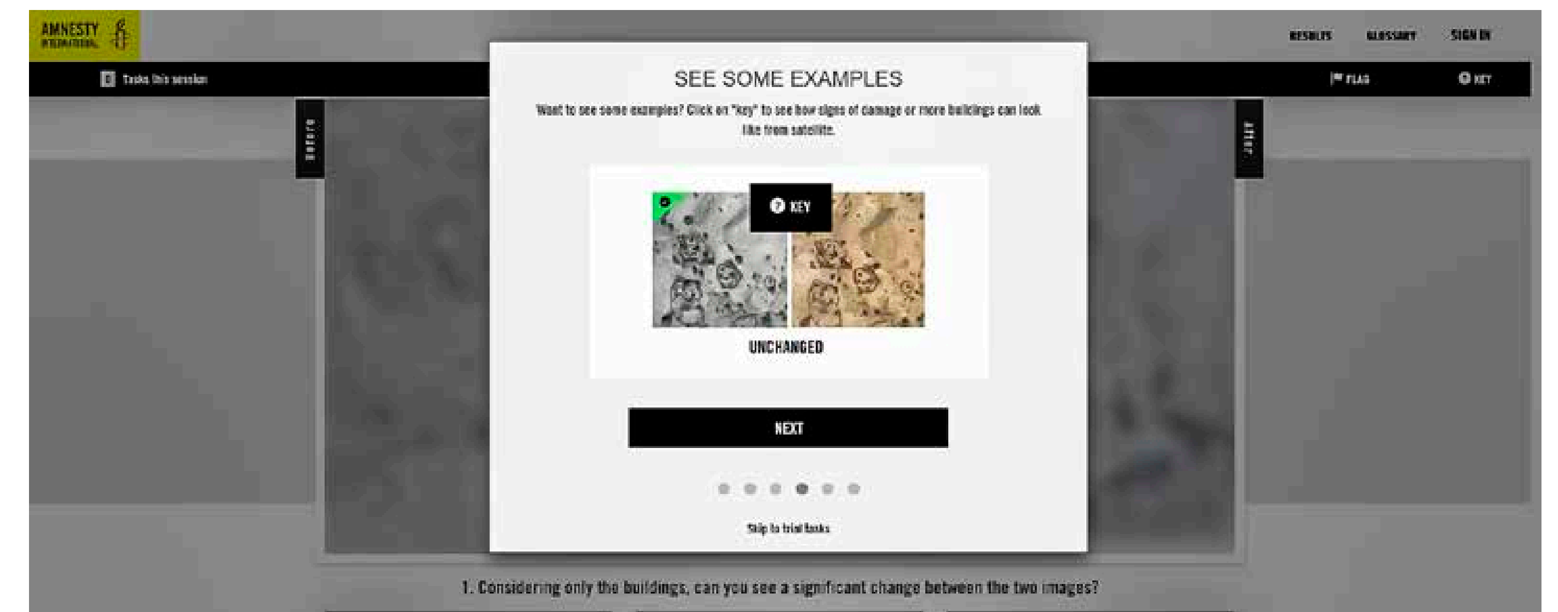


Figure 3—5.
Screenshots Amnesty International's Decode Darfur website.

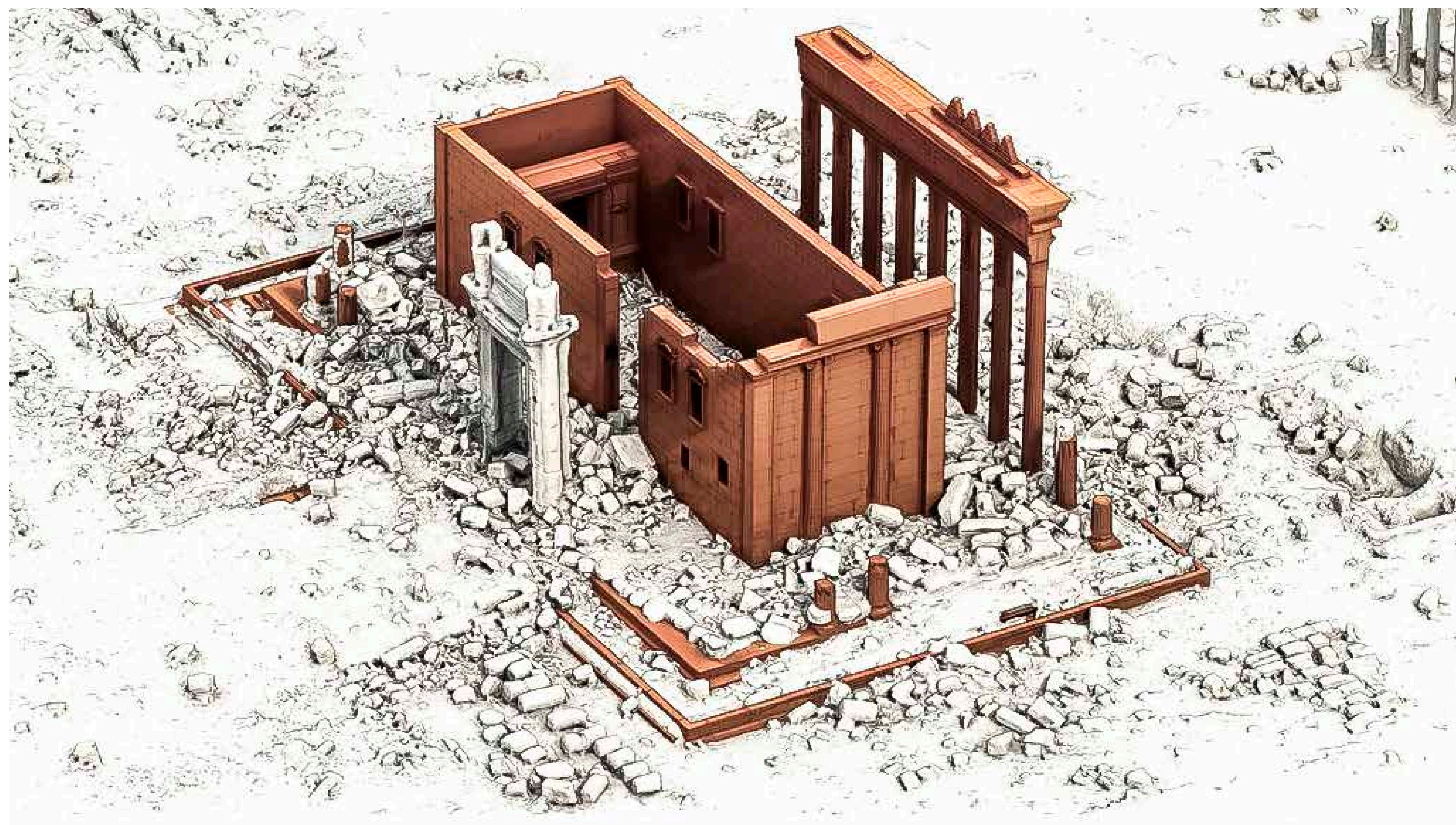


Figure 7.
Screenshot Iconem visual reconstruction of the Temple of Bel, using archival footage as well as digital models.

medium of expression can be found in the crowdsourced investigative journalism of Bellingcat's, most notably in its research on the MH17 airplane shot down over Ukraine in 2015. Or in Errol Morris' book *Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography*[40], his deeply researched exploration and exposure of the myths of photography, using recent technologies to criticise easy assumptions about the truth value of photographs and asking what notions such as 'staged' or 'fake' mean in today's digitised world. Another example is Iconem's fascinating projects restoring war-torn patrimony in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan based on extant photo archives and digital image reconstructions (figure 7).

From truth to reliability

These projects are carried out across the spectrum of science, journalism, humanitarian work, diplomacy and legal aid, and they illustrate a new paradigm in which reliability is more important than truth and aesthetics. Instead of playing on the unlimited power of images to tell stories, they try to limit its saying power by offsetting them with text, digital embellishments (figure 6) and other forms of manipulation unacceptable to previous forms of documentary culture. Through these manipulations, which spell the de facto end of a pure documentary and journalistic aesthetic and ethic, photographic images can speak more clearly in the public forums in which current battles for reliable facts and worldviews are raging. In other words, should documentary photography want to remain relevant in today's world, it should break out of the confines of artistic institutions, let go of its quasi-mythological poetics and redefine its role in a changing media landscape. This is a shift from photocentric to photo-inclusive, from truth to reliability and from art back to politics, and it's the battle at the heart of twenty-first century documentary culture.

Figure 6.
Screenshot NOS newsbroadcast showing a BUK missile-lancer with digital overlay.

40
Morris, Errol. 2014. *Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography*. London: Penguin Press.

Radical Intimacies: (Re)Designing the Impact of Documentary Photography

Oliver Vodeb

Today, 'impact' is a much-used term largely related to the quality criteria of different expert disciplines. Any expert is complicit in the system that granted her the status of expert and enables her to exercise a specific expertise. Both documentary photography and communication design are explicitly expert fields. Professional practitioners cling to disciplinary regimes of validation in the face of looming threats that developments like artificial intelligence, mobile-phone cameras and amateur culture pose to their privileged positions, which grant them somehow exclusive rights to design our society. While both disciplines share many things in common, communication design already incorporates strategies, which can inspire documentary photography to (re) design its impact.

Problems of impact

The disciplines of documentary photography and communication design are rooted in colonisation. Ariella Azoulay points to the history of the colonial past and the rights experts had in shaping society, showing that photography's invention of the documentary is rooted in a privilege acquired by denial:

> in exchange for some of its exclusive rights, not necessarily those that were financially rewarding, photographers have been mobilized to represent those imperial rights as if they were disconnected from the regime of violence. It is out of this structural denial that the tradition of engaged photography could invent the protocol of the documentary as a means of accounting for objects that were violently fabricated by imperial actors, a mode of being morally concerned among one's peers.[41]

There is another story of colonisation, one that also goes beyond the influence of European modernism and haunts communication design, namely its roots in a service- providing culture at the core of neoliberal capitalist principles. This process has been continually intensifying since the growth of neoliberalism in the 1970s aimed at colonising the public sphere and everyday life through violent commodification. It's this type of colonisation, above all others, in which both disciplines exist today; we are all embedded in capitalism.

For the majority of communication designers, serving the market has always been the natural thing to do, while documentary photography tends to think of itself as 'doing good.' This is an important ideological difference, which in my opinion actually works in favour of design and not photography, as it creates the false impression of an inherent opposition to market forces by a principle of goodness rooted in the discipline of photography. While communication design's culture is largely defined by the same forces, its contradictions are more obvious and more visible; they are widely discussed, and designers seem to be much more aware of them than documentary photographers.

Documentary photography and communication design have many things in common. Both struggle to understand their future impacts and the social relevance and sustainability of their professional practices. However, discussions about these issues are still marginal: university programmes are running largely as always, grinding the mill until there is a steady intake of students. Both disciplines have been historically self-referential and the formal training is largely focusing on the technical rather the intellectual aspect of the practice. This is seen in the object/image centeredness of photography and communication-design training, as well as in the notorious shortage of serious theory and in the lack of contextual understanding about both practices among professionals. This is especially a problem in relation to each discipline functioning as a social practice capable of going beyond Eurocentric traditions and the driving principles of colonisation. They aren't the same and differ in their historical momentum of disciplinary maturity, but they both seem to largely fail at engaging in praxis and reflecting on the conditions of their own disciplinary construction of knowledge. However, it seems like while a small but significant part of communication design is the creation of successful steps to articulate an autonomous practice, documentary photography still (painfully) dreams in the comfort of its historical self-understanding.

Donald Weber, the Canadian photographer and academic in the Master of Photography programme at KABK in The Hague, says that in order to achieve impact, a photographer 'brings light into darkness' and is therefore concerned with visibility, which is often considered a mechanism of democratic guarantee. In this sense, the photographer 'claims visibility, counters hidden motives, dissembles corruption by yanking it full front and centre, and confronts power. In other words, this light is a form of democracy in action, and a fundamental pillar of journalistic integrity.'[42] Weber is critical towards such dominant understandings and sees them as reductionist; he also rightly points to the need to focus on the conditions of photographic production.[43]

The prevalent narrow understanding of documentary photography's impact being 'bringing light into darkness' is interesting from a disciplinary perspective. A question I would like to ask is, what is it about the photography discipline that hinders a broader, more complex and more contextualised self-understanding of impact, especially as there are other articulations of impact in closely related fields?[44] Stephen Duncombe for example offered a list of ideal types of what activist art aims to achieve.[45] The list was a result of extensive surveys and interviews with diverse activist artists from around the world, and it included fostering dialogue, building community, making a place, inviting participation, transforming environment and experience,

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Azoulay, Ariella. 2018. 'Unlearning Decisive Moments of Photography'. Fotomuseum Winterhur.https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/stillsearching/articles/155301_unlearning_expertise_knowledge_and_unsettling_expertise_positions

42
Weber, Donald. 2018. 'You Win, Photography Loses: Awards, Competitions and the Outsourcing of Responsibility'. *Vantage*, 12 February 2018. https://medium.com/vantage/you-win-photography-loses-awards-competitions-and-the-outsourcing-of-responsibility-398e7908bca0

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I have been putting forward an argument about the necessity of focusing on the conditions of photographic production within capitalism for several years. Among other occasions in the following lecture, see: Vodeb, Oliver. 2016. 'What is Relevant Knowledge in Contemporary Visual Storytelling Today?' Keynote lecture, Visual Storytelling symposium, Kathmandu, December 5, 2016.

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This is especially interesting as many photo documentarists see themselves as artists.

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Duncombe, Stephen. 2016. 'Does it Work: The Æfect of Activist Art'. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*

revealing reality, altering perception, creating disruption, inspiring dreams, providing utility, political expression, encouraging experimentation, maintaining hegemony, making nothing happen, imminent cultural shift, ultimate cultural change, imminent material impact and ultimate material result.[46]

Impact in practice

I'd like to offer further concrete thoughts that might help to broaden the discussion about impact. I do believe we should think of documentary photography as socially responsive communication'.[47] In this way, we'd be able to situate photography as a social practice with a potential range of impacts. This would change the focus from the object (image) towards the process of communication and would enable us to go beyond the dominant culture of a self-reflexive practice.[48]

What if we realised that power manifests in realms beyond mere representation and that the real is actually socially constructed?[49] In this realisation, we might ask what processes we aim to create within society to contribute to a more democratic construction of reality. The image is a medium, and the impact of documentary photography and communication design should be the process mediated and facilitated by the image.

While documentary photography is inherently concerned with social change, many photographers regularly work with NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Interestingly, these organisations act very much like corporations. Their communications approach is ultimately rooted in social marketing and branding, and, as such, it reinforces a capitalist understanding of the world, specifically that the neoliberal market is the only mode of social organisation through which we can see and understand the world. One part of Magnum Photo operates like a creative client focused service, not unlike an advertising agency and employs its eminent photographers. It explicitly says it works with 'brands' to create integrated, marketing-based communications solutions. An explicit example is the work Magnum Photo has done for the largest European Bank HSBC, that among other things is known for laundering drug money. How are such projects related to documentary photography's ethos of 'doing good', and what is their real impact?

By contrast, radical design studio Loki Design lists on their website 31 design studios focusing on a radical communication design practice.[50] Most of them explicitly distance themselves from neoliberal capitalism or actively work towards an alternative. Many of these studios operate as businesses; effectively, they're designers making a living at their practice. To my knowledge, radical documentary photography studios like this don't exist. Why is this the case, and what can be done to find a working model for a sustainable radical photo documentary studio?

Awards, as one of the primary mechanisms of validating quality in the spectacle of creative industries, determine our understanding of good documentary photography. What Weber calls 'the industrial-awards complex'[51] is one of the purest forms of neoliberal ideology: decontextualised competition aimed at shining the image of the expert profession. To my knowledge, there are no serious alternative awards in photography, while communication design has Memefest, which, through its friendly competition and other activities, has been nurturing alternatives to neoliberal capitalism in communication, design and art already since 2002. We're now thinking about inviting participation from documentary photography.

Future strategies for designing impact

I do think that significant parts of communication design's discipline and practice have a lot to offer documentary photography. I also think that documentary photography can crucially contribute to a common strategy with great impact potential.

Deep fake technology will dramatically alter our already existing doubts about the documentary mode, as we already constantly wonder if what we see is true. It will both dramatically deepen people's mistrust in media and enhance media's manipulative potential. Together with fake news, the self-referentiality of social media and the use of pleasure principles to create surveillance based addictive media, deep fake technology could soon be the greatest challenge facing media democracy.

I believe that a new field of research, education and engagement connecting expanded versions of communication design and documentary photography would have the potential to counter these developments. The way we do design and photography has crucial impact on society. Ontologically speaking, as we design, design designs us. In the expanded field of documentary photography, the relation to the source of the story is ethically important, and there is still a strong presence of the tendency to do authentic work. A crucial relation between socially responsive communication and authentic work as social practice is that the former aims to create dialogue and/or conditions for dialogue, while the latter is the very product of dialogue.[52] And dialogue is the condition for an authentic social relation.[53] Here, I'm not interested in the authentic as 'real' or 'true' but in the sense of 'being close'. Our directly lived experiences are largely mediated[54] and our personal relations increasingly colonised.[55] I propose that our examination of the conditions of the production of images as well as the very practice of making and disseminating them needs to include what I call 'radical intimacies'.

Italy's first female photo journalist Letizia Battaglia's stunning photographic work on the Sicilian mafia transcends mere 'closeness', as her photographic work fights oppression in ways that completely immerse her everyday life, including personal (love) relations, faith, gender politics and her

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Idem. 2016. 120–125.

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Vodeb, Oliver. 2008. 'Družbeno odzivno komuniciranje', Ljubljana, Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2008.

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The self-reflective practice is a common description referring to practice-based approach to design/photography. The recent growth of practice-based PhDs, for example, gives some valuable insight. By far the biggest focus of PhD work seems to be on the personal, individual artistic/design experience gained by the practice. The reflection is therefore self-centred and self-referential, and it largely focuses on how to do photography or design through a personal self-reflected experience, instead of on what photography or design does in the world. This is a fundamental difference, which is present also in undergraduate and master's degrees. This particular focus is, in my opinion, one of the reasons why the usual ways of thinking of the impact of photography and design are limited.

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See also: Vodeb, Oliver. 2012. 'Beyond the Image and Towards Communication: An Extra-Disciplinary Critique of the Visual Communication Profession'. *Design Philosophy Papers* 10 no.1: 5–21. DOI: 10.2752/089279312X13968781797472

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Lokidesign. 2017. First Things Next: Socially Engaged Graphic Design Studios. LOKI. https://www.lokidesign.net/journal/2017/1/23/first-things-next-socially-engaged-design-studios

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Weber, Idem. 2018

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Vodeb, Oliver. 2008. 'Družbeno odzivno komuniciranje', Ljubljana, Fakulteta za družbene vede.

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Buber, Martin. 2000. 'I and Thou'. New York: Scribner.

54
Debord, Guy. 2002. 'Society of the Spectacle'. Michigan: Black & Red.

55
Iouz, Eva. 2007. 'Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism'. Cambridge: Polity Press; Zuboff, Shoshana. 2018. 'The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power'. Profile.

Food/Media/Crisis, Memefest Los Angeles event poster by Kevin Lo (Lokidesign) and Oliver Vodeb

relations to her local community, into her photographic practice in ways that reflect, represent, communicate and change them at the same time. The qualities of Battaglia's photographic practice are close to some of the most important discussions and practices in today's radical spheres of design. The discussions focus on a critique of neoliberal capitalism as a form of oppression, using everyday life as the primary sphere of engagement. Such design is oriented towards the local community; it understands itself as relational, subverting the patriarchal and colonial ideologies embedded in dominant design and striving to create dialogue and/or conditions for dialogue. All these are qualities of radical intimacies.

Radical intimacies are dialogic, embedded in everyday life and counter to systems of oppression, specifically neoliberal capitalism. They are communicative and refer to a social practice in the sense that they seek impact beyond the production of visual artefacts. They manifest themselves in the process of production, distribution and reception of images, but understanding that they go beyond representation is crucial. They are ontological in the sense that they acknowledge design as a general human activity. They are interpersonal, although they can also be mediated. Radical intimacies truly unfold as a practice and methodology when design and photography include friendship, dialogue, pleasure and collaboration as part of their creative processes of making. Radical intimacies build alternative worlds, they create autonomous spaces and occupy places meant for other kinds of relations.

As does every community, the photographic community practises the design of itself.[56] The current states of environmental degradation and radical uncertainties are urgent and demand new strategies that enable us to think and practise impact in ways that won't reproduce the status quo. Shining a light in dark places as a primary goal of documentary photography is still its strength, but it should be expanded, especially as other very considerate articulations of impact already exist and are already in use among activist artists and designers. They should be studied, practised, taught and developed further, and a close and intense collaboration between documentary photography and communication design needs to be established. The concept of radical intimacies binds documentary photography with communication design in ways that have the potential to counter what's coming and can contribute to their decolonisation.

Letizia Battaglia, Luciano Liggio

56
Escobar, Arturo. 2018. 'Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds'. Durham: Duke University Press

Imagining Otherwise: The impact of aesthetics in an ethical framework

Chris Becher and Mads Holm

> There is no foreseeable quantitative correlation between the quality of a work of imagination and its effectiveness. And this is part of its nature because it is intended to operate within a field of subjective interactions which are interminable and immeasurable. This is not to grant to art an ineffable value; it is only to emphasize that the imagination, when true to its impulse, is continually and inevitably questioning the existing category of usefulness.[57]

Today, photographic artists dealing with issues of the social and political work under conditions of increasingly strict ethical criteria. The focus of criticism has shifted from product to process, and the photographer must navigate a field of rights and wrongs. What Claire Bishop coined 'the social turn' is prevalent in how a new generation of photographic artists is expected to shape its practices: collaboration over subjectivity, engagement over observation, ethics over aesthetics. Artists don't hesitate to define their practices with words such as 'activistic', 'participatory' and 'social'. When the practice of art is fused with that of social work, questions about usefulness are more likely to be raised. A world hungering for solutions asks what art *does*. What is its *effect*? The word 'impact' suddenly pops up everywhere. Through the roof of the art academy in a neoliberal society sifts the instrumentality of 2019 capitalism, casting its wandering shadow over the notion of art for art's sake. It's compelling to consider the imposition of artistic research—the prevailing turn in today's model of arts education obligating students to *functionalise* their artistic practices—in the light of Western neoliberal governments' condemnation of anything *useless*.

Navigating in a changing landscape

Enrolled in Photography & Society, the new master program at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, we're asked to consider and assess the impact of our work from before we start to after we finish. Immediately, the old slogan of photojournalism comes to mind: photography can make a change. After five decades of academic problematising of photojournalism and documentary photography, it's obvious that the aim must be to avoid convention and invent new ways for photography to have influence. To have impact. During the first year of the program, the question of what impact actually means remains open and without criteria for measurability. In some of its attempts to respond, artistic practice winds up confused by, rather than fused with, social praxis. An urgency to distinguish between the two grows inside us because to ask for a determination of what art will do before it's created seems rather alarming. For today's photographers seeking to make impactful art, however undefined, the new landscape of social and ethical turns within documentary and art practice must be navigated, and questions must constantly be raised: do we make our work in an ethically acceptable manner? Is our practice inclusive enough? Are we exploiting anyone? Do we share our power?

A double-sided practice

With our heads full of voices, we find ourselves at a secondhand kitchen table in suburban Amsterdam in early spring of 2019. The year's first warm sunrays come through the room's only window and illuminate a small square of the parquet floor. We are in Khalid's apartment, and it's the first time we're meeting him. Our friend Eric has organised the meeting, and Khalid has invited Fortune. The three of them at different times left the African continent behind for a promising life in Europe. The five of us are slowly sipping hot instant coffee from different coloured cups. The city outside goes about its everyday business, and today Fortune has crossed it from the squatted building in which he currently lives with around 20 other people who don't have personal documents or so-called legal status. Their situation is desperate. The group faces immediate eviction four days from now, and they'll have nowhere to go but the streets. He's direct and asks us if we can help document their precarious situation and make short videos to spread through the wider support network *Wij Zijn Hier*[58] (We Are Here), a refugees organisation in the Netherlands. With its nearly 15,000 followers, the community's Facebook page is an indispensable platform, and the group can take charge of the distribution of images and information. We suddenly realise that the situation is exemplary and one that amplifies our concerns. Here's a clear demand for images with impact, but how we make them cannot be up to us. There's no way we can put forward our own *interests* here. It's not our struggle, and, we conclude, there's a difference between art and activism. We must first be their supporters, then artists.

Authorial renunciation

Unwinding ourselves from the cloud of cigarette smoke around the table, stepping out into the sun, we feel the uncertainty of the decision we just made. Little do we know how significant this agreement will be for the images we produce in the following months. Reducing to a minimum our roles as makers, we want to invent a new visual strategy that will give Fortune and the other members of the group the right and power to decide for themselves how to be represented through our photographic labour. There seems to be no other way to justify our presence in their environment but to sacrifice the photographer's *privilege* to decide upon representation.[59] We're eager to establish a fruitful, non-hierarchical collaboration that, because of its political context, takes on an *activistic* approach. We and the group aim to work towards the common goal of raising more awareness and encouraging dialogue

57
Berger, John. 2013. *Understanding a Photograph*. 29. Penguin: London

58
Wij Zijn Hier (We Are Here). Facebook page. https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier/ [last access: 06.09.2019]

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Cf. Azoulay, Ariella. 2018. 'Unlearning Imperial Rights to Take (Photographs)', *Fotomuseum Winterthur* (blog), 10 September 2018. https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/155338_unlearning_imperial_rights_to_take_photographs [last access: 06.09.2019]

Still from video, 30.03.19
Still from video, 02.04.19

Still from video, 10.06.19
Still from video, 13.05.19

about their living conditions, and in the long run we hope to perhaps improve their physical and psychological conditions. Not unlike Agamemnon in Homer's Odyssey we are catapulted without presentiment into a dilemma. Our minds oscillate between art and morality, aesthetics and ethics, artistic autonomy and social conscience, self-preservation and sacrifice. Agamemnon makes the decision to let his daughter Iphigenia die. In the turmoil of ethical considerations we—similarly—sacrifice artistic vision and visual literacy.

In good faith, we and the group, though doubtful, believe that this strategy will empower the latter to decide on its *own* images and fair representation. What we miss is that these *clear* and unguided images can be Janus-faced. In sum, our conceptual gesture of authorial renunciation becomes tantamount to the group's understanding of how images should represent the situation of its members. In other words, desperate to do things right, we, by compromising our interference in their representation, overlook the risk of the imagery becoming yet another repetition and reinforcement of the existing, victimising pictures of undocumented migrants in Europe. Only afterwards do we realise that the group didn't just ask for our hands to hold a camera. They, without being able to formulate it themselves, asked for our knowledge, experience and awareness as image-makers today. Nearly paralysed, we hesitate to put our knowledge to use and, as a consequence, the image that would counter the existing visual regime and contextualise the situation is never produced. Against everyone's will and intention, the images we produce emulate those already established and thus don't actively resist the perverse structure of politics and the media. What we're not often enough reminded of is the fact that the use of the regime's vocabulary, be it through images or words, can narrow our horizon and make us unable to see and act in the world. Hence, it continuously threatens our ability to imagine beyond its framework.[60]

A tightrope (imp)act

In the attempt to find the visual vocabulary corresponding to our doubts as to how we're entitled to represent people, the footage—even though it evidently states that the situation of people forcibly denied documents and rights in Europe needs to be improved—isn't enough to help us imagine a more positive future. Today's tendency to emphasise ethical guidelines in art production actually grants us permission to be gratified, and so we are. Identity politics have succeeded in teaching us to respect fellow human beings—the people we're working with—and acknowledge diversity; the resulting assurance of personal autonomy can be seen as positive. Nevertheless, conducting a faithful artistic project in a vulnerable context like suburban Amsterdam can be a tightrope act. In a finger-pointing culture, where the precocious guardians of political correctness and moralism are waiting for you to stumble into a pitfall, a well-intentioned enterprise can become increasingly delicate. Intimidated in our work with the group, we too easily justify the lack of commitment to aesthetic choices.

By underestimating the possibility of creating images that potentially perturb and agitate, we also belittle the fact that tenderness, discomfort and contradiction—together with fear, frustration, exhilaration, pleasure and absurdity—can be central to any work's aesthetic impact.[61] These aspects are quintessential in pushing the audience's boundaries as well as to the aforementioned framework for promoting new perspectives on the conditions and the image of migration to Europe. In this respect, Frederick Douglass was a leading pioneer in understanding the impactful social power of what in his time was a young medium by realising that '[i]t is evident that the great cheapness and universality of pictures must exert a powerful, though silent, influence upon the idea and sentiment of present and future generations.'[62] Thus, images operate as a blueprint for a reality that can be shaped the way it was supposed to be. In connection to this, images become the fundament of reality, not the other way around.[63] Consequently, their content filters back into the everyday and can advance people's attitude as citizens.

New imaginative impact

The contemptuousness of the individual's encounter with the visual and sensory within the circles of the ethical turn, according to French philosopher Jacques Rancière, disregards the fundamental understanding of art in the West that's grounded in the ambiguity of its autonomy and heteronomy. This implies that the attempt to resolve this confusion, to unravel this ball of wool, is a misunderstanding. For Rancière, the aesthetic experience and contemplation of art is the experience of pondering a *positive contradiction*,[64] which is the tension between the belief in art's autonomy and the confidence in art to promote social change and transform social realities. He believes that in order to influence social change, the aesthetic need not be sacrificed. It's at this intersection where the sensory experience of an artwork—its artistic quality—shouldn't relinquish itself completely to the reduction of analytical information about target audiences. Even though he argues from a philosophical rather than art-critical perspective, he's an important figure with regard to unmasking the binary tone that predominates the conversation around politicised art: collectivity vs. subjectivity, process vs. ends, generality vs. specificity, participatory vs. exploitative, performative vs. authoritarian, social effect vs. artistic quality. As a result, he cultivated a new terminology and emphasis on spectatorship. Following this thought, perhaps the most enriching artworks interrogate exactly these dialectic characteristics between art's authority and social interference by addressing its context, form, conditions of production and reception.

Back at the kitchen table in suburban

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Cf. Azoulay, Ariella. 2008. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. 16. New York: Zone Books.

61
Cf. Bishop, Claire. 2012. *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. 26. London & New York: Verso.

62
Stauffer, John. 2015. 'Lectures on Images'. *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*. 130. New York: Liveright.

63
Cf. Steyerl, Hito. 2008. *Die Farbe der Wahrheit. Dokumentarismen im Kunstfeld*. 80. Wien & Berlin: Turia + Kant.

64
Rancière, Jacques. 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Amsterdam, all of us share the same vision. However, the challenge is to find a common language to formulate that vision. Spectators, subjects or participants are more than competent in handling different types of approaches striving for more sophisticated narratives of social truth. Otherwise, we're in danger of art reduced to *weaponry*[65], meselectaning its utility and efficiency become foreseeable. Further, the assumption of an already existing audience neglects the artwork's ability to create its own situation.[66] With the shift to foreseeing the effect of a photographic artwork within the context of the omnipresent ethical and social turns, there has to be a refined language that also takes the imaginative strength of the non-foreseeable and unprovable into account when speaking about the situation of illegalised migrants in Europe. And even if neither words nor images will ever give definitive answers to the complex situation the group in Amsterdam faces, *new* humanising, sensitive and dignifying perspectives are required. If tomorrow we sit again with Khalid, Fortune and Eric, what would be the way to establish a non-hierarchical collaboration that doesn't sacrifice the aesthetic but rather subsumes both it and the political within an ethical framework? Would we be able to create these empowering and contradictory images that counter the already existing tropes and help imagine an alternative future?

65 Berger, *Understanding*, 28.

66 Minh-ha, Trinh T. 2013. 'Trinh T. Minh-ha on Images and Politics', *TV Multiversity* (blog), 9 September 2013. http://tvmultiversity.blogspot.com/2010/07/questions-of-images-and-politics.html [last access: 06.09.2019

Reclaiming Political Fires in Bangladesh

Interview Shahidul Alam

Shadman Shahid

Photographer, activist and educator Dr. Shahidul Alam was kidnapped from his home on 5 August 2018 by a group of officers dressed in plain clothes. He was allegedly spreading 'false' news through Facebook and 'provoking' during an Al Jazeera interview against the backdrop of student protests for better road safety taking place in Dhaka at the time. During the dark, 107-day period he spent in jail, his unjust arrest was met with an overwhelming outcry from the international community of freethinkers and human rights organisations. Students and journalists rallied relentlessly in Bangladesh for his freedom. Eventually, the Goliath that is the Bangladeshi government was forced to give in, and Shahidul's bail was granted. The case is still ongoing, but it hasn't deterred him from his quest for a better world. Upon his release, he was named as a *Time* person of the year, which he can add to the already sparkling list of accolades he's achieved over the course of his career. Despite that honour, he'll tell you that the greatest achievement that came out of this ordeal was to make transparent to the entire world the morose state of affairs in Bangladesh. His unbiased and unwavering war on oppression in Bangladesh has been ongoing for decades. I wanted to sit with the veteran warrior to borrow some of his boundless energy and also to talk about his motivations, the shifting landscape of media, the importance of being flexible and how to carry on the good fight in today's hostile environment.

Your career as a photographer has now spanned over three decades, during which time you've achieved more than most photographers can hope to do in a lifetime. You were the first Asian to chair the World Press Photo; you've won almost every photographic award there; you founded the Drik Picture Library, which is the first international platform for Bangladeshi photographers; and you founded the photography school Pathshala, which has produced generations of photographers in Bangladesh and around the world. But before doing all this, you resided in the world of science. It was quite a leap from completing a PhD in chemistry to practising photography. Was this shift caused by an epiphany of sorts, or was it more of a gradual process?

A combination of both really. During my student days in the U.K., I got involved with the left movements that were taking place at that time. This was in the early 80s, and we were going to street rallies trying to raise public opinion. There, I began to see how photography was being used by others as part of that resistance. I began to see how photography can be used as a persuasive tool. It pointed me to the direction in which my photography might turn. The epiphany that you refer to actually relates to a little girl. I was having an exhibition in Belfast, and I was staying in town with friends. One day, I had come back from the show and as I was emptying my pockets, their five-year-old girl Karina asked me how come I had coins in my pocket? As her parents were development workers, she had been to Bangladesh; she knew how developmental agencies saved Bangladeshis as such. So her idea of a Bangladeshi was someone poor and skinny needing financial aid. The fact that a Bangladeshi had coins in his pocket didn't fit that equation. And that was what got me thinking about the sort of social, political and cultural environment this five-year-old girl grew up in that made her incapable of seeing a Bangladeshi as anything other than an icon of poverty. Images played a big role in creating that environment. I realised that the narrative had to be changed. Because whoever controls the narrative determines the story. While White Western photographers were the people who largely told my story, it would only be a certain kind of story that was being told. I decided then that I would create a platform for local photographers. The perception and expectations of photography amongst the public needed to be taken into reckoning.

I think now, almost anyone can tell their own story, regardless of their nationality or creed. The world is bombarded with billions of images. The preponderance of social media means the people who make photographs and who disseminate them are very different from who used to. No power structure has the exclusive monopoly over the distribution of imagery. Their point of view can be questioned. But this has also brought with it all this talk about fake news; there is scepticism surrounding how images are made and seen. The perception and expectation of the public that you talk about has shifted. Photography can no longer be looked at as the harbinger of truth, can it?

Of course, photography can be misleading. Any powerful tool can be used in any way, and it's who handles the tool [who] determines what it will be used for. It was 1909 when Lewis Hine said, 'While photographs may not lie, liars may take photographs.' I think today liars become presidents, liars become religious leaders, liars own advertising agencies. Even activists can use and abuse photography. I think what we need to do is place the weight of credibility upon the source and not the

Kalpana's Warriors exhibition opening at Drik Gallery

From left to right, Taslima Akhter, Shahidul Alam and Aungmakhai Chak at the opening of the show "Kalpana's Warriors" at Drik Gallery on the 12th June 2015, marking the 19th year of the disappearance of indigenous activist and general secretary of the Hill Women's Federation, Kalpana Chakma. Photograph: Habibul Haque/Drik

We want justice near Aarong

Students demanding justice for fellow students murdered by buses on rampage. Abdul Karim Rajib, a second-year student of Humanities department at, and Dia Khanam Meem, a first-year Science student of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment School and College were killed on 29th July 2018, when an Uttara-bound bus of "Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan" rammed into a group of students who had been waiting on the road for transport. Road accidents are a frequent and major source of injuries and death in Bangladesh. Students throughout Dhaka city organised protest rallies, demanding safer roads and for justice. This photo was taken at the busy intersection of Manik Mia Avenue and Mirpur Road on 1st August 2018 Photo: Shahidul Alam/Drik/Majority World

medium. Yes, photographs may or may not lie, but it is the credibility of the source that determines whether the photograph is to be believed or not. Credibility is not something that comes from above. It has to be earned and legitimised. But I think it's positive because I don't accept that people should believe in the content solely based on the medium it comes from. They should question on all levels. They should question the credibility and the intention of the source.

When one looks at your body of work, what stands out is your willingness to be flexible. Your strategies of using photography as a tool for resistance constantly change and expand with the needs of the time. I'm curious to know how and why your works have evolved, but let's start in the late 1980s: the final days of the authoritarian rule of General Hussain Muhammad Ershad. The turmoil surrounding the fight for democracy in Bangladesh was at its peak, and it was closer to the beginning of your career. What shape did your methodology take during that era?

> Of course, flexibility is vital. You must adapt yourself to the condition that you are in. During Ershad's time, the way to get photographs out there was through conventional media outlets and newspapers. Therefore, the vocabulary that you used needed to be suitable for those outlets and the audience of that time. To give you a practical example, the work I had done during the last years of Ershad's reign—I had juxtaposed images from a wedding of a minister's daughter with the images of the floods that happened then. It was an attempt to show the divide between the rich and the poor and question the role of the government in dealing with the victims of the flood. It was a very literal sort of expression. It worked at that time. When I submitted my work for the Mother Jones photography award, I had included my open letter to the prime minister as part of the photo essay. So I was not only relying on the photographs but also political intervention. In the letter, I had mentioned the gagging of the media, discussing censorship among other things.

I remember you telling me that when you exhibited the work in 1989, the show was reviewed by the magazine that was owned by the wife of the minister you were critiquing. And I found that fascinating. Here is the minister that you question through your work, and this magazine that his wife runs was talking about it. And if I remember correctly, the review was a positive one, too. Did that surprise you or have an effect on your latter works?

> What I found interesting was that the review talked about the artistry of my work, my composition, the light and the aesthetical elements. [It] never mentioned the politics. That got me thinking about how we can be put in little boxes. As if to say, 'You can have your art but leave the politics to others.' So I decided that my politics will be embedded within my art. Later on, for my work about the disappearance of Kalpana Chakma (the still missing human rights activist who was abducted from her home in 1996 allegedly by the Bangladesh Army), I responded to the needs of the time. Data was no longer the currency of news, and I needed to find a way to engage with people that simply went beyond providing facts. At an aesthetic level and at an intervention level. We asked questions to the silent witnesses, the people who should have been asked, whose voices should have been heard. The investigations either didn't ask the right questions or were not giving importance to the people who knew. In the conversations between Kalpana and her abductor, the last argument was about the military setting fire to their villages. I used fire to create the imagery. The fact that she lived a very simple life was evidenced by the straw mats she slept on, so I used them as material to print the pictures on. The process of production and the material it was made on were all part of the politics of the story. So if you needed to engage with the art, you had to engage with the politics. You couldn't separate the two.

Nowadays, there is a tremendous competition for the viewer's attention that photographers need to face. It is a challenge to make the audience look at one's work, let alone having a lasting effect on them. Yet you continue to make an impact on society. What tactics should photographers realise in order to remain cogent in today's society?

> I think today you have a more sophisticated audience who are used to seeing imagery in different forms through various platforms. It is a much more complex situation where international trade and international recognition are crucial aspects, and mobilising global support is of the utmost importance. Technology plays a massive part, both in terms of what the government does and how you resist. You have to create work that can play in many levels: social media, street and public exhibits, fine art galleries and international publications. You might need to tweak your work to fit the platform.

Technology is being used to repress as well. In Bangladesh, it is a risk for someone like you to carry your mobile around because the government might be listening to what you are saying through your mobile, or it has the capacity to track your movements. Western governments have been largely indifferent to this new form of repression in countries like Bangladesh and even provide the surveillance technology to these countries in some instances. Why do you think that is?

Bangladesh being allowed to get away with repression also has to do with what Bangladesh delivers to other countries. While Bangladesh can contain the Rohingya refugees and on the face of it can help out in the War on Terror, they will ignore human rights transgressions, they will ignore stolen elections, they will ignore the many, many other things that are wrong. Because it is convenient for them to have someone who delivers on their needs. What happens to Bangladeshis? They will provide lip service for that, but I don't believe they will actually do anything.

You have always encouraged your students to be smart and not to perish in the act of resisting so that they can fight another day. But given the state of freedom of speech in today's world, especially in the global south, or the 'Majority World', as you call it, do you think young photographers now can express themselves freely without being persecuted?

I have better words to define it now: 'martyrs don't make good reporters.' Firstly, you have to build a network. Most young photographers nowadays understand the value of having a good network in terms of their professional career, but you also have to understand the importance of having a strong support system around you. One of the reasons I could get away with the things I said through my work—I mean the case still hangs against me, but I am out and I continue to say what I have said before—was because there was such a passionate movement internationally and in Bangladesh. We were able to do that because of the work that I have done over thirty-five years and the friends that I have made during that time. Of course, this doesn't happen overnight, but I think each one of us needs to create that support structure. You need to build a community you can rely upon and strategic alliances that go beyond your immediate perimeter. But you also have to act smart. At the end of the day, banging away at the problem is not the answer. You have to find ways to get under their skin. You have to find cracks that you seep through, and it's guerrilla warfare. Big power structures have more money, have more muscle, than we do, but they are also slower, less nimble and not able to get into the spaces we can get into. And I think we need to recognise our own strengths and turn it around.

Abahani wedding

The resilience of the average Bangladeshi is remarkable. As this woman waded through the flood waters in Kamalapur to get to work, there was a photographic studio "Dreamland Photographers", which was open for business. Dhaka, Bangladesh. 1988.
Photo: Shahidul Alam/Drik/Majority World

Antwerpen

Alberto García del Castillo

The summer of 2018. I sit with Caroline Vincart at the café of the Photo Museum of Antwerp (FOMU) in Belgium. Caroline is a curator at the museum. She's showing me some photos from the museum's collection, which are vaguely dated to the 1990s. I'm looking at self-portraits of a cross-dresser, as I must call the model and photographer, as the photos cannot show me how they identified. I'm following the example of Juliet Jacques. In her essay 'Everything is Permitted,' published in *Dazed and Confused* magazine in 2019, Juliet describes some teenage friends of Sophie Podolski, a poet and visual artist who lived in Brussels, Belgium, as 'people wearing nothing at all' and 'cross-dressers.' This, Juliet writes, is because the 1970s footage of those friends filming one another, which she is looking at, can't show her how they identified. I'm being shown these photos because I'm a transvestite, and I'm known in the Brussels contemporary art scene for transvesting with my friends in our public readings and pictures. Back in spring, Caroline and I were chatting in the lesbian bar Mothers & Daughters in Brussels when she first told me of these photos, and I expressed my interest in coming to the museum to look at them. But today in Antwerp Caroline can't provide much more information about the photos she's showing me. She says other staff members of the museum don't know either. I ask who the model is.

'No record,' she says. 'Only a name and surname.'

'How did you get those names?'

'We don't know.'

I choose to call the model Antwerpen, which is the way Antwerp is written in Dutch, the city's official language. This is because I'm certain that the photos are here today, and because I won't use the names that the museum attached to them without Antwerpen's consent. In some photos Antwerpen sits on a small cabinet or stands on their leg. They wear a red T-shirt with a white stripe, or a coat, or a straw hat or dresses, which are red, or blue, or green, or yellow, or pink, or white, or chequered or violet, which are loose or tightened around Antwerpen's waist with belts. I am also being shown other photos by Antwerpen, which are portraits of tuxedo cats, ducks and tabby cats, which have striped fur. And there are photos of a Belgian-looking city, landscapes and waterscapes, too.

'Where were these photos taken?'

'Probably in Ghent. The landscapes are from Ghent, we think.'

'How did they get into the collection of the museum?'

'The museum's former director, Christoph Ruys, found them in a flea market and donated them.'

I google the names that the museum attached to Antwerpen's photos. This search leads me to a transphobic and ableist article about these photos published in 2010 in the Dutch edition of *Vice* magazine, but Caroline is unaware of it and there seems to be no record of this article in the museum's collection. She knows that the photos were shown at the museum once in 2015 in an exhibition titled 'Photography Inc. From Luxury Product to Mass Medium.' Caroline also tells me that she recently shared a selection of six of Antwerpen's photos with the Antwerp Queer Arts Festival. They were gathering material from FOMU's collection to publish during a take-over of the museum's Instagram account. The caption of the Instagram post repeats some of the information that Caroline just gave me. It says, 'Christoph Ruys found these diapositives in 2009 on [*sic*] a Flemish flea market. The man in the pictures is [Antwerpen] from Ghent.'

Caroline and I finish lunch. I tell her that my main concern is the lack of information on how the museum acquired Antwerpen's photos for its collection, and later exhibited and published them. We agree to stay in contact, and I leave Antwerp to go back home to Brussels.

I return to the museum in the summer of 2019. It's taken a year to be called back—this time I'm in Antwerp to search for information for the writing of this story, which FOMU has commissioned. I meet with a member of the museum's staff to expand on the little information on Antwerpen's photos that Caroline gave me last year. How did Christoph get the photos? Well, probably the flea market story, but not sure. This is the information circulating at the museum. And the article in *Vice*? The staff member vaguely remembers sending the photos.

I email Jill Mathieu, the author of the text in *Vice*. My message contains this question: 'Your text is very short but it includes the phrase "*Een Belgische transseksuele seriemoordenaar uit de seventies dus, verder niks bijzonders*" [A Belgian transsexual serial killer from the seventies… so nothing special]. How did you know this information about [Antwerpen]? I mean their being "Belgian," "transsexual," a "serial killer" and "from the seventies"?'

Jill replies: 'I honestly don't remember much. The line about him being a killer is a joke, not actual information :) … I think Kasper [Jill's colleague at *Vice* at the time] somehow got word of the fact that FOMU had come upon these pictures and we decided to write about them because they were so eerie, this guy making portraits in dresses.'

That's fucked up.

Also in 2010, *Vice Canada* published an article online about Antwerpen: '[H]e killed his mother himself. … [W]hen he died, his family found stacks and stacks of pinafores and dresses in the house, all neatly wrapped in plastic and a huge series of photographs of him wearing these dresses, usually in the same spot and with a similar pose.'

I can't tell what's made up by the journalists or by the museum.

That's not the point.

The point is: The Making Up. The point is: Why the Hell Are You Narrating *Psycho* To Us?

Thanks to Caroline Vincart and Elviera Velghe, the current director of the Photo Museum of Antwerp, for making the writing of this story possible. Thanks to Bat Sheva Ross and Marnie Slater for reading early drafts of this text.

What are you saying to us?

I say Antwerpen's crime is to deceive. They deceive you. This is a term I'm borrowing from Susana Vargas Cervantes. In her 2014 essay and book *Mujercitos*, Susana looks at photos of *mujercitos* (effeminate men) who are transvesting and posing as a performative act of taking control of their images when photographed for the Mexican true-crime magazine *Alarma* (between 1963 and 1986). During those years, the tabloid published hundreds of stories about *mujercitos* being murdered, arrested in clubs and held at police stations. In most of them, *mujercitos* are posing provocatively and unapologetically for the camera. Susana writes, 'It is never clear from the photographs and written stories in *Alarma* why the *mujercitos* have been detained, or if they are in a police station. But what seems to be clear is their criminalization for "deceiving." … Thus, Lorena is described as "a real female who awakens the admiration of whoever sees her walking by, so elegant and gracious." But Alejandro Saucedo (Lorena's given name at birth) is described as a "pervert" and a "degenerate" in the written text. Queta is a happy modern woman, but Enrique Martínez is described with "disgust." Claudia is "glamorous," whereas David is an "invert," participating in an "orgy." What is criminalized is the *mujercitos*' failure of masculinity, which makes of them an abject, feminized (and desired) other.'

I ask the staff member about the 'Photography Inc.' exhibition and they share the catalogue with me. Curated by Tamara Berghmans, the show was concerned with how photographic technologies have affected the practice of photography over time, and vice versa. It presented parts of the museum's collections of photos, photographic equipment and books. When reading the catalogue, I notice an effort to divide the act of taking photos in two: amateur and professional.

In the same catalogue I see some of Antwerpen's photos described as a 'Photo album with self-portraits and cats, 1992–1995.' They're printed within the chapter 'You Press The Button, You Do The Rest: The True Democratization of Photography.' Antwerpen isn't mentioned at all in the essay in that same chapter, or elsewhere in the catalogue. Antwerpen's photos are presented as generic examples of amateur photography in the company of a 'Portrait of two girls, ca. 1925,' the 'Passport photographs of a man, ca. 1950' and a '[F]amily album with family and holiday snapshots, 1930–1972,' all three from anonymous authors.

What are they showing us?

One eight-page unauthorized catalogue of gender performance?

A twenty-page issue of *Obscuur* photo magazine is missing from the library of the museum. The same staff member finds it in another library and sends me a scan. It's a black and white monograph on Antwerpen's photos, which Christoph edited prior to directing the museum. I decide to speak with Christoph.

Caroline has arranged a meeting with Christoph in a hotel lobby in Ghent. The room is furnished with green and brown sofas and armchairs. There are tourist city guides and other leisure publications spread over our coffee table. In this condensed edit of our interview I start by asking Christoph how he got Antwerpen's photos.

A Well, a member of my family sorted out some kind of administrative problem that [Antwerpen] had—not as a favor, but because that was part of the job of the family member of mine—and [Antwerpen] was very grateful. One day, [Antwerpen] died and the priest of the parish of the Port of Ghent found a note in his home instructing to leave all his belongings to the family member of mine. These included a house by the Port of Ghent and everything in it contained. The house had three levels. Downstairs there were jazz records and tapes, and recording material. The rest of the floors seemed unused. The top floor looked like an old repair shop of pianos and other musical instruments. [Antwerpen] lived downstairs amongst, I think, 20 cats, the recording material, jazz records, and piles, hundreds and hundreds of skirts that he made himself. The house was sold and I got the photos because I was studying photography. And that's how the story went.

Q When did this happen?

A I think it had to be 1993 or 1994.

Q So you got these pictures and kept them private for a while?

A Yes. Although at the time I was publishing a magazine titled *Obscuur*, and there was probably a short article published there…

Q Yes, a selection of [Antwerpen]'s photos, 56 in total, was published in a monographic issue of *Obscuur* in 1999 under the title '*Over de herhaling, als tegenbeeld*' [About Repetition as Counter Image]. What led you to publish an issue on [Antwerpen]'s photos?

A Well, vernacular photography was a very, very big issue at the end of the 1990s. And I thought that we had the most interesting collection, because it was so weird.

Q What was so weird?

A Well, it was weird because we didn't find any information from [Antwerpen] explaining why he made this collection of photos. And also the repetitiveness of the images interested me, as indicated in the title 'About Repetition as Counter Image.' There was repetition in most of the collections we saw at the time, but this is different in the way [Antwerpen] looks at the camera. I'll tell you that there was once a project to print the whole series of [Antwerpen]'s photos in the form of a book. I remember that there was a suggestion to title it *Small History of Photography*, because this series contains a lot of key topics in the history of photography: the self-portrait for example, or the still life, or, again, repetition.

Q Apart from their amateurism and repetitiveness, cross-dressing appears to me as a relevant theme in the photos. Was that ever apparent to you?

A I didn't consider it as a specific theme at that moment.

Q But in the photos, you see that [Antwerpen] is cross-dressing…

A es.

Q But that was never…

A No. Because at the end of the '90s—it's important to think about this in that context—when we, the editorial team of *Obscuur*, thought about cross-dressing and that kind of thing, we thought about extravagance. Not about this very sober style. We knew the work of Nan Goldin, so it's not that we didn't know the theme, but we didn't connect it with [Antwerpen]'s photos.

…

Q You were the director of the Photo Museum of Antwerp from 2003 to 2009. It'd seem that the photos were not shown or published within that period.

A No. But in 2008 I had the project to make an exhibition of Louis Paul Boon's collection of images *Fenomenale Feminateek*. He's a Belgian writer who'd been collecting photos of women from magazines and all other types of sources. I wanted to show this collection in the museum for its relevance in the practice of amateur archiving. And I had the idea to combine it with a small exhibition of [Antwerpen]'s photos, not because of what they depict but to present another example of amateur gathering and classification of images. But the project never occurred because the board of the museum was at the time composed of politicians who saw Louis Paul's images as immoral, especially those of very young women. I never intended to show photos of underage women though. There was a commotion all over the press. I left the museum at that time because of this kind of political interference, which had never happened before.

Q Gender appears central to both exhibition projects, but you never wanted to make that connection?

A No, the connection was collecting and archiving.

…

Q Was it during the exhibition project process that you decided to donate [Antwerpen]'s photos to the museum?

A Yes, the librarian at the time, Luc Salu, was very fond of them and included them in the library's catalogue.

Q Was there at the time any policy in the museum concerning the copyright of found photos?

A Yes, there was. But we didn't talk it through because at the time there was no urge or need to do it. Luc always said that in a way they belonged to me. The author was dead and we'd never met any family member, so we didn't go any further than that.

…

Q It seems surprising that there is no information attached to [Antwerpen]'s photos in the museum. Did you donate them as is, without any other documents?

A Yes, in a box.

Q Did you ever think about leaving a document explaining the story that you just told me about how the photos got to you?

A Yes, if they'd been exhibited, eventually then I would've done it. It would've been nice to write about

Alberto in Plaça Reial in Barcelona in the summer of 2019. Photographed by César Segarra.

them or ask someone to do it. That was the bigger plan.

Q So this story was known orally between the museum's staff and then it was lost?

A It has its own logic. I think in a way people working there now are more eager to know this kind of thing. At the time it was all about art photography, and there was a huge discussion on whether we had to show all kinds of photography or not. I thought we had to. We worked with the money of taxpayers, so my opinion was that all kinds of photography had to be shown. Also, amateur photography is closely related to the origins of photography, more than the artistic format.

…

Q Did the museum have a section of LGBTQIA+ photography?

A Well, we had a lot of the information but not specifically from that point of view. We also bought a lot of books by gay and lesbian photographers because we thought that their work was good. That was the first reason, more than their personal sexual orientation.

Q You never thought that the museum had to document a history of LGBTQIA+ activism and lives?

A No. But if you'd asked for the famous photographers of that time, there were certainly books in the library. This is because the mission of the museum was to acquire collections from Belgian photographers, and newspaper collections, like the one of the *Gazet van Antwerpen* and others.

Q And you never looked at [Antwerpen]'s photos as queer photography? Your co-editors, the team of the museum… they never said these photos were queer documents?

A No. But also I have to admit that at the end of the 1990s queer wasn't like it is now. It wasn't an issue. Don't get me wrong. It's not part of my culture, it wasn't part of the culture of anyone involved in *Obscuur*, and it wasn't a part of the culture we worked in at that time either.

That time? What time? *Straight* time?

For ten years, those behind *Obscuur* magazine and the Photo Museum of Antwerp have shown Antwerpen's photos as exemplary documents of amateur photography and self-portraiture.

Antwerpen was never around.

Nobody asked them.

Nobody spoke about cross-dressing.

They were too busy making fun of it.

'you think Oscar Wilde was funny / well Darling I think he was busy / distracting straight people / so they would not kill him'

CAConrad wrote this in 2018 in the poem 'Glitter In My Wounds.'

Thanks for the poems.

I can't know how Antwerpen identified.

I've chosen not to show their photos here.

I can't know what they wanted to do with them.

It could be that Antwerpen wasn't part of a queer community—this isn't certain.

But we are.

In Lille, France, Sœur Dide, a member of the international order and activist group The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, once told me, '*Après avoir souffert d'une agression, nous les transpédéguoines pouvons faire plein de choses avec nos sentiments, l'activisme et l'expression artistique en sont deux bons exemples*' (After being attacked, us transfagdykes can do many things with our feelings; activism and artistic expression are two good examples).

Merci.

Us transfagdykes can do a lot of things with our feelings.

We can tell stories in museums of photography.

Readers and audiences have insistently been told to look at Antwerpen alone, erasing the linage of a 'whole motley crew of artists, actors, writers, and drag queens and other sexual deviants [who] worked on one another's projects and generally found mutual inspiration in a shared countercultural milieu. And they inhabited and helped make a world beyond their aesthetic endeavors, a world that devised innumerable means of resisting the forces of conformity and repression with radical hilarity, perverse pleasure, defiant solidarity—a truly queer world.'

This is a quote from Douglas Crimp's essay 'Getting the Warhol We Deserve,' that appeared in *Social Text* in 1999.

I can't know if Antwerpen felt close to a queer linage but I know that it's irresponsible to look at their photos outside of a history of cross-dressing culture and politics.

The choice is between cross-dressing politics and non-cross-dressing politics.

There isn't culture full stop and then cross-dressing culture.

The first-ever *cross*-dresser made everyone else a *line*-dresser.

This is about looking at Antwerpen's photos long after that day when the first-ever cross-dresser…

Antwerpen's photos have been used to delete gender and sexual dissidence and queer activism and art.

People… they've been used to delete *people*.

When first posted as queer photos on Instagram, they were to carry the burden of years of straight false framing.

They were said to have been found in a flea market!

It makes no sense.

It's nonsense.

In 2011 Paul B. Preciado wrote 'The Ocaña We Deserve: *Campceptualism*, Sexual Insubordination, and Performative Politics' in the exhibition catalogue *Ocaña 1973-1983: acciones, actuaciones, activismo*.

Ocaña was an Andalusian, anarchist, artist and transvestite who lived in Barcelona, Catalonia.

Ocaña was notorious for making artistic and activist performance work during Spain's political regime shift—from a fascist dictatorship to a parliamentary monarchy—in the 1970s and 1980s.

In Barcelona, Ocaña lived in two different apartments in Plaça Reial.

Antwerpen's photos have been used to delete Ocaña.

Paul writes, 'Ocaña's performative feminization, which met with mistrust both in the left and amongst homosexual movements, was not only a satirical reference to bourgeois and national Catholic female models (wife, mother, virgin) but also the exaltation of marginal figures such as mad women, tomboys, spinsters, widows, invalids, southern women, sinful saints, orphan girls, hunchbacks, outcasts, whores, dykes… Ocaña's performance embodied all these subordinate biopolitical figures. By theatralizing them, he did not represent them (in the political or even metaphysical sense of the word); rather, he brought them to life, embodied them, produced them, activated them as somatic fictions and at the same time affirmed them as not only ghosts in history (invisible bodies with no discourse or agency of their own) but also as lines of flight through which life evades biopolitical control.'

Do you believe in ghosts?

They're just like living people, only a bit transparent.

This is Jacinta's idea. Jacinta is a character in the latest Almodóvar film.

My friend Marnie Slater is a living person.

This morning I told her about Jacinta.

Marnie told me how Chris Kraus said in a public talk that the question of genre is not important to her, but that literary tradition is incredibly important.

That's it.

We got it.

The dismissal of considering Antwerpen's photos along the tradition of cross-dressing erases the countercultural agency of yesterday and today's cross-dressers.

Antwerpen's photos have been used to delete gender and sexual dissidence, queer people, *living*, and queer activism and art.

I can't know how Antwerpen identified.

But.

We're here.

Ask before taking a picture.

A Letter to Dr. Paul Julien.

Pondering the Photographic Legacy of a Dutch 'Explorer of Africa' [67]

Andrea Stultiens

Dr. Paul Julien (NL, 1901–2001)[68] was a trained chemist, a largely self-made anthropologist and an 'explorer' who travelled through fourteen different countries in sub-Saharan Africa between 1932 and 1962.[69] The Nederlands Fotomuseum currently holds a collection of 20,000 of his photographs. A significant number of them, including 9x12 black and white negatives and autochromes, 35mm colour slides, 6x9 and 6x6 black and white negatives as well as lanternslides and vernacular prints, concern his journeys on the African continent. Julien produced his photographs in the service of science, but portraits of the people he met on his journeys were also used to illustrate interviews that were primarily concerned with Julien himself. Currently, Julien's photographic legacy is considered to be of more importance than the outcomes of his scientific research.[70] However, he did not only 'collect the world' in photographs[71] but also produced 'statistical data' in the form of the measurements of physical features, blood samples and fingerprints, which would supposedly contribute to the understanding of the spread and even the origin of humanity.[72]

Since 2012, I've been working with Julien's photographs under the premise that it's impossible to understand what we see without consulting the people whose world was depicted. I've taken up the responsibility of activating the collection *with* stakeholders from the places Julien visited, including the descendants of people who appear in the photographs, as well as artists and designers who currently contribute to the production of the visibility and imagination of future histories. The idea is that this will offer a read of the photographs beyond the context Julien gave them so we can then reconsider their value for both 'African' and 'Western' audiences.

In a series of illustrated letters, I tell Julien about my actions and share my thoughts as they develop. This format allows me to manoeuvre from speculating about Julien's intentions and actions to reflecting on the potential value and meaning his photographs could have in the present, as well as the effects of the way I deal with my self-appointed responsibility to work with this legacy. This is the third letter in an open ended 'correspondence'.[73] Two translated text fragments, which shed light on Julien's practice, precede this letter that speaks of both recent and more distant encounters in which the impact—in terms of both effects and responsibilities—of my and Julien's actions emerge in rather problematic and, for now, unresolved ways.

* * * * *

Excerpt from a radio lecture by Paul Julien, broadcasted in 1933:

> Gbarnga is an economic hub … with a level of activity one wouldn't expect in central Liberia. It is the seat of a District Commissioner, Mr. Ross, for whom I carried a letter from the president giving him the assignment to assist my expedition. It had been difficult along the way to get access to the materials needed for my blood research so any assistance was more than welcome. Mr. Ross went to the market with me, asked the people to squat and, helped by an interpreter, addressed them: 'A powerful witch-man came to the village, a sorcerer, a big medicine man. Tomorrow at 8 am all those suffering from pest, all the lepers, all those with yaws should come to the courthouse to be examined and give blood.' There was obviously a misunderstanding and the man took me to be a medical doctor. I hurried to whisper in the commissioner's ear that I would prefer healthy people. The messenger shouted: 'The healthy should also come, women, children all should come. The whole village should come. Understood?' A loud applause was the result.
>
> Early the next morning I was busy preparing for the research. Eight am there was nobody there. Nine, nobody, quarter past nine Mr. Ross grew nervous and sent out a group of messengers to force the people, with violence if need be, to the courthouse. It was all in vain. The village was completely deserted. The whole community had fled into the forest, and I may add that they did not return before I left a couple of days later.

* * * * *

Excerpt from an interview with Julien published in 1960:

> I can imagine that someone who collects blood samples is thought of as a medical doctor. There are of course photographs on which I am taking or analysing these samples while surrounded by a group of Negroes. I always tell them that I have come to see their diseases. They would not understand my true interests and also, I have been able to help many people with medication, injections and dressing of wounds. The authorities of course know better. [74]

* * * * *

67
Scare quotes are used in this text with words that I would rather avoid, they thus are meant to problematise the conventional categorisation connected to the word.

68
Julien's photographic legacy and the numerous documents related to it are in the care of the Nederlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam.

69
In the film in footnote 5 and elsewhere, Julien speaks of 1926 as the starting point of his work on the African continent. This refers to his journeys to Northern Africa.

70
De Wijs, S. in Bool et al, 2007 '*Dutch Eyes, A Critical History of Photography in the Netherlands*'. 316-319; Zwolle, Waanders Uitgevers.

71
Sontag, S. 1977. *On Photography*. 1. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

72
The stories and pictures reached large audiences through lectures and four bestselling books. See this short film in which Julien himself introduces his practice: https://vimeo.com/showcase/4306567/video/195524279

73
The use of illustrated letters as a discursive format is explored in my doctoral thesis. In PJU, its potential will be further examined. In the first and second letters, I introduced myself to Julien and compared our respective methodologies and methods. All the letters will be published on www.bridginhumanities.nl. Also see https://www.facebook.com/ReframingPJU and https://www.instagram.com/andreastultiens for work progressing.

74
The radio lecture was broadcasted by Dutch national broadcaster Katholieke Radio Omroep. The interview was published by the *Katholieke Illustratie*. Both media had a national reach and a Catholic denomination. In addition to his ideas about science, Julien also operated from a Catholic worldview.

Addis Ababa, Wednesday, 7 August 2019

Dear Dr. Julien,

Sixty-four years after you briefly visited this town on your way to South Western Ethiopia, I am in Addis Ababa. Yesterday, I visited Itegue Taitu Hotel, where you spent your first nights in the country. I brought a print of the Kodachrome slide you made of the accommodation. The host I met was surprised to see how much has changed since 1955. He showed me where you once stood, looking down towards the building behind the restaurant and the tennis court on its right. A banner and a truck now blocked the view. The tennis court, the host informed me, was long gone. Meanwhile, time seemed to have stood still in the restaurant itself. While enjoying my lunch, it was easy to imagine you coming down the stairs at any moment.

While I type this letter on my computer, a documentary titled *The Great Hack*[75] is playing on the television set of my host, artist Michael Tsegaye. This film addresses the theft of personal data shared on the internet, a phenomenon you may remember emerging in the late 1990s. The stolen data was used to influence national elections without the 'provider' being aware of it. You, too, collected data from individuals you encountered on your journeys without their informed consent. This, therefore, seems to be an appropriate moment to share some thoughts with you about the relationship between our respective ambitions and the effects our actions had and could have. In other words, this letter is about impact.

Last Monday, I did a presentation for a group of Ethiopian photographers and designers. After speaking about my way of working,[76] I showed them the photographs and films you produced here. I added translated information from your notebook and from newspaper clippings reporting on a public lecture titled 'Shankala'. Michael told me that Shankala, which is Amharic for 'Black',[77] is now considered to be a derogatory term because it was used to refer to people with dark skin as well as to slaves. I decided to avoid using the word. I did, however, use 'Negroe' and 'Pygmy' when quoting you, even though I'm well aware these words are considered to be offensive, too. Their past and present-day uses by non-Black people like you and me emphasise the differences between people with different positions of power. They generate a distance I consider problematic. One of the members of the audience was indeed offended by my using the words, while others argued that the messenger should not be shot.

It was not the first time I encountered this kind of response to the work I, as a White European, do on the African continent or to the historical materials I bring to the table. I take this to be a reply to the privileged positions that both of us have and use to 'take' whatever it is we need before leaving again. This observation could result in a dismissal of 'your' photographs because it reduces their meaning to your position as a maker. Such a judgment, however, also dismisses the possible agency and relevance of the visibility of the people, places and objects you photographed. It eliminates the potential impact of the accessibility of the photographs *for* them as it does the possibility for people in 'the West' to learn *from* them. In order for this potential to unfold, I take it as my responsibility to explain the purpose of my visit to whomever I encounter and work with. This may lead to uncomfortable situations, as was the case with the person I offended, despite my attempts to carefully position my words. It cannot, however, result in my being less honest about my intentions. Which reminds me of a question. In your writing, you repeatedly mention how the 'natives' you met were rude, primitive or dishonest. Did it ever occur to you that they might have rightfully thought the same of you?

With regards to your first major scientific expedition in 1932, I have a more particular but related concern. In July 2014, I was in Liberia for the third time. During earlier visits, I followed the same route you travelled eighty-two years earlier. I visited, as I mentioned in the previous letter, descendants of 'King' Kwei Dokie and prepared an exhibition of your photographs in the National Museum in Monrovia that was then about to open. Ebola, at the time a deadly and highly contagious virus, had been raging through the region for a couple of months. The crisis related to it reached a new height in the week before the planned exhibition opening. I was invited to speak about the show during the weekly governmental press conference of which Ebola was, of course, the major topic. After providing journalists with numerous facts about the virus, the minister of health addressed the people of Liberia directly through the microphones and cameras in the room: 'You should not be afraid of the health workers, because they too get sick.' I doubted what my ears had heard. As if aware of my incredulity, the minister repeated the remark several times. Then I remembered reading an anecdote in which the population of Gbarnga fled town because of the way in which the district commissioner had communicated the purpose of your visit. It occurred to me that the minister's remark could've been part of a damage control strategy related to the actions of people like you, who through their practice generated a distance between 'the sick' and those coming from elsewhere to treat (and research) them. Is it possible that you contributed to the 'fear-related behaviour' the minister responded to?[78] Would you do things differently now?

And also, going back to a more general concern about impact, would it make sense for you to be decentred from the meaning and value of the photographs you produced? This question and the others asked earlier will stay with me as I work my way towards the next letter.

With best regards,
Andrea

75
Noujaim J. and Amer, K., dirs., *The Great Hack*. 2019.

76
Stultiens, Andrea. Pages 13-30 of my dissertation (https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/67951)

77
Shinn, D.H. and Ofcansky, T.P..,*Ethiopian Historical Dictionary*. 363. Washington, Scarecrow Press.

78
A lot has been written, particularly in mainstream news media, about this phenomenon; however, a historical perspective is rarely taken. See Shultz et al. 'The Role of Fear-Related Behaviours in the 2013-2016 West Africa Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak'. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, November 2016.

Dining hall of Itegue Taitu Hotel, August 6th 2019.

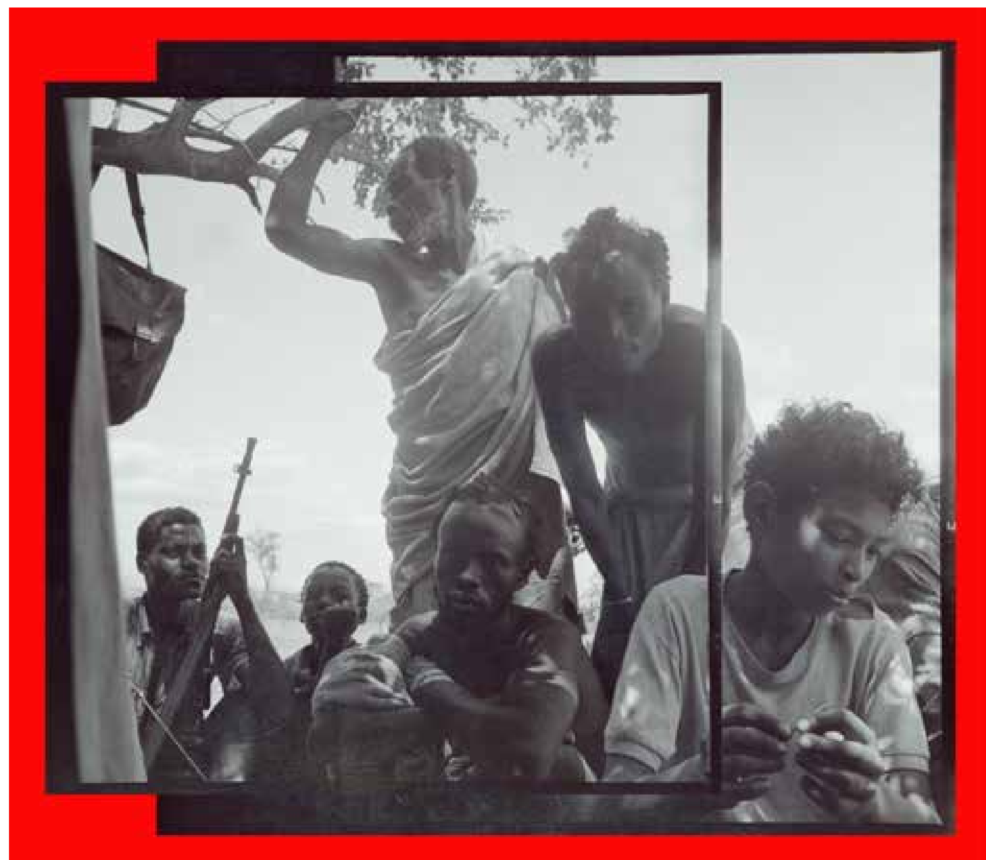
PJU-colour slides box 6 [Itegue Taitu Hotel, Addis Ababa, 1955]. Collection Nederlands Fotomuseum.

Illustration (based on negative filed as PJU-656 exposure 3) with the quoted interview. Personal collection.

The interpretor of Mr. Ross (on the far right of the photograph) addressing the people at the market of Gbarnga, Liberia, August 1932. Collection Nederlands Fotomuseum

Governmental press conference, July 15th 2014, Monrovia, Liberia.

PJU-637, exposure 1. Mission Neghelle, Ethiopia, July/August 1955. Collection Nederlands Fotomuseum.



Composite of exposures 5 and 6 from film PJU-657. Collection Nederlands Fotomuseum.

P.S. I almost forgot. Yesterday, I came across the first proof of your presence on the African continent from a perspective other than your own. Johan Helland, an emeritus anthropologist specialising in issues concerning the Horn of Africa, replied to the message I sent him. He was the eight-year-old son of the Norwegian family with whom you spent a night in Southern Ethiopia.[79] He recognised all the adults in a group portrait I attached to my words. You took the picture at the mission in Neghelle. Johan does not remember you himself but recalls his mother mentioning an anthropologist who was on his way to research 'pygmies' and visit Lake Stephanie.

*****

The encounters generated by my engagement with Julien's legacy continuously make me aware of certain privileges I 'enjoy' as a White woman, such as freedom of movement and access to resources. They also bring up the relativity of my rather specific expertise as an artist and researcher educated in the Netherlands. Little can be taken for granted when it comes to, for instance, the benefits of 'Western' healthcare or the ethnic categorisation of people. Spending time with Julien's photographs where they were produced decades ago leads, time and again, to experiences that make it possible to connect particular narratives to photographs that were, so far, framed from an ideologically coloured outsider's perspective. These experiences and narratives have the potential to expand existing ideas of 'African' pasts and presents for audiences both on the African continent and elsewhere. For this to be possible, they have to be presented in ways that are open-ended and inclusive of the multiple perspectives related to Julien's legacy.

79 From Paul Julien's Ethiopia notes, private collection.

The Impact of the White, Male Gaze

Andrew Jackson and Savannah Dodd

Upon the announcement that the White finalists of the 2018 Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize had all produced portraits of Black sitters, the historian John Edwin Mason wrote on Twitter that the portraits, 'like all of western visual culture, swim in a sea of white supremacist cultural flows … like most creators & producers of western visual culture, [they] have not challenged those flows, those ways of seeing.'[80]

In a previous article,[81] we asked why images produced predominantly by White, cisgendered men are chosen over images produced by historically marginalised photographers. Here, we want to explore the consequences of the continued prioritisation of the White, male gaze and the repetition of its visual tropes, both for photojournalism and broader society.

Colonial lenses

The origins of photography coincide with two important moments in history: positivism and colonialism. The core tenant of photojournalism, that photographs must represent the truth, comes as a hangover from the era of positivism into which the camera was born. In the nineteenth century, seeing really was believing, and scientific knowledge was restricted to that which was observable and reproducible. The camera was therefore used as a scientific instrument tasked with capturing an accurate, objective and truthful representation of the world.

The history of the camera is also inextricably linked to the colonial project. Photography has acted as an instrument of colonialism since its inception, beginning with the photographic application to anthropometry[82] and intimately connected to acts of appropriation[83] and objectification.[84] These uses of photography, combined with the belief in photographs as true and objective representations of reality, underpinned and validated the colonial project in a way that other artforms, like painting or drawing, could not. Hannah Mabry explained:

> That most if not all people believe each photograph appearing before them to be a truthful representation of its subject causes serious social issues. Photography, like any form of representation, was and is a social practice whose connotations were organized through cultural ideas and contracts … During colonialism photographs portrayed explicit cultural ideas, justified colonization, advertised empire, and represented different peoples and cultures, and fed into a racial discourse of European superiority.[85]

Within any historical overview of photojournalism, it's clear that colonial legacy has continued to dictate how the world is represented. Even the way that Africa is described today by industry professionals reveals how imbedded colonialism is in the institutions that govern our media. In a now infamous job advert for Nairobi Bureau Chief Michael Slackman, the International Editor for the *New York Times*, conjured up a fetishised image of Africa:

> It is an enormous patch of vibrant, intense and strategically important territory with many vital storylines, including terrorism, the scramble for resources, the global contest with China and the constant push-and-pull of democracy versus authoritarianism.[86]

Slackman's words stem from a dominant ideology that continues to cast Africa, and notions of Blackness in the diaspora, through a colonial prism. The impact of this is clear; the advert seeks to employ a journalist able to continue its master narrative about Africa. Slackman's ideal candidate must show 'a commitment to understanding the needs and behaviours of our audience', so no matter how contrite Slackman's *mea culpa*,[87] the advert is a clear signposting of the type of content the *Times* desires from its suppliers. There is no question that photojournalists who are unable or unwilling to produce imagery that conforms to Slackman's desired narratives will not be reporting on Africa for the *New York Times*.

Perpetuation of the White, male gaze

If representations are to be seen as reliable and truthful, they have to be presented to us in ways which we already presume they exist, or in ways we've been told they exist, within the dominant ideology. Slackman's advert, then, isn't really just that of a Nairobi bureau chief; it's an advert for the institutionalised perpetuation of a colonialist narrative. This is how stereotypes are constructed, maintained and continued.

But if editors are upholding the framework of the colonialist narrative, it is predominantly White, male photographers—and indeed some conditioned marginalised photographers—who are complicit in providing content that conforms to these tropes and stereotyped representations. Although we recognise that people will do what is necessary to find work in a competitive environment like photojournalism, there is, nonetheless, a lack of criticality. Max Pinckers writes about the repetition of tropes in photojournalism:

> I don't think photographers that produce such images are doing it on purpose … I think it's something that's deeply ingrained into the subconscious. If a template-like image wins the World Press Photo award, it's going to influence the next photographer going out into the field wanting to win the next World Press Photo award.[88]

80
Mason, John Edwin. Twitter post. 18 October 2018, 8:45 a.m. https://twitter.com/johnedwinmason/status/1052948844504322048?lang=en

81
Dodd, Savannah, and Jackson, Andrew. '"Good" photographs: The white male gaze and how we privilege ways of seeing'. *Witness*, 11 May 2019. https://witness.worldpressphoto.org/good-photographs-the-white-male-gaze-and-how-we-privilege-ways-of-seeing-30ac3f005acc

82
Spencer, Frank. 1992. 'Some Notes on the Attempt to Apply Photography to Anthropometry during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century'. In *Anthropology and Photography: 1860–1920*, edited by Elizabet Edwards. London: The Royal Anthropological Institute.

83
Sontag, Susan. 1977. *On Photography*. London: Penguin Books.

84
Barthes, Roland. 1981. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang.

85
Mabry, Hannah. 'Photography, Colonialism and Racism'. *International Affairs Review*, fall 2014. https://www.usfca.edu/sites/default/files/arts_and_sciences/international_studies/photography_colonialism_and_racism_-_university_of_san_francisco_usf.pdf

86
'Nairobi Bureau Chief at The New York Times'. *MyJobMag*, 3 July 2019. https://www.myjobmag.co.ke/read-job/50658/jobs/nairobi-bureau-chief-at-the-new-york-times

87
Slackman, Michael. Twitter post. 7 July 2019, 2:25 p.m. https://twitter.com/meslackman/status/ 1147980093429620741

88
Crosson, Kayle. 'The camera that produces perfect pictures'. *Witness*, 30 May 2018. https://witness.worldpressphoto.org/the-camera-that-produces-perfect-pictures-b43072adb649

While job-seeking and trophy-hunting are key causes for the repetition of these photojournalistic tropes, we must nonetheless return to the gatekeepers responsible for prioritising the White, male gaze—and by extension, White male photographers.

World Press Photo reports that of 5,202 professional photographers from more than 100 countries over a four-year period, over 80% are male: 'more than one half participating photographers are Caucasian/White' and 'only 1% of participating photographers classify themselves as Black.'[89] That's means only 52 Black photographers participated in World Press Photo between 2015 and 2018. If the percentage of female participation holds true across racial lines, which is unlikely due to the double marginalisation of women of colour, then that means that no more than 10 Black women participated over a four-year period.

Let us be clear: this does not mean that there are only a few Black or female photographers. Instead, this makes it clear that Black, female and other marginalised photographers haven't been supported, encouraged or otherwise enabled to produce photographs in the same way that White men have. This becomes evident when we look at the discrepancy in the representation of women in the industry at different stages in their career. Amanda Mustard states succinctly: 'Female photojournalists go from a majority in university to the minority in the industry.'[90]

This matters because we all bring our own life experiences to the table when we photograph a subject. Tara Pixley explained it best:

> We shape the world in our own image: our individual understandings of truth and reality, our personal experiences and backgrounds do play into the scenes we choose to capture, how we frame them and whether we find them deserving of public dissemination. There is so much more to the photographs we take, select, and publish than aesthetics and the reality of any individual moment. Rather, each frame captured is a single millisecond in a sociocultural, historical reality that predates subject, photographer, and viewer.[91]

When photographs reflecting a White, male gaze are invariably chosen above photographs presenting alternative perspectives, a trickle-down effect manifests as pressure on all photographers, regardless of their marginalisation, to conform to the accepted canons. As Lagos Photo Festival Director Azu Nwagbogu explained:

> African photographers also tell these [White] stories because they think it's what the West wants to see … They instinctively begin to follow these canons because they think this is what will get published.[92]

African photographers and, to extrapolate further, photographers of colour in general, via their adherence to these canons, exhibit and replicate the very same form of Orientalism within their photographs, creating images which objectify and victimise—just like their White counterparts. Similarly, women photographers are forced to replicate the male ways of seeing and being in the world that have come to constitute 'good' photography.

Impacts of a dominant gaze

We've explained in this article that photojournalism has carried into the present two critical characteristics from its birth in the nineteenth century: our collective trust in its objectivity and a colonial lens that upholds certain representations of the world and silences others. By placing a higher value on representations that reinforce a colonialist and patriarchal view of the world, and by imbuing these images with the truthfulness commonly attributed to the photographic image, we've further inherited a limitation on the range of 'truths' that are represented in photographs. The danger herein cannot be overstated.

Photographs shape how we understand the world. They can confirm our prejudices or break them down. When the images we consume replicate patriarchal or colonialist tropes, these tropes become further embedded in our collective conscience.

Under the White, male gaze, women are fetishised:

> The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.[93]

Representations of Blackness and people of colour take on a problematic, crisis-driven aesthetic, by showing people as always violent, bestial, broken, inferior or dead, as Sarah Sentilles aptly points out:

> Publishing some images while suppressing others sends the message that the visible bodies are somehow less consequential than the bodies granted the privilege of privacy … 'The more remote or exotic the place, the more likely we are to have full frontal views of the dead and the dying,' Sontag wrote. But 15 years later, her words are not quite true. Sontag's sentence could be rewritten: The darker the skin, the more likely we are to have full-frontal views of the dead and the dying, even when those suffering bodies are just across town, down the street, right next door.[94]

89
Hadland, Adrian, and Barnett, Camilla. *The State of News Photography 2018*. World Press Photo. https://www.worldpressphoto.org/getmedia/4f811d9d-ebc7-4b0b-a417-f119f6c49a15/the_state_of_news_photography_2018.pdf

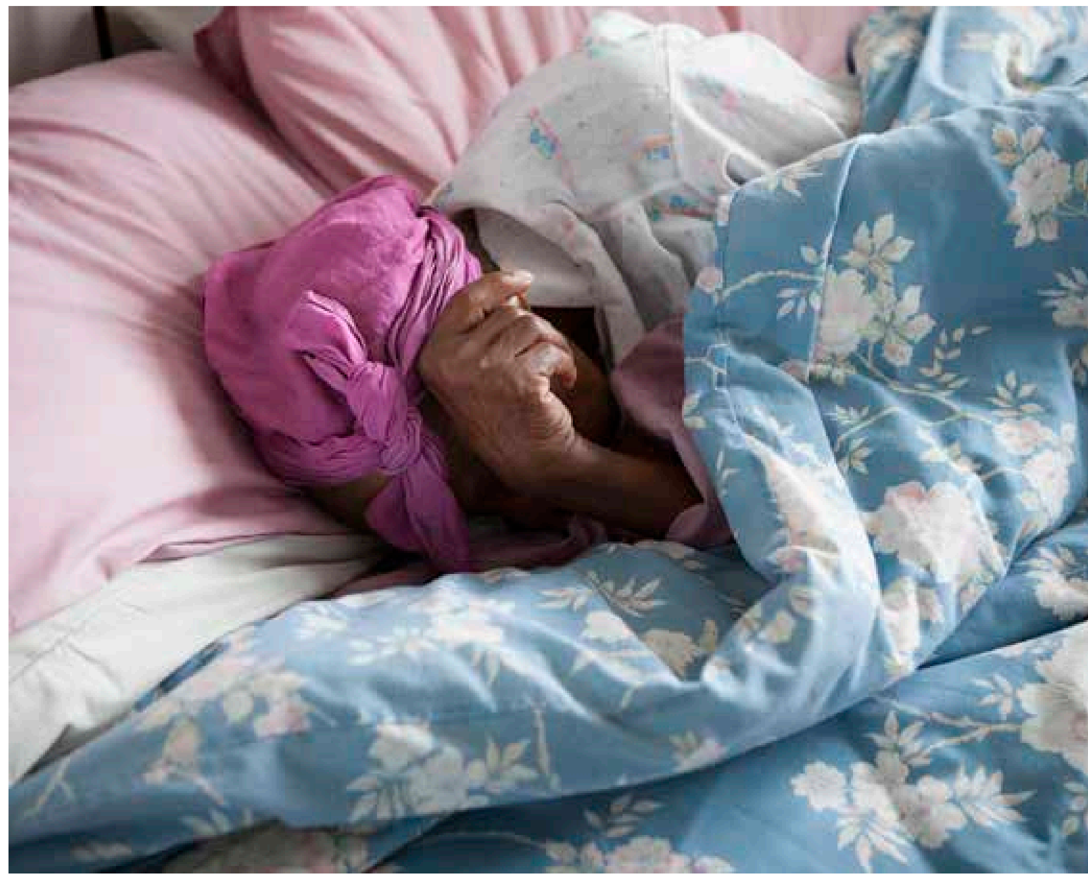
90
Mustard, Amanda. 'Want more women in journalism? Get predators out of our way'. *Witness*, 4 October 2017. https://witness.worldpressphoto.org/want-more-women-in-journalism-get-predators-out-of-our-way-f6c85a1fe0e4

91
Pixley, Tara. 'Why We Need More Visual Journalists and Editors of Color'. *Nieman Reports*, 15 May 2017. https://niemanreports.org/articles/a-new-focus/

92
Taylor-Lind, Anastasia. 'How a Lack of Representation Is Hurting Photojournalism'. *Time*, 4 May 2016. https://time.com/4312779/how-a-lack-of-representation-is-hurting-photojournalism/

93
Mulvey, Laura. 1999. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. 837. New York: Oxford UP.

94
Sentilles, Sarah. 'When We See Photographs of Some Dead Bodies and Not Others'. *The New York Times Magazine*, 14 August 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/14/magazine/media-bodies-censorship.htm



Amy sleeping, Dudley, England

Hand #1 Kingston, Jamaica

Outside the house where
Amy lived Kingston, Jamaica

Sea #1 Montego Bay, Jamaica

These representations effectively serve to reify sexism and racism. They do not create empathy with the viewer; they subjugate women and place Black bodies away from any notion of the perceived normality reserved for Whiteness in our visual landscape.

On the other hand, Tara Pixley points out that it's the humanised images—images like 'peaceful protesting en masse and black communities working harmoniously'—that 'evinc[e] empathy rather than a paternalistic sympathy.'[95] When there's a dearth of these kinds of images, we're left with an empathy gap, or an inability to relate to or understand individuals with different lived experiences.

Photographic representations do not only shape how we understand others, they also shape how we understand ourselves. Daniella Zalcman wrote that 'The way others see us, and the way we see ourselves, are not always aligned.' Therefore, there are consequences when others are responsible for constructing our image in the media:

> Photographs don't just tell us stories, they tell us how to see. So when representations of womanhood, the female body or femininity are largely constructed by men, it's not just that they define us, they teach us how to see ourselves.[96]

Photojournalistic tropes can even shape the trajectory of our lives. Leigh Donaldson wrote the following about a 2011 study, *Media Representations & Impact on the Lives of Black Men and Boys*[97]:

> …negative mass media portrayals were strongly linked with lower life expectations among Black men. These portrayals, constantly reinforced in print media, on television, the internet, fiction shows, print advertising and video games, shape public views of and attitudes toward men of colour. They not only help create barriers to advancement within our society, but also 'make these positions seem natural and inevitable'.[98]

Just as important as the impact of *how* subjects are represented is the impact of when subjects are *not represented at all*. What are the consequences of *not* seeing yourself represented? How does this affect someone's sense of belonging, their ability to express themselves to other members of their society and their own self-image? Robin R. Means Coleman explains that these omissions are not a kind of stereotype, as stereotypes 'actively signify that which is a present and identifiable, constructed image.'[99] Instead, these omissions are a kind of 'systematic annihilation' of marginalised groups.

95
Pixley. 'Journalists and Editors of Color'. https://niemanreports.org/articles/a-new-focus/A

96
Zalcman, Danielle. 'We've made an all-woman photography issue. This is why'. *Huck,* 26 November 2018. https://www.huckmag.com/art-and-culture/photography-2/daniella-zalcman-women-photograph-change/

97
Topos Partnership. 2011. 'Social Science Literature Review: Media Representations and Impact on the Lives of Black Men and Boys.' New York: The Opportunity Agenda. http://racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Media-Impact-on-Lives-of-Black-Men-and-Boys-OppAgenda.pdf

98
Donaldson, Leigh. 'When the media misrepresents black men, the effects are felt in the real world'. *The Guardian*, 12 August 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/12/media-misrepresents-black-men-effects-felt-real-world

99
Means Coleman, Robin. 2008. 'The Symbolic Annihilation of Race: A Review of the "Blackness" Literature'. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30860804_The_Symbolic_Annihilation_of_Race_A_Review_of_the_Blackness_Literature

100
Mayes, Stephen. 'World Press Photo: 470,214 Pictures Later'. *Jens Haas* (blog), 26 May 2009. https://www.jenshaas.com/2009/05/26/world-press-photo-470214-pictures-later/?source=post_page-

101
Simons, Margaret. 'Journalism faces a crisis worldwide—we might be entering a new dark age'. *The Guardian,* 15 April 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/apr/15/journalism-faces-a-crisis-worldwide-we-might-be-entering-a-new-dark-age

Within his role as a World Press Photo judge in 2009, Stephen Mayes asked the question: 'What is journalism if it doesn't inform but merely repeats and affirms?'[100] However, a lot has changed in ten years. The immediacy of social media and the accessibility of the camera has meant that photojournalism is no longer the domain of an elite few. As Margaret Simons explains: 'Today, just about anyone with an internet connection and a social media account has the capacity to publish news and views to the world. This is new in human history.'[101]

This democratisation is a critical step towards a photojournalism that reflects the diverse range of narratives that exist in the world. This comes with a responsibility for photographers to recognise that not every story is theirs to tell and to reflect on the question: am I the best-placed person to tell this story? If the answer is 'no', then perhaps there are other ways of enabling those who are best placed, for example by seeking out photographers from the community in question or by facilitating participatory photography practices.

But diversity in storytelling is not enough. As we have explained, even some marginalised photographers have internalised and reproduced the same perspectives and stories. Therefore, we need to actively interrogate the messages our photographs are sending, what tropes they invoke, the harm they do and what stereotypes they rely on. We do this by heightening our sensitivity to the visual language we employ, recognising that aesthetic choices are not benign. These choices carry with them their own coded messages that have the power to either reproduce or subvert stereotypes. Going back to the words of John Edwin Mason, we need to challenge cultural flows. We need to redefine the visual language of photojournalism if we are to subvert the White, male gaze and its ways of seeing in the world.

Medicines for sick farm employees, Central Province, Kenya

The Impact of the Camera on Wheels: The Moving Gaze in the Modern Subject

Sara Dominici

Writing in 1885 on the practice of combining photography and cycling for leisure purposes, George Vincent, a contributor to the British periodical *Amateur Photographer*, said the following:

> Hobbies, like men and women, seldom do well apart; and the recent marriage of the tricycle with the camera is in my opinion 'a good match.' Undoubtedly they were 'made for each other,' the one being the necessary counterpart to the other. What common sense therefore has joined together, let no man put asunder! Young ones we wish you luck![102]

This marriage had been made possible by the development and mass production of new camera and cycle technologies, which began in the 1870s and included dry plates, thanks to which photographers no longer needed to attend to glass plates immediately before and after exposure, and tricycles and quadricycles, three- and four-wheeled machines safer and more practical than the high-wheeler favoured for racing events. Vincent's enthusiasm was widely shared by his fellow amateur photographers. 'The two pursuits go most admirably together; in fact, neither is complete without the other', wrote a photographer in 1884.[103] 'Photography and cycling—particularly tricycling—are, and must always be, most intimate associates,' another commented the following year.[104]

What this combination entailed, however, was no small feat: camera equipment was still heavy and fragile (depending on the size and number of glass plates used, it could've weighed between 5 and 25 kilograms), and the cycling machines were rather bulky and laborious. Figure 1, which shows a tricycle with a camera mounted just underneath the saddle between the two big wheels, offers an illustration of such a precarious arrangement. The roll holder carrying negative paper patented by George Eastman had entered the market in 1884, followed in 1885 by the 'safety' bicycle, a machine with two same-size wheels similar to today's bicycles. Nonetheless, until the second half of the 1890s, the majority of upper- and middle-class photographers, the only group who could realistically afford both technologies, continued to prefer glass plates over film because of their clear definition and sensitiveness, fundamental to a class that sought to demonstrate artistic value as a marker of respectability. Consequently, they continued to ride tricycles and quadricycles to transport this material.

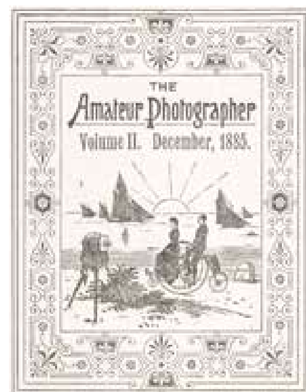


Figure 2
Front cover of the Amateur Photographer bounded volume for 1885. Advertised in (1885). Amateur Photographer. (11 December), 610. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: LOU.LON 123B.

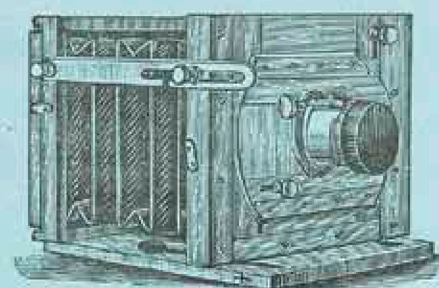
Figure 1
Carte-de-visite, E. Denney & Co. Studio, England, early 1880s
© Lorne Shields, private collection

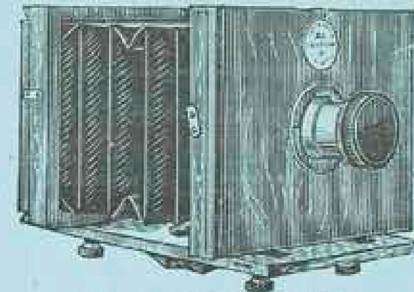
As contemporary accounts reveal, a key reason photographers were undeterred by these difficulties was that the self-propelled vehicle afforded the freedom to travel where and when one liked, and thus to find more subjects to photograph. The front cover of *Amateur Photographer*'s bounded 1885 volume (figure 2), which shows a couple riding a tandem quadricycle by a shore and a camera mounted on a tripod in the foreground (the suggestion being that this is the camera the couple secures to the back wheel), is indeed about visual and mobile independence: a location off the main tourist sites and a camera positioned to capture what's found therein. The photographs of a man standing next to a sociable quadricycle on an unidentified country road (figure 3) and that of a woman sitting on the same model in what appears to be a rural hamlet (figure 4) were perhaps taken to demonstrate that they had reached a location unfrequented by the masses.

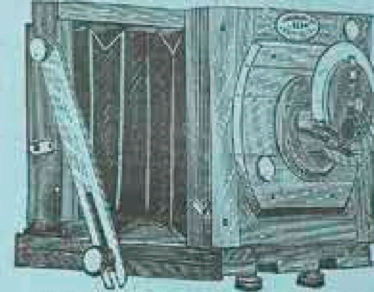
This engagement with technology, however, did more than simply expand one's field of action. Most importantly, it impacted on how people experienced the landscape they rode through and, consequently, how they thought of themselves and their visual experiences. At this time, body-machine interactions were central in the public discourse. In the context of widespread industrialisation, for example, technology was seen by some as hindering the human body (e.g., William Morris's view that it 'reduce[d] the skilled labourer to the ranks of the unskilled'),[105] while others saw it as extending the body's capabilities (e.g., Henry Ford's comparison of the worker's body to the assembly line).[106] For its part, cycling was considered by those who practised it to be a splendid extension of the body. In this sense, we could think of these early camera and cycle combinations as a prosthetic technology experienced by its users as an augmentation their bodily capabilities and sensory faculties, especially their sight. This was because, by virtue of a new experience of speed, cycling not only allowed people to see more things but also to see them *differently*. A typical description of this new sense of empowerment and what it meant for photographic practices was published in 1885 by *Photographic News,* another major British photographic periodical:

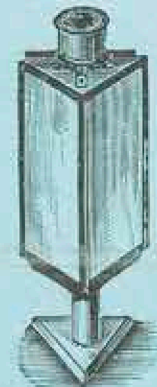
102
Vincent, S.G. 'The Tricycle and the Camera', *Amateur Photographer,* 4 September 1885, 344.
103
Salmon, S.H.R. 'Correspondence. The Tricycle and Photography', *Photographic News*, 18 April 1884, 252.
104
Anon. 'Our Views', *Amateur Photographer*, 20 March 1885, 378.
105
Morris, W. 1885. *Useful Work v Useless Toil*. 37. London, UK: Socialist League.
106
Ford, H. 1923. *My Life and Work*. New York: Doubleday

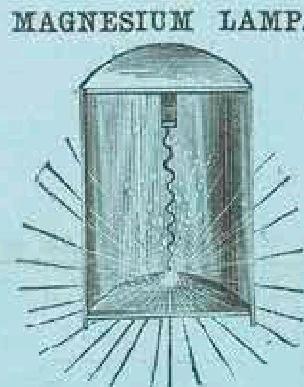
Figures 3 + 4
England, early 1880s.
© Lorne Shields, private collection.











← Figure 5
Advertisement published in (1884). Amateur Photographer. (12 December), 160. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: LOU.LON 224.

> we know of no greater pleasure than a spin along the country roads on a bicycle. The bracing air, the easy exercise given to all parts of the human frame, the delight of the eye with the surrounding scenery, give new life to a man … As the rider spins along, his eye catches some little bit of scenery, some quiet nook with bubbling water, or some exquisite vista stretching in the distance, that he would gladly fix in some more permanent form than upon the tablets of memory.[107]

The text starts by highlighting the positive impact that cycling, widely regarded as a truly modern technology, was deemed to have on the human body. In its fusion with the machine, the capabilities of the body are extended—it is 'give[n] new life'—or, to put it differently, becomes modern. The author then describes the new experience of how this modern subject looks at the world. Operating from a mobile position, the 'eye catches' a rapidly changing environment; it perceives the landscape not as a stable view to be contemplated but as a collection of different 'bits' that viewers assemble in recollecting *their own* individual experiences of looking at the world. This was the moving gaze of technologically empowered individuals who'd developed a new sense of self and place and, accordingly, felt in control of their own visual experiences. Many contemporary accounts similarly describe this new way of seeing the world. For example, almost ten years later, Milton Hayden said the landscape 'seems to open out before one's eyes like a magnificent, ever-changing panorama', and this makes one want to '"bag" the numerous little "bits" of sylvan scenery which surround him on every side.'[108]

This had a profound influence on photographers' expectations, fostering a desire to use the camera to engage with such a proliferation of individual perspectives. As both examples indicate, however, existing cameras were considered unsuited to the requirements of this moving gaze. While by the 1890s glass plates were fast enough to capture moving subjects, the sense of freedom, independence and spontaneity—including of visual experiences—that photographers had come to appreciate while cycling dissipated with each step of the fiddling set-up and capture of just one exposure. As Cyclops (a pseudonym) wrote as late as 1899, '[a]s the pace is often pretty fast, one does not want to carry weight, and when the time necessary to select the view, unpack, and set up the camera and expose, then to take down and repack on cycle.'[109] Consequently, cycling photographers joined outdoor photographers in asking manufacturers for compact, portable and accessible cameras. Their requests, however, were also seen as crucially motivated by a desire to use the camera in a way considered to be suited to the gaze of a modern and fast-moving individual.

Figure 6
Advertisement published in (1891). The American Cyclist. (July), 165. © John Weiss, private collection.

Camera manufacturers' early attempts at meeting cyclists' demands can thus be read as a way of adapting the technology to the requirements of a modern subjectivity. This was the case, for example, with the Birmingham-based firm J. Lancaster & Son, a major camera maker in this period that in 1884 presented itself as '[t]he largest makers of photographic apparatuses in the world, for tourists, bicyclists, tricyclists'.[110] The apparatus promoted specifically for cyclists, the Instantograph (top right, figure 5), came with a lens and stand or a cycle clip 'in place of stand'. Its promoted benefit was that it allowed photographers to get rid of the cumbersome tripod and instead use the wheel as a support, as shown in the same ad. Unsurprisingly, many photographers complained about how this constricted one's freedom because one was limited to work from the road and at the height of the wheel. This image of a camera on a wheel, however, also crystalises the unresolved desire to pass the speed of cycling and associated benefits of autonomy and spontaneity to photography, something that would come to define the compact cameras of later years.

Figure 6, an ad produced by George Eastman in 1891 to promote the Kodak camera (possibly the Kodak B Daylight Box, launched that year) illustrates some of the possibilities enabled by compact cameras and the reasons why cameras like that, as opposed to previous types, were considered suitable for the moving gaze of a modern subject. Combining the high-wheeler and the Kodak was an interesting choice because the safety-bicycle era was by now well underway. The high-wheeler, which people would have associated with the fast machines used for racing in the 1870s and early 1880s, might have been used to highlight some of the features of the Kodak: it was as fast as a high-wheeler and so easy to use you could take photographs while pedalling, which is what the photographer in the illustration seems to be doing. The speed of the bicycle merges, in this image, with the speed of the camera. In his interaction with technologies, the physical abilities of the photographer are augmented. He can move quickly, and he can capture what he sees without having to stop: in this example, he masters the tools as he masters his environment. In doing so, he can capture *his own* experience of the world and those 'bits' that many cyclists were writing about.

By the turn of the century, cameras and bicycles were almost ubiquitous in Britain, and taking photographs during a cycling holiday became the norm. For the generation of photographers and cyclists who came of age in this period, the intertwined speeds of cycling and seeing defined their experience of modernity. As Scribe (a pseudonym) enthused in 1903, recollecting a bicycle descent from the top of the Grimsel Pass in the Swiss Alps:

> [A]s we flew down the steep road, 'every now and then,' to borrow from Mark Twain, 'some ermined monarch of the Alps swung magnif-

107
Anon. 'Photography for Wheelmen', *Photographic News*, 16 October 1885, 659.

icently into view for a moment, then drifted past an intervening spur.' But whereas Mark Twain saw these things from a slow-moving carriage, we had kaleidoscopic changes of beautiful landscape, owing to the great pace at which we were travelling. With him the handle of the panorama turned slowly; we had it highly geared; his was the pace of Venice, ours that of New York.[111]

The author's speed-based analogy clearly captures the shift in the visual culture of this period. The way of seeing enabled by the horse-drawn carriage, which the protagonists of Mark Twain's *A Tramp Abroad*[112] used to traverse the Alps, is associated with the panorama. Such a large, slow-moving circular painting sought to simulate one's presence in the landscape so that this could be appropriated visually, thus relying on the view of looking as a means to knowledge. For Scribe, this belonged to the past ('Venice'). Conversely, cycling made him feel at the cutting edge of human experience, an active and self-aware participant in modernity ('New York'). His visual experiences are accordingly associated with the kaleidoscope, the tube containing mirrors and coloured pieces of glass that represent a fractured and idiosyncratic way of seeing modernity, one in which knowledge depends entirely on the single observer.

The cameras now commercially available and that cyclists like Scribe would've used (while only incidentally mentioning them in their tour accounts) were small, light and compact. The Idento camera, for example, produced by the company Adams & Co., catered to this market (figure 7). As the man in the ad says, 'that ruin reminds me that I have my 'Idento' here, I had quite forgotten it.' Photography had become an assumed tool that could be swiftly summoned to record anything that attracted one's attention. Vincent, who, as seen at the beginning of this article, ended his ode to photography and cycling with 'Young ones we wish you luck!', would have been pleased; what his generation had longed for had finally been realised. In the present-day media environment, replete with anxieties over technology's influence on our experience of the 'real', where new prosthetic tools from smartphone cameras to selfie sticks are shaping how we move through and see the world, the experiences of these early pioneers can perhaps help us reimagine contemporary body-machine interactions as empowering and inspirational. For us, as for photographers in the late nineteenth century, what's at stake is our own sense of self, as how we choose to use technology impacts who we are.

108
Milton Hayden, C. 1894. 'The Camera on Castors', *Photographic News*, 3 August 1894, 483–486.
109
Cyclops. 'A Photographer's Companion', *Photographic News*, 27 January 1899, 58.
110
[Advertisement]. *Amateur Photographer*, 14 November 1884, 96.
111
A.J.C. 'Through Switzerland Awheel', *Polytechnic Cycling Club Gazette*, June 1903, 4–5.
112
Twain, M. 1880. *A Tramp Abroad*. London: Chatto & Windus

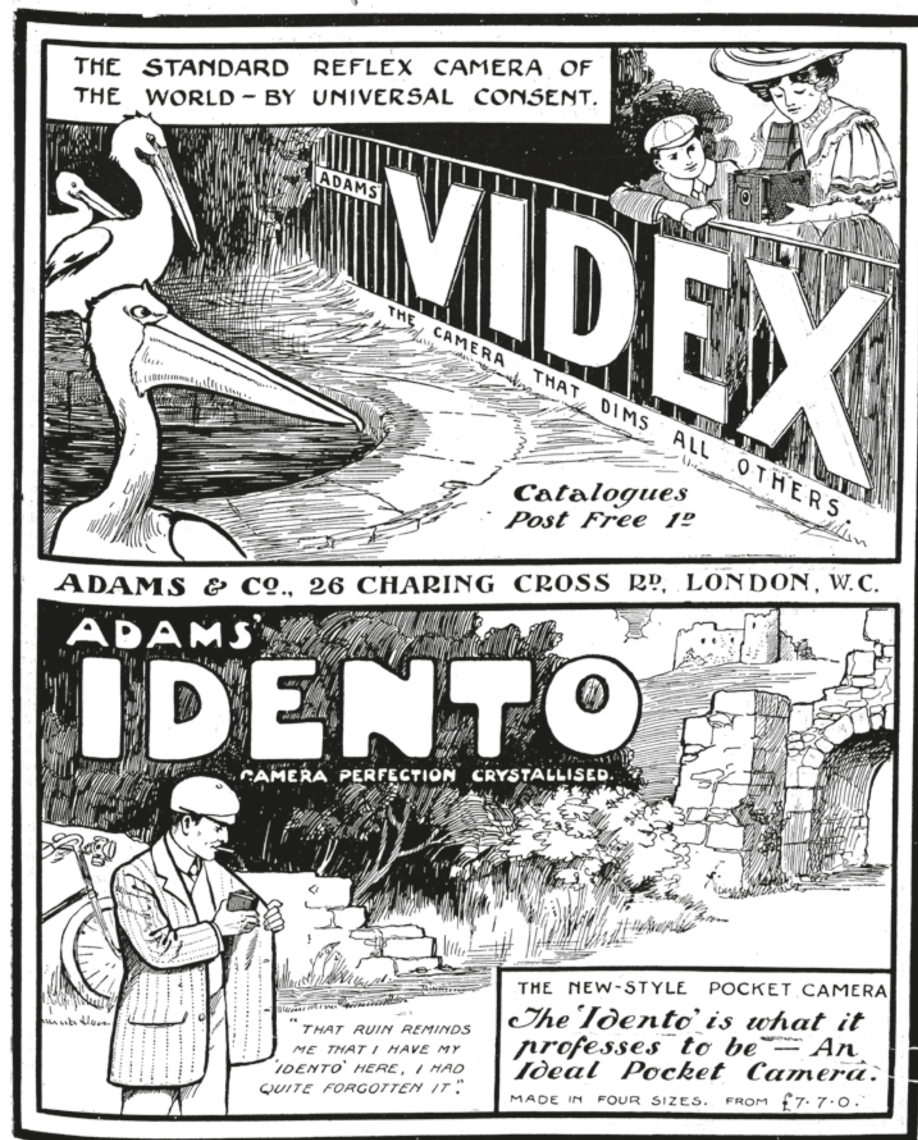


Figure 7
Advertisement published in (1906). Amateur Photographer. (29 May), xxiii. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: LOU.LON 13.

Fashioning an 'Image Space' in Apartheid South Africa: Afrapix Photographers' Collective and Agency

M. Neelika Jayawardane

Almost forty years ago, South Africans from a range of social, economic and racial backgrounds organised to challenge the repressive policies of apartheid, its violent police apparatus and the National Party, which had ruled the country since it came into power in 1948. Artists, cultural workers, members of fast-food workers' unions, university student groups, faith-based organisations and members of the radical, oppositional press came together, despite their differences in race, culture, class and political opinions. Their goal: nothing short of regime change from within, with their collective power as leverage. Their vision: a non-racial future in which South Africans of all backgrounds played a part.

This collective spirit, evident throughout the 1980s' organised resistance to apartheid, was instrumental in the formation of Afrapix, one of the most influential photographers' collectives in the country. According to Afrapix cofounder Paul Weinberg, those who initially came together to discuss the possibility of forming a photographers' collective had two major objectives: first, to become 'an agency and a picture library'—modelled on the principles of Magnum Photos, the photographer-owned and operated cooperative founded in 1947 by the photographers Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, David Seymour, George Rodger, and William Vandivert—and second, to 'stimulate social documentary photography in the country.'[113] Coming together during this last, turbulent decade of apartheid, Afrapix photographers wanted to ensure that photography became 'a more effective vehicle for social change.'[114] They dedicated themselves to exposing the lies behind the regime's propaganda, using photography as their medium. They provided a visual dimension to the South African resistance movement through their artistic and social documentary photography projects, as well as their journalistic work. As photographers who embraced the philosophy and principles of social documentary photography, they were motivated by the imperative to make things visible and transparent—and to bear witnesses. But many Afrapix photographers took a more radical approach. At the influential Culture and Resistance Symposium and Festival, held in Botswana in June 1982,[115] Peter McKenzie—who was, at the time, the first 'Coloured' person to attend the exclusively Whites-only Technikon Natal to study photography—famously stated, in no uncertain terms, that the 'committed photographer' must not only 'take sides' and 'accept their responsibility to participate in the struggle' but also use their cameras as 'weapons' in the liberation struggle.[116] He urged photographers to 'be involved in the strikes, riots, boycotts, festivities, church activities and occurrences that affect our day to day living [and to] identify with [their] subjects in order for … viewers to identify with them.'[117]

113
Weinberg, Paul. 1990. 'Beyond the Barricades.' *Full Frame: South African Documentary Photography*. 1:1: 5.
114
Weinberg, Paul. 1984. 'Afrapix – Going beyond the image.' *Creative Camera*. July/August: 1479.
115
The Culture and Resistance Symposium and Festival was organised by *Staffrider* and the Medu Art Ensemble (a cultural association operating in Botswana, formed by Botswanan and South African artists and writers who opposed South Africa's apartheid policy of racial segregation and violent injustice). It was hosted by the Botswana National Museum and held in Gaborone, Botswana. It brought together a large cohort of activists, political party members living in exile and those who identified as 'cultural workers'—artists, photographers, writers, musicians and performers. Included in the festival's programme was an exhibition of photography.
116
Katz, Leslie. 1971. 'An Interview with Walker Evans'. *American SuburbsX*. https://www.americansuburbx.com/2011/10/interview-an-interview-with-walker-evans-pt-1-1971.html.
117
McKenzie, Peter. 1982. 'Bringing the Struggle into Focus'. *Staffrider* 5, no. 2: 18.
118
See: Ollman, Leah. 1991. *Camera as Weapon: Worker Photography Between the Wars*. San Diego, CA: Museum of Photographic Arts: 'Photography entered a new age of creation in the mid-1920s with the advent of small, hand-held cameras, such as the Leica and Ermanox, capable of functioning with available light rather than flash. These cameras facilitated a new, more candid documentation of the world, while faster, more efficient rotary printing methods made this vision widely available to the German public through a proliferation of new, photographically illustrated magazines.

McKenzie and others of his generation were inspired by the German worker photography of the 1920s—factory workers and union members used newly available, more affordable cameras, such as Leicas and Ermanoxes.[118] Likewise, the Afrapix photographers' mandate was to be participants in action, aligned with the politics and principles of the anti-apartheid movement. Their work was grounded in the belief that exposure and visibility were not the end goal; rather, the objective was 'preconditions for an empathetic and humanistic reaction that would prompt international political action.'[119] In many ways, the Afrapix photographers' ultimate goal was nothing short of the desire to use photography as a political tool in the liberation struggle. As Pierre-Laurent Sanner's rousing rhetoric sums up, Afrapix's objectives were to expose the atrocities of a regime that had been in power since 1948 and, just as importantly, to foster and train a new generation of black photographers. At the time, South Africa had been experiencing the most turbulent racial history. As particularly intimate witnesses of the events of the period, photographers felt the imperative necessity of testifying to their involvement through their images.[120]

Given the state's repression, censorship laws and sanitised propagandistic images whitewashing the violence under which the collective lived and operated, calls for 'objectivity' seemed high-minded and unrealistic, if not directly feeding into the directives of the state; the times 'did not call for objectivity, art, or multiple perspectives' but a commitment to portray 'the truth'.[121] Afrapix needed to create a radical, oppositional image-bank to counter the surfeit of propagandistic images showing Black people as incapable of political leadership or intellectual achievement.

* * * * *

Long before the formation of Afrapix in the 1980s, South African photographers had been using their cameras—the instruments through which Black and African people were (and continued to be) depicted in denigrating ways—to write over the colonial archive and the apartheid state's growing reservoir of propaganda. In the hands of Black South Africans, cameras and pictures became conduits for Black people to refashion themselves, re-visualising the country and its inhabitants' day-to-day experiences in spite of the superfluity of a racist gaze. It wasn't only a way of wresting control of the image field from the state but a visual practice essential to the struggle for political liberation and the desire for self-liberation. Black photographers also understood photography's power to bear witness and disseminate a political message to audiences around the world.

Despite photography's rich presence in South Africa, little to no opportunities were available for Black people interested in the discipline, this because of the racialised education system, with its built-in inequalities preventing Black learners

from advancing. Black, Coloured, and Indian people were barred from attending photography classes at technikons, to which only White students were admitted. For most, imagining the camera as a conduit to engage, contemplate or theorise their outer and inner worlds wasn't a realistic possibility.

A number of catalysts and conditions were essential to the formation of Afrapix, helping the cofounders forge a clear vision for their future. On practical and logistical levels, Afrapix's formation was aided by the cultural magazine *Staffrider*.[122] Since its inception in 1976, the magazine created a much-needed social location for 'up to then unheard' and unknown poets, writers, artists and photographers, so that they could learn about each other's work.[123] Biddy Partridge, a Zimbabwe-born musician and photographer who'd worked with *Staffrider* since its early days, was instrumental in selecting the photographers' work for publication. Through seeing each other's work in *Staffrider*, photographers learned that there were a significant number of photography enthusiasts interested in using the discipline to document the injustices they, too, were seeing.

The idea of creating a photographers' collective was also influenced by a prevalent cultural ethos among activists, student groups, unionists, artists and cultural workers who used collective action to push for change. At the time, photographers were generally disconnected from each other by geography, class and race. They had little to no structure to aid their development, nor did they have connections to platforms that would publish or exhibit their work. The structure of a collective provided a spatial construct, bringing together photographers from Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, each isolated in South Africa's socio-political geographies of White suburban enclaves, Black townships and designated areas for 'Coloureds' and 'Indians'.

Although Afrapix's official formation as a photographers' agency took place in 1982, they'd already begun discussions in 1981 at *Staffrider* publisher Ravan Press's offices in Johannesburg. Omar Badsha, Judas Ngwenya, Jimmy Matthews, Biddy Partridge, Mxolise Moyo, Lesley Lawson and Paul Weinberg were among those at the first meeting, along with Lloyd Spencer and others from Ravan Press, including Mike Kirkwood of *Staffrider*.[124]

Afrapix photographer Cedric Nunn, one of the collective's first coordinators and administrators, also remembers that Rev. Bernard Spong, who headed the Interchurch Media Project, which was part of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), supported Afrapix during its early years.[125] For a small fee, the SACC provided Afrapix with an office, a darkroom connected to the office area and bookkeeping services at Khotso House, a modernist, concrete high-rise building located at 42 De Villiers Street, in the heart of Johannesburg's Central Business District. The building became a hub, playing the important 'role of incubating organisations that were directly confronting the apartheid state', according to Nunn.[126] It housed alternative media groups and several community organisations, charities and NGOs, including the Black Sash and the United Democratic Front (UDF). Afrapix photographers not only created practical collaborations with these groups; in the face of police raids, restrictions and states of emergency, they provided each other with genuine support and solidarity.

* * * * *

At its height, Afrapix's full members included a large repertoire of photographers, as well as a number of photographers who contributed their work to the agency as non-members.[127] Many young, White photographers, such as Eric Miller, remember that they were aware that the politics of the country made them angry, but they had limited experience of what apartheid meant for Black communities and individuals. He remembers that the police would regularly release a so-called *Unrest Report*, and the media would quote those reports, saying that due to 'provocations by Black provocateurs, "police were forced to retaliate" or "forced to fire"'; but even then, he knew that 'it simply didn't sound logical or correct.'[128]

Anna Zieminski was 19 when she bought her first camera. It was 'a tiny, baby Rollei', and with that, she took photography classes at Ruth Prowse School of art, learning about F-stops, basic darkroom techniques to process and print black and white photographs, and, eventually, Ansel Adams's 'zone system'.[129] There were many factors that led to her political awakening; one event that stands out in her mind was the discovery of Leslie Lawson's book on domestic workers, which she found at Grassroots, 'a little bookshop in Observatory', a left-leaning artists' and writers' enclave in Cape Town.[130] Another significant event she remembers was the day she decided to go to Khayelitsha, an area to which Black Capetonians were about to be forcibly removed. At the time, the apartheid municipal government was telling a completely different story; 'they were trumpeting how they were building a new development … a place called "Our Home".'[131] When she got to the location, she saw that some sand dunes had been cleared off to flatten the land, and that 'some tall lamp posts, like [those] at football stadiums … toilets, and houses [were] beginning to go up.' But it was nothing but a desolate, windswept area that 'was such a contradiction to the name, "Our Home".'[132] Subsequently, Zieminski moved to Johannesburg, where she met powerful Black women who were community workers, which also made her want 'to know … what [else] was kept from me? I knew I was in the receiving or privileged end of the system. I felt … why had I all these amazing people been kept from me?'[133] For Gille de Vlieg, her political awakening came with a personal revelation in her 40s: 'My daughter was about to leave; I was emotionally upset. I wanted to do something that was

119
Campbell, David. 2009. '"Black Skin and Blood": Documentary Photography and Santu Mofokeng's Critique of the Visualization of Apartheid South Africa.' *History & Theory* 48 no. 4: 53.

120
Sanner, Pierre Laurant. 1999. 'Comrades and Cameras'. *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography.* Edited by Saint Léon, Pascal Martin, Fall, N'Goné, and Chapuis, Frédérique. 253 – 259. Paris: Revue Noire. 253.

121
Wylie, Diana. 2012. 'Introduction to special issue: Documentary photography in South Africa.' *Kronos* 38, no. 1: 17.

122
Staffrider Magazine began its first print run in 1976; it reflected the political and cultural needs of the progressive, leftist and radical youth that emerged after the 1976 student protests against the forced introduction of Afrikaans in schools.

123
Weinberg, Paul. 1989. 'Apartheid – a vigilant witness, A reflection on photography'. In *Culture in Another South Africa,* edited by Willem Campschreur and Joost Divendal. 63. London: Zed Press.

124
Weinberg, Paul. Interview with author. Cape Town. 26 October 2018.

125
Nunn, Cedric. Interview with author via WhatsApp. 20 March 2019.

126
Nunn, Cedric. Interview with author via WhatsApp. 21 March 2019.

127
Full members included, in alphabetical order, Joseph Alfers, Peter Auf de Hyder, Omar Badsha, Steve Hilton Barber, Graham Goddard, Dave Hartman, Lesley Lawson, Chris Ledochowski, John Liebenberg, Herbert Mabuza, Humphrey Phakade 'Pax' Magwaza, Kentridge Matabatha, Rafique Mayet, Mxolise Mayo, Vuyi Lesley Mbalo, Peter McKenzie, Roger Meintjies, Eric Miller, Santu Mofokeng, Deseni Moodliar, Cedric Nunn, Billy Paddock, Biddy Partridge, Myron Peters, Jeeva Rajgopaul, Wendy Schwegmann, Cecil Sols, Guy Tillim, Zubeida Vallie, Gille de Vlieg, Paul Weinberg, Gisèle Wulfsohn and Anna Zieminski.

128
Miller, Eric. Interview with author via WhatsApp. 20 December 2018.

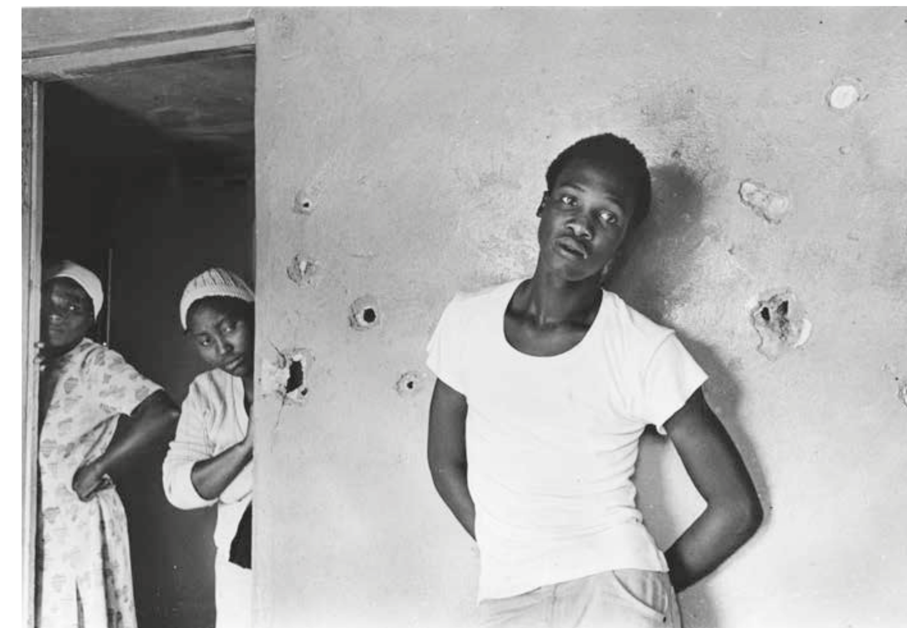
129
Zieminski, Anna. Interview with the author. London. 2 February 2019.

130
Ibid.

131
Ibid.

132
Ibid.

133
Ibid



Cedric Nunn

The morning after. The youth who was the target of a massacre in which twelve members of his family where shot dead. Security forces were implicated in the murders then dubbed the 'AK47 massacre'. This youth was killed several months later. KwaMakhuta. KwaZulu-Natal. 1987 Credit ©Cedric Nunn

Anna Zieminski

Albertina Sisulu and Helen Joseph at a FEDTRAW meeting ©Anna Zieminski, SAHA collection AL2547

White members of JODAC visiting Alexandra to commemorate the "Alexandra massacre" ©Anna Zieminski, The Unbreakable Thread publication, SAHA collection

COSATU Cultural Day, JHB. 18/7/87 ©Anna Zieminski, SAHA collection AL2547

relevant for my own life.' One night, she was so agitated she couldn't fall to sleep. 'It was … a long night of the soul. Up till then, I was a wife, mother and sportswoman.' She read one of Andre Brink's seminal novels *Rumour of Rain* or *Dry White Season*, and the following morning, she knew that the 'something' she wanted to do would involve women's organisations. She'd seen members of the Black Sash women's organisation quietly holding anti-apartheid placards on street corners as she drove to the offices of her and her husband's sail-making company. She 'found the Black Sash in the telephone book', phoned them and began working in their Advice Office. There, she learned that a root cause of the urban migration of Black people from rural areas to the city was due to forced removals of entire settlements and villages from arable, desirable land designated for Whites to 'Bantustans' – remote, inhospitable locations. Those displaced people were forced to come to Johannesburg in search of an income because they'd lost their way of life and their livelihoods generated through farming and rearing cattle and because of taxation by the apartheid state. She began to go to those rural areas to document what was happening and record organised resistance to forced removals. Because Black Sash had offices in Khotso House, where Afrapix was also based, she met Weinberg, who invited her to join Afrapix.

Of those who operated in Durban, there were Rafique (Rafs) Mayet, Cedric Nunn, Jeeva Rajgopaul, Pax Magwaza, Myron Peters and Deseni Moodliar (now Moodliar Soobben). Badsha generously opened his tiny photographic darkroom in the Good Hope Centre on Queen Street (currently named Dennis Hurley Street) in Durban to a disparate band of hopeful photographers from a range of apartheid-era racial groups (Black, Coloured, and Indian of both Tamil and Gujarati descent), social classes (some whose families had worked in the cane fields; others whose families were middle class business people), educational backgrounds and levels of photography experience. They honed their skills through the photography workshops he organised; he invited veteran photographer David Goldblatt to, over the course of a weekend, 'train [them] in the Ansel Adams "zone system" of developing and printing.'[134] Acts of generosity like this—by Goldblatt, in particular—helped professionalise Durban photographers, most of whom had no formal training because photography courses were typically only available to White students.

Rajgopaul had been a physics teacher who decided to leave the profession to become a full-time photographer. Nunn had been straining to find something more fulfilling than a lifetime of working at the Amatikulu sugar mill, 130 kilometres from Durban. He'd been 'making occasional forays into the city of Durban' to hear live music and socialise; there, he met McKenzie, then a third-year student at the Technikon Natal.[135] He remembers that upon seeing McKenzie's portfolio, he 'had an epiphany moment'.[136] Mayet was similarly from a working class background; he'd been working at the Sasol chemical factory when he decided to leave after seeing a horrific accident that permanently disabled a fellow worker. He was at home, unemployed, when Badsha invited him to try his hand at photography.

Moodliar Soobben, one of two 'non-White' women to join Afrapix, came from a Durban Indian family that ran a successful business. She recalls that '[m]y dad [was] always reminding me that I wanted to become a human rights lawyer', but her interest in photography took her to Technikon Natal to study photography. She became the second Black (or 'Indian') person to attend Technikon Natal for photography after McKenzie. Like McKenzie (who was two years ahead of her), she was forced to apply for and obtain a special permit, as a Black (or Indian) South African, to study photography at the Whites-only institution. She remembers clearly that she 'was the only non-White in my class.' Because of the hard-won education of the Durban contingent who used Badsha's darkroom, she was the only person to have formal training in photography.

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As young, politicised photographers, Afrapix's earliest members had been independently 'documenting the horrors of apartheid resettlement, squatter life, migrant labour [and] poverty'.[137]

Many saw themselves as comrades of the working class, intricately embedded in the struggle against apartheid, along with the greater collectivising forces of the time. Unions represented one of the most effective modes of collectivised effort, spearheading pushback against corporate and government policies that exploited Black workers. If photography is stereotypically thought of as a visual technology that works best with 'action' and drama—and, in the case of photography in South Africa during the 1980s, as something dependent on the actions accompanied by spectacular violence—attending trade union meetings would be the antithesis. Discussions, collective agreements and decisions moved at a glacial pace, although punctuated by moments of impassioned speeches. Yet, Afrapix photographers attended these meetings faithfully to learn about the concerns and daily struggles of union members. Reflecting back on his years as a photographer with Afrapix, Chris Ledochowski noted, '[e]ntire days were spent attending the meetings of one union or the other; we were highly committed and wanted to change the course of history with our cameras.'[138] Their cameras followed and recorded ordinary South Africans' concerns, rather than solely the spectacular moments of confrontation.

Much of the way apartheid operated was through legislation and institutional violence. To photograph those almost invisible machinations meant that Afrapix photographers became witnesses to the 'slow processes' of political

134 Nunn, Cedric. Interview with author via WhatsApp. 20 March 2019.

135 Ibid.

136 Nunn, Cedric. 2011. 'The Bright Light of the Maelstrom: Okwui Enwezor interviews Cedric Nunn'. In *Cedric Nunn: Call and Response*. Fourthwall Books: Johannesburg.

137 Weinberg, 'vigilant witness', *Another South Africa*, 65

138 Sanner, 'Comrades', *African and Indian Ocean*, 253.

movement towards justice and democratisation; these photographers became attuned to photographing less obvious and difficult-to-imagine violence. This meant living with the experience of the quiet, quotidian violence faced by displaced communities long after the spectacular violence of forced removal, replete with bulldozers razing homes. It meant following those who were forcibly displaced to the hinterlands and recording the violence they faced: little to no services, opportunities for work or arable land to farm. It meant being present before a community is displaced to record how they did, in fact, organise and present powerful, unified bodies that resisted, sometimes for decades, the might of the apartheid legal and policing institutions that wished to erase their existence. Leslie Lawson remembers that one of the unspoken rules in Afrapix was that they used wide angle lenses to include and reveal 'as much of the context and the landscape as possible.'[139] In a country with a government and legal system that actively prevented much of the 'context' of its divided communities as possible from entering the White public's (and each other's, too, by default) field of vision, this was a revolutionary photographic practice.

The practices of Afrapix photographers meant that much of their work had a remarkable quality that the work foreign photojournalists, parachuted into the country, did not. Rather than showing their subjects as a dehumanised and powerless lot demeaned and damaged by police brutality and reliant on violence as their sole means of expression, Afrapix photographers showed those people as they saw themselves: wrestling for power by any means possible, both peaceful and not. As photographers in a collective, their individuality took a back seat; they didn't adopt the role of 'saviour' assuming the mantle of giving a 'voice to the voiceless.'

Having positioned their work so clearly alongside radical, oppositional politics, Afrapix members and contributors had no doubt that they posed a threat to the apartheid regime. As Okwui Enwezor recognised, in the 1990s, photography 'frightened the regime' because no other form of testimony matched its ability 'to expose and counteract the sanitized, propagandistic images working in the [apartheid] government's favor.'[140] Even when photographs showed ordinary scenes in which Black people were carrying on with life, creating culturally vibrant centres outside the confines of the depravation that apartheid's mandates engineered, they threatened and 'taunt[ed]' the state, argues visual culture scholar Kylie Thomas.[141] While these photographs depicting 'alternative' and thriving existences did not 'directly attack the state [they] … ignored it' and thus illustrated that 'there is a space outside apartheid's stranglehold.'[142]

* * * * *

As Afrapix grew in influence and numbers during the mid- and late 1980s, its photographers faced challenges from increasingly oppressive media censorship laws, which restricted their movements and what they could photograph, as well as pressures from market forces governing the media and internal discord.

To begin with, apartheid security forces continually harassed Afrapix photographers. They lived in constant fear of police surveillance, infiltrators, spies and direct threats. In June 1986, the apartheid police raided offices of the UDF, SACC and Afrapix, all of which were housed in Khotso House. In August, the building was bombed for harbouring anti-apartheid groups, resulting in the injury of nineteen people.

Media restrictions in the country grew in 'length, scope, and complexity with each successive state of emergency', expanding on the 'one hundred censorship statutes already in existence'.[143] These restrictive laws were designed to combat 'the public relations nightmare the apartheid government was experiencing overseas, namely, images of white police officers brutalising unarmed black civilians'.[144]

There were also practical realities that gave pause to many executive editors as they looked at their bottom lines. The mainstream press in South Africa actively avoided running stories that showed opposition to the party's official line. It mainly censored itself in order to survive, and it actively avoided running stories that could have been read as opposed to government policy.[145] The paper's White readership, from which the mainstream newspapers earned their revenue, complained that they were bored and annoyed by headlines about the experiences of Black South Africans.[146] Moreover, the addressing of 'race issues' didn't appeal to advertisers, who didn't want to appear as though they supported dissent.[147] That meant Afrapix photographers' work, which conscientiously objected to the apartheid state, wouldn't find space in mainstream newspapers. Rather, the resistance and alternative presses and anti-apartheid organisations provided space for Afrapix productions.

Life as a photographer, whether as a member of Afrapix or an independent, remained precarious, and securing a dependable source of income was difficult. According to Cedric Nunn, Afrapix photographers mostly found work with the 'so-called alternative press newspapers … as "stringers"',[148] independent photographers hired to take photographs of a particular event. But few of these outlets hired staff photographers, with only the odd person like Santu Mofokeng getting a staff position at *The Nation*.'[149] And the pay, whether from the mainstream or alternative newspapers, was poor—maybe 'R15 per photo, starting out', notes Nunn; even after accounting for inflation, and the fact that the pay improved later in the 80s, they couldn't 'make [a] living doing the news beat.'[150] If photographers were able to get jobs as stringers with foreign wire services or get commissioned to cover a story, the pay was better.[151] However, Nunn maintains that those jobs were hard to come by.

139
Masduraud, Nathalie, and Urréa, Valérie. 2014. 'Afrique du Sud Portraits chromatiques'. Uploaded in 2013. https://vimeo.com/69172861
140
Enwezor, Okwui. 1996. 'A Critical Presence: Drum Magazine in Context'. In *In/Sight: African Photographers 1940 To The Present,* edited by Okwui Enwezor, Octavio Zaya and Olu Oguibe. 191. New York: Guggenheim Museum.
141
Thomas, Kylie, and Green, Louise. 2016. 'Introduction – Stereoscopic Visions: Reading Colonial and Contemporary Photography.' In *Photography In and Out of Africa: Iterations with Difference*, edited by Kylie Thomas and Louise Green. United Kingdom: Routledge.
142
Ibid.
143
Trabold, Bryan. 2018. *Rhetorics of Resistance: Opposition Journalism in Apartheid South Africa*. 28. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh
144
Ibid., 29.
145
Ibid, 23
146
Ibid., 43.
147
Ibid.
148
Nunn, Cedric. Interview with author via WhatsApp. 20 March 2019.
149
Ibid.
150
Ibid.
151
Ibid.

Moreover, the international media in particular demanded spectacular, two-dimensional visuals for the sake of sales and stock values. In order to make an income, photographers often felt the pressure to work in ways that were sometimes antithetical to the politics they'd come to espouse: that is, photographing communities in a way that provided deep context rather than caricatures of a violent, dystopian Africa. Given that the money was in those spectacularly violent images, photographers found it difficult to balance their desire to change and challenge visual tropes with the realities of making an income. For instance, a photograph of a 'white policeman beating a black school child or protester'[152] would show the apartheid government as the instigator of violent actions, creating a public relations and diplomatic nightmare. But the iconography essential for such stark images of violence also depends on the continuation of predictable narratives and simple binaries between 'good' and 'evil'. Even if photographs of police brutality made the apartheid regime look bad, the people they violated often appeared to be without agency.

Afrapix also developed ideological rifts within. Lawson remembers that the legalism and didacticism embedded in Afrapix's politics could be limiting. Although she understood photography as 'a language' that came with nuances and contradictions, the politics of Afrapix maintained 'that the camera was a weapon of the struggle'.[153] At the time, photographers felt the pressure to internalise this refrain.[154] However, therein lay the conflict: 'if you are saying it is a weapon of struggle' notes Lawson, 'you are making it one dimensional. And that did happen in Afrapix.'[155]

Conversely, as Afrapix's influence and roster of contributing photographers grew, it became evident that not all of them were onboard with the non-racial politics and collective action that drove the activism and became the popular strategy of the 1980s. Some weren't as committed to developing a political consciousness to undergird their work or as the motivation for their practice; others made successful careers producing images that reflected demands for stereotypes. Many who became involved in Afrapix towards the latter part of the collective's life were anti-authoritarian and rebellious, but they weren't necessarily as articulate or clear about the need to work collectively against White supremacy. Many were rebelling against the restrictions that the apartheid regime placed on them as White youth, especially mandatory conscription into the South African Defence Forces. As Gille de Vlieg, one of the photographers who joined Afrapix early in its formative years, remembers: 'We were really a conglomerate of, I suppose, somewhat rebellious people. All of us had a slightly "fuck you" nature, as one could put it.' At the time, apartheid 'gave us a unity; apartheid … and the fight against it … was always the great unifier.'[156]

They wanted to photograph the unfolding action and violence, a feature of South African photojournalism in the late 1980s and early 90s. Dozens of photojournalists were flying into the country, wanting to get in on the danger and adrenaline-fuelled 'missions'.

Black photographers remember that they simply had more difficulties because they came with far less resources than their White counterparts; these difficulties came about as a result of structural racism, rather than because of individually-directed racism. For instance, it was sometimes difficult for them to find transport to a particular assignment since they didn't often have the luxury of owning a vehicle or having money for petrol; so a White photographer with those resources was likely to get the jobs that required mobility. Black photographers also had little access to the funds required for expensive camera equipment and photo-developing materials. When he moved to Johannesburg, Nunn realised that there were few in the Afrapix group who would actually spend time teaching technical proficiency to other, less experienced photographers. He remembers that though there were several White photographers with whom he felt a deep kinship, he was sometimes forced explain his (and other Black photographers') disadvantages in stark terms:

> We came from fucking Bantu education; the [White photographers] … when we asked for help from the guys who did know and had training … they laughed at us. These guys were very good at doing the talk … but it took Goldblatt to [eventually] set up the Market Photo training centre. We then became part of the original workshops that became the Photo Workshop.[157]

Nunn maintains that the 'greatest difficulty [for Black photographers] … was not being networked into the publishing world [which was] almost entirely white at the time … [Because] whites were likely to have an "uncle in the business", they knew more about publishing and what was possible, so were also more likely to get commissioned.'[158]

As several women photographers noted, there was very little recognition of gendered differences, or everyday sexist attitudes towards women or patriarchal expectations. For instance, the expectation that women would serve as office coordinators or in administrative positions, rather than aspire to develop their skills as photographers, was the norm. But as several photographers and office coordinators noted, these were such normative attitudes at the time that they never questioned or challenged them; de Vlieg notes that the idea of taking on an administrative position may have, in fact, been in her on mind, as she had previously been doing administrative work for her husband at their shared business. But she, and other women who joined Afrapix simply refused to be limited; instead, they did as they saw fit—and necessary. As a member of the Black Sash, de Vlieg used her camera to document injustices and pushed to get the photographs published in order to educate a (White) public that was often ignorant of these events.

Nunn's memories of rivalries and the some-

152
Mayet, Rafique. Interview with author. Johannesburg. 15 October 2018.
153
Masduraud and Urréa, 'Portraits chromatiques'.
154
Ibid.
155
Ibid.
156
de Vlieg, Gille. Interview with author. Johannesburg. 31 October 2018.
157
Nunn, Cedric. Interview with author via WhatsApp. 20 March 2019.
158
Nunn, Cedric. WhatsApp message. 23 August 2019.

times-dismissive attitude he encountered from those who refused to understand the disparities and disadvantages arising from racial (and at times gendered) differences accentuate some of the less-than-idealistic issues with which non-racial collectives of the period dealt. His pointed critique illustrates that the idealistic thesis that Pierre-Laurant Sanner present in 1999[159]—of 'comrades and cameras', or of a band of brothers (and some sisters), united as one, who went forth to fight a regime's injustices using photography as their weapon—may not, in fact, be wholly accurate.

* * * * *

Afrapix disbanded in 1991 amid rising internal tensions, moves by some photographers to establish a more commercially minded agency and growing pressure from international photographers hired by foreign news agencies. However, its members' photographs remain a unique record of the struggles waged by the mass democratic movement and the myriad of grassroots resistance groups that sprang up, as well as a record of ordinary life under apartheid in the 1980s.

Ultimately, Afrapix's long-term impact as a collective and an agency that its founding members engaged in the invaluable work of creating what I refer to as an image-space, despite ever more restrictive and often dangerous conditions. In his investigation into the ways in which the resistance press in South Africa operated under the states of emergency, Brian Trebold uses the term 'writing space' as a 'metaphor to describe the parameters of expression' and as a way to show how 'editors, journalists, and attorneys working for the newspapers devised various legal, writing, and political tactics to maximise their writing space' even as the government, using states-of-emergency legislation, worked to constrict expression.[160] This is similar to the ways in which Afrapix photographers pushed the boundaries of apartheid censorship in concert with resistance organisations and the anti-apartheid alternative-media community that emerged in the late 1970s and early 80s. Together, they helped create visual spaces in which they could challenge the narrow picture circulated by the state and mainstream media within the country and the often misleading narratives that reporters and photojournalists from international news agencies disseminated to a global public.

The collective influenced the opening up of photography to those who would otherwise, under apartheid, not have had the chance to record and disseminate their worlds and experiences as they saw them. Its legacy is today evident in South Africa's thriving and multifaceted photography scene. It's also evident in the historical importance of Afrapix photographers' images; their work has contributed to how the public—both within and outside South Africa, as well as the generations that came of age in subsequent decades—envisions what it meant to live under an unjust, racist system of governance and what it meant to resist that government's dehumanising edicts, the structures that upheld racial hierarchies and the police that maintained the status quo with violence. Their photographs remain essential to how we comprehend and decode apartheid.

159 Sanner, 'Comrades', *African and Indian Ocean*, 253.

160 Trebold, Bryan. 2018. *Rhetorics of Resistance: Opposition Journalism in Apartheid South Africa*. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh

The Crisis of the Cliché

Has conflict photography become boring?

Peter Bouckaert

For accomplished conflict photographers, the hardest part of the job is getting to where the action is. Once in the thick of it, instinct and experience take over. Their senses are on high alert as they wait for the elements of a powerful image to fall into place.

Actually, the latter part is more difficult than it sounds: when really dramatic things are happening really quickly before your eyes, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking you'll capture them by just pressing the shutter release, whereas it's ever crucial to think about composition, what's happening in the corners of your frame and other technical issues. The best conflict photographers can cope with everything happening and focus on capturing striking images. The process of composition becomes instinctive in those situations, but capturing the emotion doesn't. That's an entirely more complex process.

Almost every rubber raft packed with desperate migrants hitting the Greek shores in 2015 made for powerful images, with the vivid colours of the lifejackets, the panic-stricken faces onboard and the presence of infants and toddlers among them. It was much the same with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's drug war in 2016. Photographers could snap away nightly, photographing the latest victims of a drug war executed by the police (or police-tolerated hit squads): young bodies next to a police-planted handgun, surrounded by grieving relatives.

Limited edition impact

When I covered the bloodshed in the Central African Republic in 2014 for Human Rights Watch, photographers could head out on the violence-plagued streets of the capital Bangui, and expect to witness a few lynchings before breakfast. The killers didn't flinch from our cameras—in fact, when we would leave in disgust at their brutality, they would invite us to stay to witness further mutilations, saying, 'We are not finished yet.' They seemed surprised we didn't want to keep photographing.

But what the dramatic photographs from the European migrant crisis, the Philippine drug war and the civil war in the Central African Republic do not capture is the throng of photographers standing on the other end of the camera, often ensuring no other photographers or cameras are in their shot, creating the illusion that they are the only ones on the scene.

If a camera had been turned on the photographers, you'd have generally found a dozen of them lined up side by side behind the yellow police tape of the drug war scenes in the Philippines or on the beach in Greece during the refugee crisis, strictly abiding by the new rules of conflict photography (rule number one: don't step into another photographer's frame).

Conflict photography is facing a crisis, and it's a crisis of the cliché, a crisis in which the originality is lacking and the dramatic is rendered banal. War photography—long the most dramatic of subjects in the visual arts—is at times boring.

Year after year, we see the same images endlessly repeated in our media, at award ceremonies and at photography festivals.

This failure limits the impact of war photography. We've become inured to seeing dramatic, often violent, but very similar images from conflict after conflict, and we're rarely moved to register the horror behind them, let alone take action to stop it. We just turn the page and move on.

What's to blame

The print media crisis has led to the collapse or reorganisation of newspapers and magazines that war photographers once relied upon for their bread and butter. During the Balkan Wars, outlets such as *Time* and *Newsweek* permanently assigned photographers to the conflict with generous benefits, including expenses and double-day rates.

With the ability to devote months or even years to a story, the great photographers of the time had the luxury to stay away from clichés and explore nuances and backstories. They could earn the trust of their subjects, embed themselves with various fighting sides and come back with images that were unique, striking and impactful.

All that has changed. There's hardly a conflict photographer left in the world with that kind of job security. Assignments are counted in days, not weeks or months, with the exception of some unique outliers like those working for *National Geographic* and *The New York Times*, which continue to invest in long-reported work. On short assignments, conflict photographers lack the time to explore in depth; rather, they go out with a list of images they need to complete the assignment.

Two years ago, they all headed to Bangladesh, and all shot images of newly arrived refugees crossing the watery border, the misery of the refugee camps and portraits of rape and massacre survivors. They all knew what their editors were looking for, and most of their work looked very similar—even down to the portraits of the same female survivors of rape and massacres from the village of Tula Toli.

When we talk about the impact of photography, we should not only think about the impact of the images on us and the general public. We should also pause to reflect on the impact such a herd mentality has on photographic subjects. Imagine the impact on a rape and massacre survivor of having her portrait taken by dozens of photographers, each spending hours snapping away, or of repeatedly being asked how her children were murdered or gang-raped in front of her.

What was it like for Muslim migrants arriving in Greece to be faced by a wall of cameras? When male relatives on the rafts objected to female migrants being photographed, photographers would sometimes insult them, saying they were in Europe now and better get used to having their women photographed.

The culture within conflict photography is also partly to blame for its downward slide. It's a macho culture in which, like notches on a belt, the number of conflicts covered earns a photographer respect. Afraid to miss a big story, too many conflict photographers jump from conflict to conflict, padding their portfolios with superficial images. Such photographers wouldn't have wanted to miss Libya in 2011, Syria in 2012, the Central African Republic in 2014, the refugee crisis in 2015, the drug war in the Philippines in 2016 or the Rohingya crisis in 2017. There were countless other interesting stories unfolding elsewhere, but swarms of conflict photographers travelled like a herd to those high-profile stories. Once they'd checked off the assignment, they moved on to new adventures, leaving behind a coverage vacuum (Syria's war rages on, as does the conflict in the Central African Republic, the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, the drug war in the Philippines and the Rohingya crisis).

Beyond the changing media environment and the often toxic culture of war photography, the world in which conflict photographers work has also shifted. Just over a decade ago, conflict photography was an exclusive club of intrepid and talented photographers who provided us with our only images of wars around the world, often at great risk. In today's social media environment, we are flooded with violent images from conflict zones, many of them taken by citizens and activists posting to social media. In such a crowded field, the erstwhile uniqueness of war photography has faded away.

The more intimate path

There's a way out of this crisis of conflict photography. Many of the best conflict photographers have never succumbed to the shallowness currently plaguing their profession. They know that great photography requires time and effort and often takes place far away from the circling pack. These photographers tread a more intimate path towards stories with unique and impactful approaches.

Even in a crowded media environment, it's possible to find fresh and powerful ways to tell stories. In 2014 in the Central African Republic, Marcus Bleasdale and I left behind the rest of the media focused mostly on the capital Bangui and its shocking violence and travelled for months deep into the bush to find the people affected by the conflict further afield. We drove for days, negotiated with violent rebels, waded through rivers and looked for signs of life in deserted, burned-down villages.

This is how we found people living in absolute misery, dying from hunger and malaria after fleeing their torched villages. We met Christian religious leaders risking their lives to save Muslim neighbours and poorly armed rebels seeking to ethnically cleanse their country of Muslims. Our images revealed a world rarely glimpsed, engaging our audience and allowing them to witness an otherwise unseen reality.

The images and our reporting for Human Rights Watch prompted the international community to deploy a UN peacekeeping force to try and stop the carnage. The photography industry recognised Marcus's work with numerous awards, including the Robert Capa Gold Medal, the most prestigious award in conflict photography. It was the first time a photographer was awarded the medal for work commissioned by an NGO rather than a traditional media outlet. Such recognition confirms that the photography industry values the kind of original work that's increasingly rare in today's media environment.

When I discussed these issues with Marcus recently, he reflected that conflict photography isn't so much about conflict or even about photography—it's about understanding the context and people's lives: 'Photographers need to understand that photographing conflict is about photographing people's lives. The more you can understand about how and why these people you meet arrived at this point, and how they feel and what their hopes are, the better you can represent them to an international audience and hopefully change things for the better for generations to come.'

It's troubling to meet photographers working in countries where they may not even know the name of the president, the warring parties or the basics of the conflict they're covering. A good conflict photographer needs to be a historian, an anthropologist, a sociologist and an investigator all rolled into one. You need to understand the politics, the people and why the conflict is happening in the first place, and you need to do that before you get on a plane and pick up your camera to take your first picture.

The idea that one can just jump on a plane and 'be there' documenting a conflict is deeply embedded in our social media culture, the era of Instagram. One sees it out in the field. Immediately after migrant boat landings in Greece during the refugee crisis, photographers often split into two groups: those staring at their camera screens to see if they got a good shot and those who put down their cameras to talk to the newly arrived migrants they'd just photographed to learn more about their stories. Again, the photographers aren't the only ones to blame: many work under deadlines so tight that a few minutes' delay in filing an image can lead to reprimands, limiting their ability to pause and interact with their subjects.

A question many photographers never pose themselves is this: what's the reason for being here photographing this? Is it just to put another series of images in one's portfolio and advance one's career? Or is it because one actually cares about what's happening to these people, wants to understand what's happening to them and wants to provide the public with informative and meaningful images?

Some of our best hope for original, absorbing and impactful work comes from the increasing ranks of top female photographers working on conflict and the unique and refreshing perspectives and approaches they bring to their work.

The Euromaidan Revolution ousted President Victor Yanukovych in 2014 and culminated in the worst day of violence on the 20th of February, which became known as Bloody Thursday.

I set up a make-shift photo-studio inside the barricades on Hrushevskoho street and spent a month making hundreds of portraits of the anti-government protestors who fought the riot police in running street battles in the centre of Kiev.

From the book MAIDAN-Portraits from the Black Square, published by GOST in 2014.

↖
Photo by Anastasia Taylor-Lind @anastasiatl | Oleksiy. Euromaidan protestor, Kiev, Ukraine.

←
Photo by Anastasia Taylor-Lind @anastasiatl | Eugene. Euromaidan protestor, Kiev, Ukraine.

↙
Photo by Anastasia Taylor-Lind @anastasiatl | Serhiy. Euromaidan protestor, Kiev, Ukraine.

Surman, Libya, June 20, 2011
At around 4AM, NATO bombs almost completely flattened an extensive complex of five villas belonging to Major General El Khweldi El Hamedi, alledgedly used as a military control and command center. Among the victims were members of his family including 3 children, but he himself survived the bombing. Pictures were taken during a regime organized trip the following day. ©Bruno Stevens

The likes of Anastasia Taylor-Lind, Nicole Tung, the late Anja Niedringhaus and Lynsey Addario bring a unique perspective to conflict photography, often devoting the time and effort needed to tell the more intimate and private stories of individuals affected by war.

Anastasia's powerful portraits of war-affected persons from Ukraine and Bangladesh (where I worked with her) and Nicole's similarly haunting night-time portraits of Rohingya widows and their children begging by the road allow us to look deeply into the experience of war, without the need of AK-47s waving in the background. Of course, the female perspective on war is nothing new, with outstanding photographers like Susan Meiselas producing a uniquely personal and painful body of work since the 1970s.

Effective conflict photography

Having worked alongside some of the most talented conflict photographers for the last twenty years, I've learned a few important lessons. First and foremost, producing powerful and captivating photography in conflict zones takes a lot of time, original thinking and planning—before you start photographing. It can't be rushed, and it can only come about when the photographer is given the time needed to do the job right—often a period of months or even years, but not days. Very few photographers have the resources (or backing) and dedication needed to produce that kind of work, but if you see outstanding work, you can be pretty sure that it took an incredible, exhausting effort on behalf of the photographer.

Second, most professional photographers can take good pictures in just about every conflict zone, but only a few have the dedication, experience and talent to take extraordinary ones. When you sit down with one of the greats after a day's work and review the uniqueness of their vision, the perfection of their work just jumps out at you, and it doesn't come from hours spent editing their images in Photoshop.

Third, good conflict photographers make impactful partnerships with organisations that can transmit their images and messages to a target audience in order to create the change they would like to achieve with their work. Effective conflict photography is no longer about the relationship with the magazine or newspaper but working out how to place the images in front of the right policymaker to create real change.

Finally, it's worth acknowledging the impact of conflict photography on those behind the lens. For too long, conflict photography has been dominated by a toxic macho culture, ignoring the mental health impact of documenting traumatic events. In a business rife with PTSD, alcoholism, mental health problems, broken relationships and suicides, we can no longer ignore the basic reality that it's painful to document the pain of others. The work can leave deep emotional scars. Prominent photographers like Patrick Baz and Finbarr O'Reilly have opened up about their own mental health struggles, beginning an essential dialogue. In order to produce powerful work, it's important we look after ourselves and each other and acknowledge the impact our witnessing has on ourselves.

Fromt heseries Rohingya Women ©NicoleTung

→
Kulsuma, 30, embraces her son while waiting by the side of the road for food and cash distributions near the Balukhali refugee camp in Bangladesh on Friday September 22, 2017. Kulsuma arrived in Bangladesh 8 days ago. She does not know the fate of her husband.

In less than a month, over 420,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar, leaving behind entire villages in townships burned to the ground and hundreds dead since a military crackdown began late last month in retaliation over the ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army) attacks on police stations and an army base in the Rakhine State. After arriving at the designated sites for the Rohingya, thousands of refugees throng the main road hoping for a food handout, sometimes for the whole day and into the night. Much of the food distribution to the nearly half a million new arrivals has been ad hoc, leaving many families with the uncertainty of where their next meal will come from, even with local and international organizations scrambling to provide aid.

More than half of the 420,000 people fleeing have been children and women, who were either separated from their husband in the violence, or killed by the military. Without the family's main bread winner, this has left many women vulnerable to exploitation in the form of sexual violence, harassment, and potentially human trafficking. The rate of child marriage amongst displaced populations also rises when families see no other choice.

Jahan, 25, waits with her two children by the side of the road for food and cash distributions near the Balukhali refugee camp in Bangladesh on Friday September 22, 2017. Jahan's husband remains in Myanmar but she does not know of his fate. The Burmese Army attacked their village, attempting to round up its civilians, when her husband ran away.

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Hasina Begum, 25, waits with her son by the side of the road for food and cash distributions near the Balukhali refugee camp in Bangladesh on Friday September 22, 2017. Hasina does not know where her husband is as they were separated after crossing the border in to Bangladesh.

In less than a month, over 420,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar, leaving behind entire villages in townships burned to the ground and hundreds dead since a military crackdown began late last month in retaliation over the ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army) attacks on police stations and an army base in the Rakhine State. After arriving at the designated sites for the Rohingya, thousands of refugees throng the main road hoping for a food handout, sometimes for the whole day and into the night. Much of the food distribution to the nearly half a million new arrivals has been ad hoc, leaving many families with the uncertainty of where their next meal will come from, even with local and international organizations scrambling to provide aid.

More than half of the 420,000 people fleeing have been children and women, who were either separated from their husband in the violence, or killed by the military. Without the family's main bread winner, this has left many women vulnerable to exploitation in the form of sexual violence, harassment, and potentially human trafficking. The rate of child marriage amongst displaced populations also rises when families see no other choice.

Khadidja Alhadji Adbou, a 30-year-old Mboro woman, witnessed anti-balaka forces shooting and killing her husband and three children. In the same attack, she was shot in the neck but survived. October 31, 2013.

Machete collected by FOMAC troops in the disarmament process.

→
The mother of Eliam Fedongare 24, greets him and celebrates as he arrives home wirth his father Jean de Dieux. They were abducted in their farm by Seleka as they fled Bangui to carry their belongings for them. They were forced marched through the bush for 9 days and 4 of the others who were taken were shot and killed when they became too tired to continue. They escaped during an attack on a local village.

→
Anti Balaka on the road to Boda. They are going there to attack the muslim residents who remain there. Previous the muslims were protected by the seleka but they fled leaving the civilians to their fate. Over 40 muslims have been killed in the town in 5 days and nearly 50 Christians.

→
Muslims flee the town of Bangui together with Chadian special forces. Over 10,000 peole leave the city for Chad on a huge convoy as the Muslim population is forced out of the country by the population of CAR.

→
The sister of Vanessa mourns for her after she was shot by Muslims close to her home in Kilo 5, Bangui. Five people were killed overnight and just after this photograph was taken, her cousin was killed by Rwandan soldiers as he was killing a muslim in a revenge attack.

Peter Bouckaert

On Iconic Photography

Rutger van der Hoeven

When considering the impact of photography on the world, what instantly springs to mind are the photographs we all know, no matter where we're from. Popular books like to celebrate these 'iconic' images, while a fair amount of academic literature is devoted to disparaging them. But what these pictures mean, and how people read them, is far less straightforward than we might imagine.

Half a century ago, in the late summer of 1969, the American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh spent months trying to sell a shocking story to U.S. media. According to Hersh, American soldiers had killed hundreds of civilians in the Vietnamese villages of My Lai and My Khe following the Tet Offensive a year earlier. No newspaper, magazine or press agency would touch it. When the small news agency Dispatch News Service finally broke the story, it was only printed locally. However, the local paper *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* got hold of photographs to accompany the story and published them a week later. That same day, The Associated Press distributed Hersh's story on its network, and it was soon being picked up by all the American media—including the outlets that had previously rejected it. My Lai rapidly became a global news sensation, and Hersh's story is still considered to be one of the biggest journalistic scoops of the past century.

Fast-forward to 2004, and we find the same Seymour Hersh working on another big story. This time, it's about American soldiers abusing prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison in Bagdad. There'd been a few stories on Abu Ghraib from The Associated Press, but they'd barely been noticed. In one such story, a prisoner commented that he wished 'someone would publish photos of what's going on here. Now, Seymour Hersh did indeed have the photographs. When they were published together with his story and aired on national television, Abu Ghraib became a global news story within hours.

Stories such as these emerge whenever one looks at the influence of photography on our lives. They confirm the widely held belief that photography is extremely powerful. They also corroborate the feeling everyone experiences at some time in their lives: photographs can have much more direct and intense emotional impacts than words. Such an impact may be entirely personal: in *Camera Lucida,* the French philosopher Roland Barthes writes about the effect his mother's childhood photographs had on him and about how you may be the only person who's struck by a particular image.

But strong feelings can also be experienced collectively: photographs such as the one of the drowned Syrian boy Alan in 2015 or the Salvadorian girl and her father in the summer of 2019 provoke a simultaneous emotional response all over the world. It seems that images of this nature have huge transformative power and, when identical ideas are received in identical moments, people and societies are inspired to change. At least, that's the popular belief. But is it true?

Academic scepticism

It's not difficult to find examples of faith in the almost mythical power of images. This is written about—often in loving terms—in many coffee-table books on photography. Take *100 Photographs: The Most Influential Images of All Time,* for example. As the compilers—editors from *Time Magazine*—wrote in the introduction, 'What all 100 share is that they are turning points in our human experience'. Some of the photographs in their book 'shaped the way we think', they write, while others 'directly changed the way we live'. Such superlatives aren't only found in American books. Bold claims expressed in melodramatic words are typical of popular books on famous photographs in the West, an expatiation of the cliché 'a picture says a thousand words'.

Of course, the fact that something is a cliché doesn't make it untrue. But proving this particular cliché is actually very difficult. In her marvelous book, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives,* photography historian Vicki Goldberg sets out to show us the tangible evidence that pictures do, in fact, speak at least a thousand words. She writes on subjects such as Seymour Hersh, photographs taken on the moon, the galloping horse and shocking news stories. And yet, despite a wealth of indirect evidence, Goldberg doesn't come any closer to explaining this power. She's not the only one: on the subject of the power of photographs to influence human thought, she writes, 'No one ever seems to find proof of what nearly everyone believes'.

It's a strange observation. The impact of photography has been the subject of broad (though not very focused) debate for at least forty years among media scholars, historians, art critics, sociologists, photographers, curators, political scientists and others. The leading book on the subject was, for a long time, Susan Sontag's *On Photography,* a fascinating analysis that, from start to finish, is an attack on photography. According to the author, the medium is 'predatory', 'treacherous' and so forth. 'To photograph people is to violate them', Sontag claimed, '… it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed'. Photography is therefore 'a soft murder'. A whole range of authors followed in her footsteps, writing about how photography creates a hierarchy, flattens experiences and monitors and levels people. Allan Sekula, for example, called photography 'primitive, infantile, aggressive'; Abigail Solomon-Godeau wrote that documentary photography commits 'a double act of subjugation'.

In a postmodern reading, the photographs that best serve the dissemination of the prevailing ideology—that everyone is expected to adopt—are those that are reprinted *ad nauseam* and enjoy a second life as postage stamps and other memorabilia. They're considered 'iconic'. Such photographs receive very mixed reviews. Non-academic books on the subject often wax lyrical about their beauty and impact on the world.

Academic publications, on the other hand, in line with postmodern analysis, can be highly critical. *No Caption Needed,* one of the most-cited books on iconic photographs, characterises such photographs as 'fragmentary representations of events that reinforce dominant, totalizing narratives … used to justify state action; the reproduction of exploitative conceptions of race, class and gender'.

No Caption Needed wasn't alone in this view of iconic images: many other media studies agreed. A famous photograph would be analysed, the effect on the public described and the different layers of meaning—as the authors saw them—would be considered until the picture was declared to be, 'in fact', a neoliberal-capitalist mouthpiece. Jeff Widener's *Tank Man* photograph, taken in Beijing in 1989, thus becomes a symbol of 'freedom through consumption'; Steve McCurry's 1984 portrait of an Afghan girl then 'legitimises the war on terror', and so on.

These are disturbing conclusions. But just as in Goldberg's book, which tried to prove that photographs have the power to shape our lives, there's no hard evidence. If photographs transmit all sorts of social concepts, then it would be useful to see evidence about how people read images, what the ideas and messages are that they take away from them, which photographs people remember and find important, how this varies by country and age group, etc.—all more pertinent than the broad brushstrokes of an author.

Plural readings

I found all this dissatisfying and decided, seven years ago, without the hindrance of knowing too much or of thorough preparation, that this was virgin territory for a dissertation. I wanted to create a questionnaire with some simple questions about recognising twenty-four photographs that feature prominently in academic discussions about 'iconic', 'historic' and 'world-famous' photographs, plus some questions regarding what exactly people see in a smaller selection of them. This turned out to be a lot more difficult than I'd anticipated (especially developing it into a dissertation). But it did yield a number of interesting conclusions—about photographs that many people think speak for themselves, such as Robert Capa's *Falling Soldier* or Richard Drews *Falling Man* and about individual photographs and their familiarity or interpretation—but also conclusions about how people actually 'read' pictures.

A research agency distributed ,y questionnaire in twelve countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, Germany, Great Britain, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Turkey and the United States. (Unfortunately, the research agency that wished to help with my work in the Arab world, Survey Sampling International, didn't have a wide enough reach) I had expected that some of the images would be recognised by over half the respondents (nearly three thousand). But the results were still very surprising.

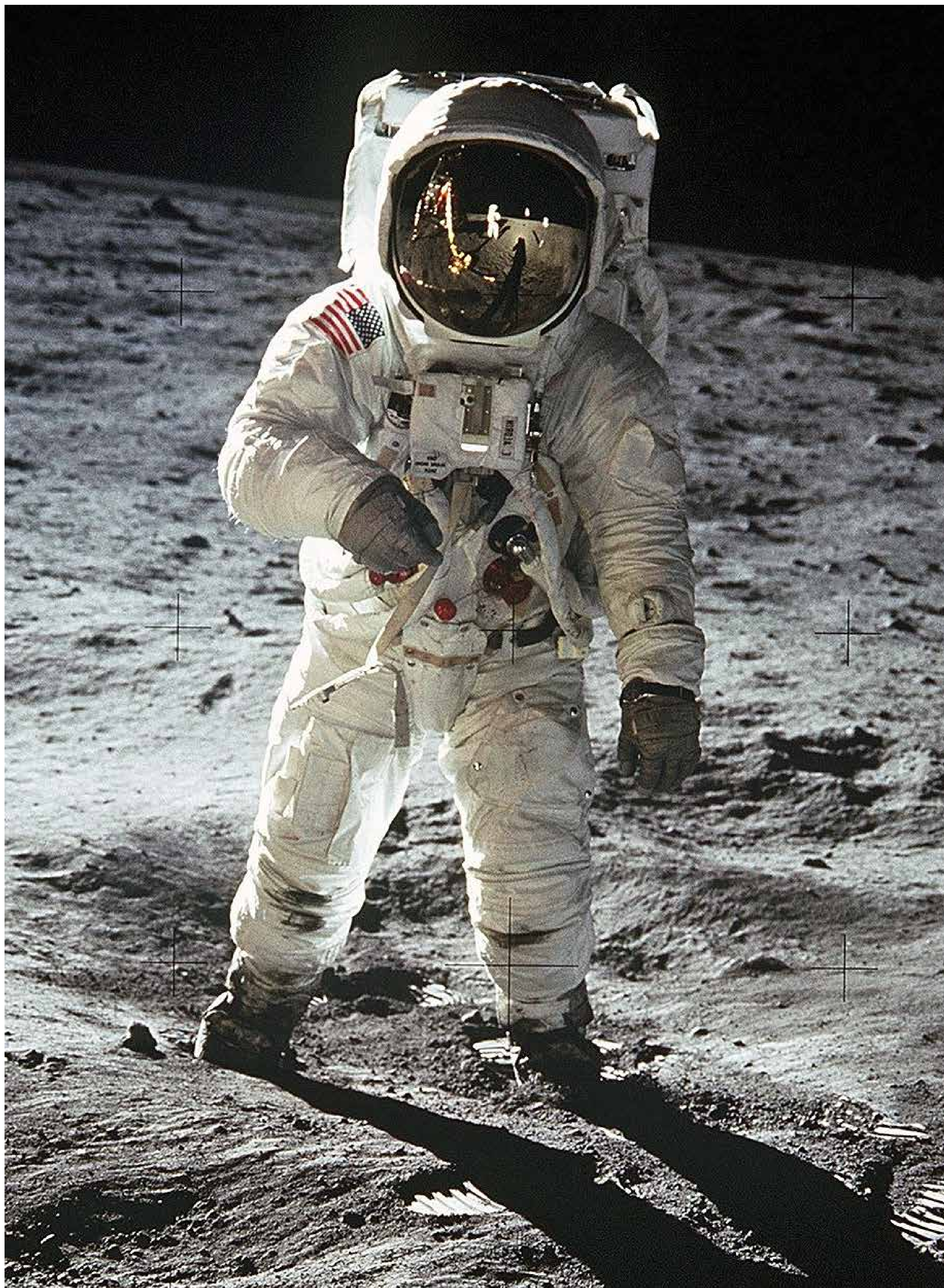
More than two thirds of all respondents in the world (70 percent) indicated that they recognised the portrait of Che Guevara (Alberto Korda, 1970). The photograph of Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon (Neil Armstrong, 1969) was familiar to even more respondents: 80 percent. And the picture of hijacked American Airlines Flight 175 about to hit the World Trade Center in New York, taken by accountant Carmen Taylor on 11 September 2001, was actually recognised by over 85 percent of all respondents. There were three other photographs that were familiar to almost half of all respondents: the one of American marines raising the flag in Iwo Jima (Joe Rosenthal, 1945), that of the solitary demonstrator in Tianenmen Square in Beijing (*Tank Man*, Jeff Widener, 1989), and the one of Kim Phuc running up a road (*Napalm Girl*, Nick Ut, 1972).

These dry figures suggest something inconceivable: that people all over the world share the same visual references of the past. They have many visual memories that diverge completely, of course, but also ones that are identical. The above-mentioned images are included in the latter, but no doubt many more too: perhaps The Beatles on Abbey Road, or the painting of Chairman Mao? I propose that this phenomenon could be called 'the global visual memory'.

Those interested in what such a memory might mean will soon come across the work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. In *La Mémoire Collective* (*The Collective Memory*), published posthumously in 1950, he describes how a person's memory isn't formed autonomously, as people tend to believe, but socially and collectively. What people think about something in particular, what they find important, and the symbols and stories they use to remember them—this is all, according to Halbwachs, socially constructed.

So this is what some of these photographs are on a global scale: symbols that recall moments in history and that tell us which events we're supposed to remember; objects that have frozen a particular event from a particular perspective to be remembered that way for always. I find it a fascinating and exciting idea that such a thing exists. However, if the academic literature—which often reflects the same suspicion of photography that Sontag and other postmodern authors display—is anything to go by, this isn't a good thing. Such photographs are inevitably a simplification of reality; they transmit emotions but no causes or background, and, according to media scholars and others, always serve the powers that be.

But this view seems to be a simplification in itself. The fact is, when you ask people all over the world what they read in such photographs, the responses you get are incredibly diverse. I asked respondents in my twelve chosen countries to indicate which of the six photographs they found important, how much of an emotional impact each one had, which historical events they were taken during and what was their central message. The result was an astonishing variety of interpretations, ways of describing them and idioms used to do so, but there was also a diversity of 'readings' of the pictures.



For example, in a photograph of starving prisoners taken in Buchenwald in 1945 (probably by Lee Miller), some respondents read moral messages, such as 'This must never happen again'. But many others did not. 'None' was a frequent answer to 'What is the central message?' Others wrote: 'this is informative' or 'this describes the living quarters in concentration camps'. These differences could be found for all the photographs that respondents answered questions about. An upsetting photograph of a collapsed, starving child in Sudan being watched by a vulture (Kevin Carter, 1993) elicited emotional reactions from many respondents, especially in Italy, Argentina and Brazil. 'Misery… hunger… fear… pain', wrote a Brazilian respondent; and from an Italian: 'the never-ending sorrow of the world'. But many others simply said, 'famine in Africa' or 'hunger'. Others read the central message as 'donate to charities' and 'don't throw away food'.

Starting all over again

When you read through these responses, it immediately becomes clear that the assumption that people receive the same message from a photograph, and that this can be expressed in moral terms, is nonsense. One can perceive photographs as moral precepts, but that's only one of at least six different ways that an international general public will read a photograph. For example, many people turn to the factual information a picture provides about a past event to find the 'message', while others try to imagine how the person in the photograph feels and call that the message.

You might imagine that the result would be different for older photographs, and that our frenzied image culture would have an impact. I can only say that I found no evidence of this. I couldn't see a pattern that more recent photographs are better recognised than older ones or any other age-related patterns. The photographs that people recognised and found important as well as what they could see in them appeared to have little to do with the respondent's age, education, media use, or nationality; there's no Russian or Asian way of reading a photograph.

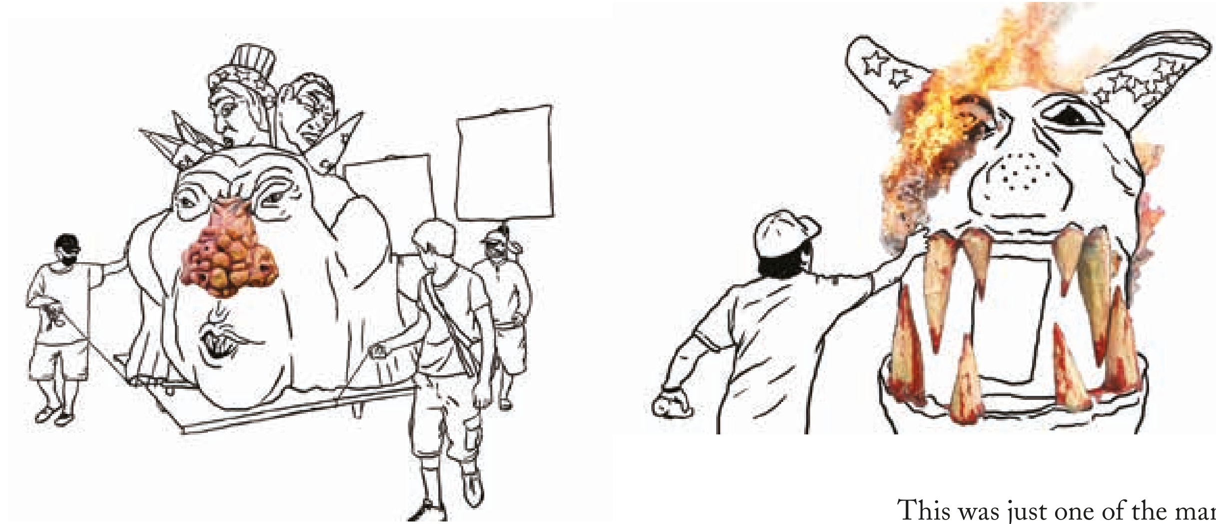
For this reason, I believe we need to start all over again, not by declaring in no uncertain terms that photographs have great influence on us and why that's a bad thing, but instead by asking ourselves what we actually know about how photographs work, both on an individual level and on that of society and the world. It's particularly important now, in a time when a visual culture has gone global and photographs can become a worldwide news story or meme within hours of their being taken, that we realise that the pictures we all simultaneously consume mean different things to different people, and we're too quick to put our own interpretation on the meaning or effect of a photograph. All those photographs that speak for themselves—they actually don't.

Burning Images for Punishment and Change

Florian Göttke

During a December 2016 demonstration on International Human Rights Day, protesters dragged a giant effigy of President Rodrigo Duterte with them through the streets of Manila: a two-metre-tall head, painted ghastly green, attached to a monstrous crawling creature. The head bore two demonic horns, its eyes glowed red in the dark and its stuck-out tongue was painted with the stars and stripes of the American flag. The armoured and spiked hand, clenched into a fist, was splashed with red paint, just like the horns. According to its makers from the activist artist collective UgatLahi, the effigy symbolised the 'resurrection and rehabilitation of the Marcoses'[161] under Duterte's administration. It was slowly rolled along the path of the demonstration and burned at the end of the route surrounded by crowds of protesters with cell phones and journalists with cameras, who spread the images of the monster Duterte perishing in the flames through social media and news networks: photographs of burning images were employed to damage the image of the president.

161
Tupaz, Voltaire. 2016. 'Left's 1st effigy under Duterte depicts fascist monster', *Rappler*, 10 December 2016. http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/155140-left-burn-effigy-duterte-authoritarian-tendencies.



This was just one of the many effigy protests targeting Duterte in his first three years in office, denouncing his indiscriminate war against alleged drug peddlers and users, his ties to the family of the former dictator Marcos, his disregard for the rights of indigenous peoples and his neoliberal policies that only catered to the wealthy. Recurring features were the giant head, iron fists and vehicles like tanks and trains that signified Duterte's political style of barrelling through all obstacles, regardless of the costs. The train also refers to his contentious tax reform bill called TRAIN (Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law). Always included in Philippines protests are references to the United States—the former colonial power who supported the regime of Ferdinand Marcos and retains major economic and military influence—as the evil force pulling the strings of the country's politics.

Newsweek

THE PHILIPPINES

ANOTHER IRAN?

Washington Backs Away From Marcos

MARCOS

Ever since effigies were employed successfully in the resistance to the Marcos regime in the 1970s and early 80s, protesters have burned every Philippines president in effigy. Over the years, the Philippines developed its own effigy tradition. Effigy protests became a very elaborate form of street theatre with complex visual narratives: giant effigy floats, with moving parts, animated by activists and inviting interaction with the public. They always end in a big, spectacular fire, staged for maximum impact. In keeping with the rhythm of the political calendar, effigies are rolled out on International Workers Day on 1 May, International Human Rights Day in December and other occasions, but they're most prominently used in demonstrations during the annual State of the Nation Address delivered by the president in July. Records of effigy protests in the 1930s in resistance to U.S. colonial rule hint at an even longer tradition.[162]

162
The United States bought the Philippines from Spain after the Spanish-American war in 1898 for $20 million. After being occupied by Japan from 1943 to 1945, it was granted independence in 1946.

Ridiculing animals and monsters

A number of influences contributed to the development of these spectacular protest effigies in the Philippines. First, they were appropriated from two types of traditional effigies imported by Spanish colonialists. The *higantes* are friendly giants that dance in street processions during a festival in Angono, a town east of Manila, on 22–23 November, just as they do in Spain and other European cities, many of which are in Flanders.[163] Effigies of *Hudas* (Judas Iscariot) are burnt before Easter in a town on the island of Panay and north of Manila in Minalin, as they are in Spain, Greece, Poland and many countries in Latin America. Other influences include political street theatre from the first half of the twentieth century, the practice of displaying large cut-out figures of politicians during political rallies and the activist street theatre group *Bread and Puppet Theatre* from Vermont, USA, which worked with Philippine activists in the mid 1990s.[164]

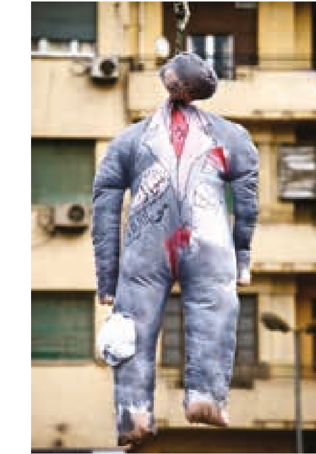
163
'The Angono's Higantes Festival for San Clemente', International Information and Networking Center for for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, 17 November 2017. https://www.ichcap.org/the-angonos-higantes-festival-for-san-clemente/.

164
Cariño Ito, Lisa. 2005. 'Dissident Puppets: The Effigy in Philippine Radical Politics'. 64. BFA thesis, University of the Philippines Diliman.

The friendly, dancing giants of the Spanish tradition were turned into scary and vile monsters. Using the carnivalesque strategy of inversion, turning the world upside down, the figures of power are defamed and ridiculed. They're smeared with blood, pus, slime and excrement and disfigured by diseases; the whole gamut of bodily grotesque denigration is employed.[165] Politicians are depicted as duplicitous, as traitors to their people and beholden to foreign interests, puppets steered by more powerful forces. The presidents, their allies and cronies are dehumanised, turned into animals and monsters. The effigies are there to unmask them, to reveal their true nature as enemies of the people. They are the demons that need to be exorcised in a ritual of punishment and purification to liberate the people and create a new future.

165
Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and His World*. Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press.

These kinds of theatrical protest performances—albeit usually with smaller, less sophisticated puppets—can be found almost everywhere across the globe. The earliest known example dates from 1329, when Emperor Louis IV staged the trial of Pope Johan XXII, and his troops burned the pope's effigy in Pisa, Italy.[166] Effigies often appeared during revolutionary upheavals. In the beginning of the American Revolution (1765–1783), New England activists paraded, hanged and burned effigies of tax collectors to threaten British loyalists. After the founding of the Union, it became a well-established practice in U.S. politics that remains today, as shown by the many effigies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. During the Iranian Revolution in 1979, effigies of the Shah and President Jimmy Carter were paraded and burned to protest the regime and U.S. interference in domestic politics.



During the 2011 Arab Spring, effigies of Hosni Mubarak, Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad were hanged in the streets in Egypt, Libya and Syria. Effigies have been hanged and burned for many causes: in the fight against dictators, against racism, against corruption, against capitalist exploitation, against corporate wrongdoing, against foreign aggression, against rising fuel prices, against rules regulating the treatment of manure and many other societal and political injustices.

166
Brückner, Wolfgang. 1966. *Bildnis und Brauch: Studien zur Bildfunktion der Effigies*. 197. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

The World

Vittoriano Rastelli for The New York Times

Striking Roman workers and a hanging effigy of Premier Giulio Andreotti.

Tableaux vivants as bodily protests

Making the effigy—working collectively towards a common goal—is the first stage in the ritual and strengthens the bond between activists. In the Philippines, artists' collectives brainstorm the image, program and scenario and, together with crafts, people and volunteers, work on the effigies for weeks. But effigies can also be made very spontaneously from old clothes stuffed with straw or paper; with an improvised head and a sign attached to identify the targeted persona, they effectively communicate disdain towards the represented.

During the protest march, the effigy, with all its grotesque features, is proudly presented to demonstrators. It is carried, dragged or rolled along the demonstration route. The ritual-like nature of the performance invites participation, and activists and bystanders interact with the effigy by insulting, mocking, hitting, kicking or punching it.

This bodily interaction, and the resistance offered by a material body, provides a physical outlet for the protesters' pent-up anger. It transforms the psychic energy of anger, frustration and powerlessness in the face of ongoing injustices into a positive energy, expressed with laughter and exhilaration. It's a communal energy derived from acting together in the ritual of protest. Creating and performing an effigy is both a ritual of punishment and a ritual for change. It demands the end of injustice, and it projects an imaginary new order for the rebuilding of society through the purifying violence of fire.

The street, though, is just one stage that effigy performances occupy, and the demonstrators and onlookers are just one audience they address. When the time comes to burn the effigy, a space opens up around it. The protesters face the cameras, and pose with the effigy as a living image, a tableau vivant. They make themselves into an image for the onlookers and even more so for the cameras in order to address those audiences reached through the media.

Every photograph in itself already attests to the presence of the camera and the photographer at the scene. In many photographs, the cameras themselves become visible: the bulky frames of professional still cameras, shouldered video cameras and, increasingly in recent years, the rectangles of smart phones held overhead. Being present in traditional news media, as well as on social media platforms, has become an integral part of the protest on the street. The space of the media is not just an add-on but an essential extension of the protest space—the channel to reach a much larger audience than the one physically present. Political philosopher Judith Butler, who generally emphasises the importance of bodily presence for political protests, wrote that 'the media *is* the scene or the space in its extended and replicable visual and audible dimensions.'[167]

167
Butler, Judith. 2015. *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*. 91. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

This was different in early-modern societies, where the street was by far the most important site to gather the public, and an effigy was staged to arouse—and entertain—the people present and to make a statement about social or political wrongdoing. But already during the American Revolution, the media helped spread the uprising by publishing detailed reports about burning effigies and other protests in New England's newspapers.

Beyond iconoclasm

Parading, hanging and burning effigies is a truly visual form of protest, but it's not an iconoclastic practice. Images (the effigies) are created, mutilated and destroyed—but they're destroyed to produce new visceral and affective images: the scene of a public figure punished by the people and the media images of that performance. These spectacular and symbolic images fit the needs of the media. They're able to communicate political conflict and anger at an experienced injustice in a condensed way.

Hanging and burning effigies was an effective form of protest in premodern societies that entertained the public and allowed for the delivery of a statement and the vying for support. In the print-media-dominated societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was effective in reaching national audiences. In the twenty-first century, it might be even more effective for activists across the globe who stage the spectacle for maximum media exposure—for the biggest impact. In the contemporary global media environment, where visual media take a central role in communication and where it becomes easier to access a variety of channels for distribution—traditional news media online and off, as well as social media platforms—hanging and burning effigies enables protesters to communicate their grievances directly to a wide variety of audiences across the boundaries of language and culture.

Photographing the Anthropocene

Taco Hidde Bakker

In recent years, the term 'Anthropocene' has taken centre stage in debates about climate change and global warming. The name was proposed in 2000 by natural scientists to designate the current geological epoch as the 'time of the human', set to succeed the Holocene, but in recent years it's ignited hot debates among social scientists and philosophers.[168] Artists and photographers have taken note as well, as the term frequently appears in their discussions and in writing about their work. More and more artists are trying to capture images of or imagine what the term signifies, from straightforward documentation of climatic events threatening human settlements to deeper ways of relating to the human-nature complex.

In 2007 and 2008, I worked as a researcher for Paradox (a Dutch producer of multiplatform photography and film projects) on a large-scale documentary. *The Last Days of Shishmaref* comprised a feature-length documentary by director Jan Louter and an extensive photo series by photographer Dana Lixenberg. A team compiled by Paradox mainly worked on turning Lixenberg's photographs into a photobook, an exhibition, a project website and, later, a web documentary (released in 2010). Louter's documentary, which had a limited release in cinemas and was screened at international film festivals, focuses on how a few families in Shishmaref, Alaska, view changing environmental conditions and their foreseeable consequences for the village.

Along with thirteen other Alaskan coastal villages, Shishmaref has been severely threatened with erosion since the beginning of this century. During a series of November storms over the past two decades, Shishmaref, which sits on a barrier island off the coast of the Seward Peninsula, near the Bering Strait, has lost at least fourteen homes to the sea. In 2008, the United States Army Corps of Engineers started construction on a storm surge barrier consisting of basalt blocks, but this solution can only be temporary. Within one or two generations, all of the approximately 600 inhabitants will have to move to higher ground on the mainland.

Louter referred to the villagers as belonging to the first generation of 'climate refugees' right at the time when the news broke that several small islands in the Pacific had sunk below sea level. For some Polynesian nations, the situation was already direr than that of Alaskan villages, although it's true that global warming conditions proceed much more quickly in the polar regions. This year, for example, Alaska experienced unprecedented heat waves and multiple forest fires.

Without much environmental concern, I booked flights to the United States in the spring of 2008 for my research in museums and archives in New York City and Washington D.C., in the Alaskan cities of Fairbanks and Anchorage, and subsequent fieldwork in Shishmaref. Strangely, I had no qualms about my carbon footprint while I participated in an endeavour aimed at raising awareness of the grave consequences of excessive release of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. I had vague memories of a 1980s public campaign in the Netherlands, including the slogan 'A better environment begins with you.' However, I was too immersed in studying the Inupiaq-Eskimo[169] culture and history and searching for any historical documents related to Shishmaref that I could lay my hands on. Any worries about my own climatic impact were secondary.

A decade later, environmental concerns have risen on the global political agenda, and rightfully so, as the situation for vulnerable populations has only worsened. Despite the many conferences and international agreements, both binding and non-binding, the human consumption of fossil fuels and the release of greenhouse gasses have continued to increase. Awareness is one thing, swift political change another. It seems that, for the time being, we'll remain trapped within a political-economic system based on limitless growth at the expense of ecological resilience and sustainability. For a long time, we (most of all people whose demand on natural resources exceeds the biocapacity per person) behaved as if no outside force could ever stop the march of progress.

On a return flight from Alaska, I began reading a 2007 reissue of *The Weather Makers* (2005), Tim Flannery's popular science book about humanity's influence on climate change, and James Lovelock's poignant *The Revenge of Gaia* (2006), a plea for the rapid decarbonisation of society. I felt I needed to learn at least a minimum of background while working on a project in which global warming was a major theme. And while the term 'Anthropocene' was already there in Flannery's book, I barely took notice.

Many years later, in 2015, when the increasingly urgent topic of global warming was becoming impossible to ignore, I attended a lecture by Bruno Latour in a theatre in Utrecht, and the term 'Anthropocene' resurfaced.[170] Latour spoke like an eloquent prophet of doom, and his words were supported by his four decades of deep reading and thinking about exchanges between science and society since the seventeenth century. Latour opened my eyes in that I began to understand that the problems posed by the Earth's warming shouldn't only be interpreted technologically; rather, they're fundamentally of a religious and ethical nature. In Latour's terms, we must feel the Earth trembling as if the apocalypse is happening right now and not in some mythical past or ominous future. In another telling metaphor, he spoke of how modernists tend to assume nature to be a passive backdrop to their activities but that we're now rediscovering it happens to have a will of its own. Through all sorts of unpredictable and uncontrollable acts, nature claims an important role on the stage of human activities.

I began to reflect on the roles photographers and visual artists can play in addressing this new condition. The tentative and highly controversial concept of the Anthropocene hints at an issue so large and pervasive that it undermines all

168
For a concise and accessible history of the origins of the term Anthropocene, including its nineteenth century predecessors (such as 'Anthropozoic Era'), see: Lewis, Simon L. and Maslin, Mark. 2018. *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene*. London: Pelican Books.

169
The exonym Eskimo is controversial. Most indigenous people in the circumpolar regions nowadays refer to themselves using indigenous names. In Alaska, the southwestern Yup'ik and northwestern Inupiaq still tag Eskimo onto the endonym or refer to themselves more broadly as Alaskan Eskimos.

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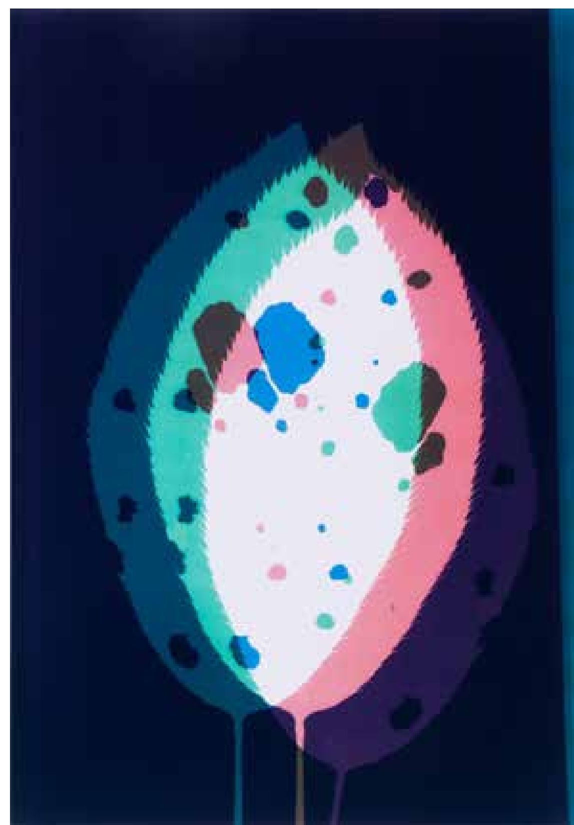
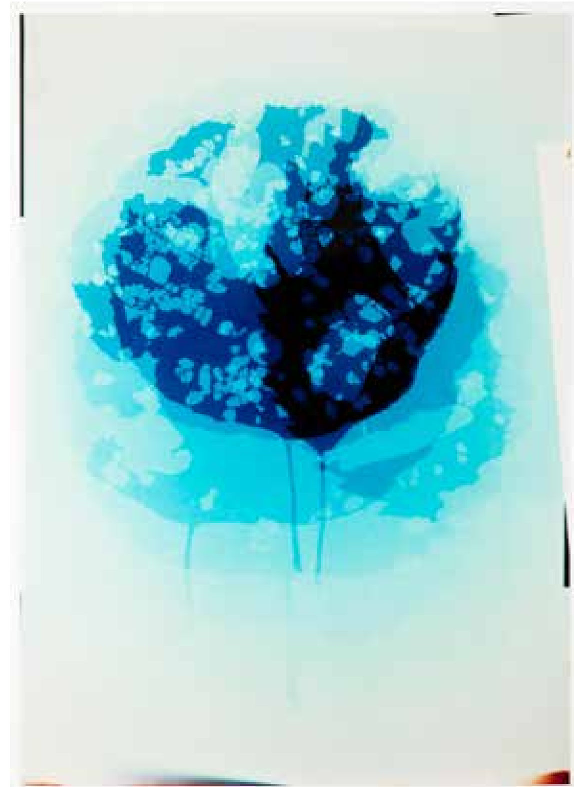
Latour, Bruno. 2015. *How to Sort Out the Many Ambiguities of the Concept of the Anthropocene*. Lecture given at Stadsschouwburg, Utrecht, 15 April 2015. A revised version of this lecture was later included as a chapter in Latour, Bruno. 2017. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge: Polity Press.





Eva-Fiore Kovacovsky, From the series Fotogramme (2011-ongoing). Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Stampa, Basel.

comfortable certainties. How on Earth could this be appropriately depicted? The world-famous photograph *AS08-14-2383*, taken on Christmas Eve, 1968, by astronaut William Anders during the Apollo 8 mission to the Moon, hasn't done much to prevent the levels of human-emitted greenhouse gasses from further increasing. The photograph, more commonly known as *Earthrise*, inspired a generation of environmentalists and was famously featured on the cover of the American countercultural magazine *Whole Earth Catalog* (1968-1972).

For a while, I thought the documentary approach taken by Louter and Lixenberg was the way to portray climate change. It's of course important that the impact of rising sea levels or melting permafrost on human settlements be documented in an honest manner. Yet, despite all our documentary efforts, nothing seems to change fundamentally, or not fast enough considering the speed of climatic changes. The concept of the Anthropocene is perhaps better expressed by means of the hockey stick graph. This line with a strong upward curve at the end represents the sudden rise in global mean temperatures over the last century. But the same type of graph results from many other analyses of changes related to the impact of human civilisation on ecosystems, from the exponential growth of the human population to the extinction of species.

Despite its limitations in representing longer durations, let alone geological timescales, photography has proven to be a suitable medium for recording changes like the retreat of glaciers. This type of 'comparative photography' is a popular means of demonstrating that the melting of icecaps is real and swift. It's also been artistically adapted by photographers such as Mark Klett and, more recently, Chrystel Lebas.

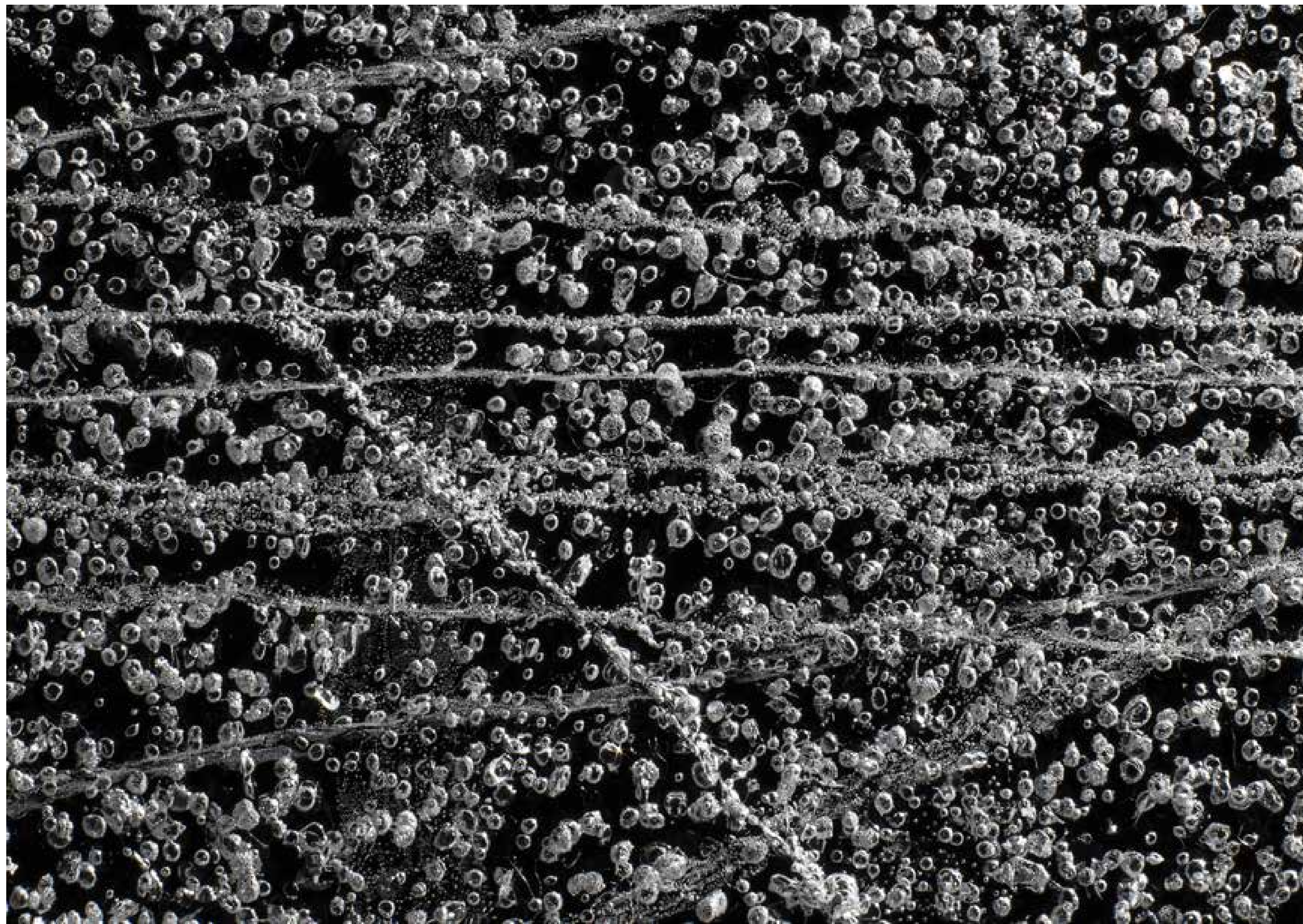
Klett's *Third View* project is a meticulous re-photographing of the exact locations of previous American landscape photographs, some over a century old. By overlaying two or three photographs in a slideshow of the same location over a multi-generational timespan, the viewer can see these gradual changes within a fraction of a second. Lebas' series *Field Studies: Walking Through Landscapes and Archives* more or less follows the same procedure, albeit in a freer mode. Lebas literally followed the footsteps of British botanist and ecologist Sir Edward James Salisbury (1886-1978), whose field notes and hitherto unexplored photographic glass plates depicting the flora and landscapes of Scotland and Norfolk provided the blueprint for Lebas' re-photographing of these landscapes a century later.

My encounter with the work of two other artists put me on the track to imagining alternatives to the complex topics of climate change and man-nature relationships. I believe that storytelling, whether in words or graphics, may be best suited to narrating the unfolding apocalypse, and I also believe that photography and related methods can communicate urgency without compromising artistic vision and autonomy. The fact that photography is itself a strange hybrid between high technology and natural appearance already provides the impetus to think through the intersections of the powers of humanity and nature.

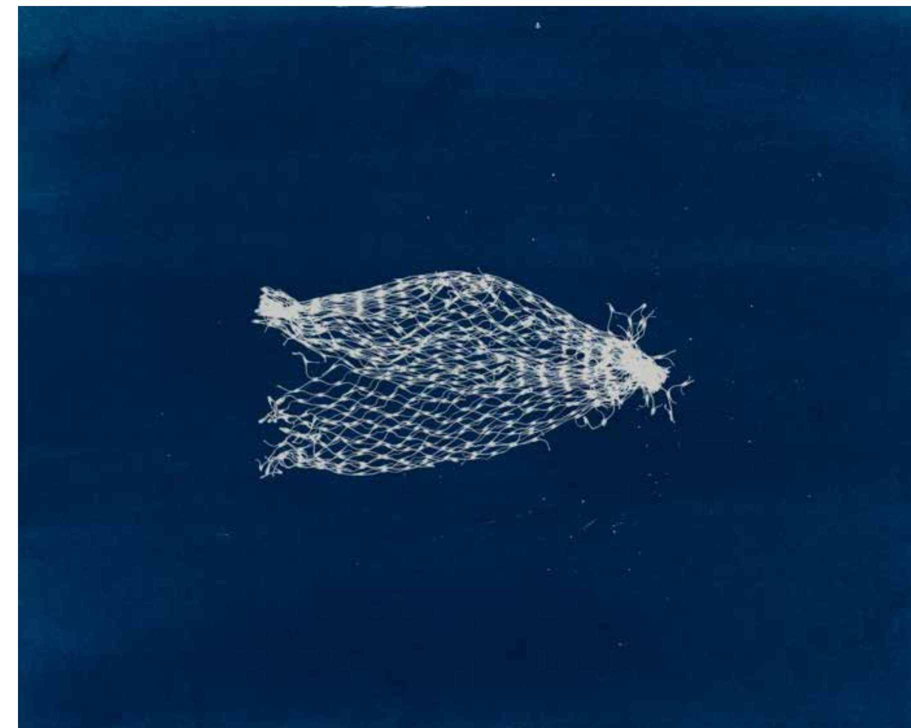
The *Fotogramme* series that Eva-Fiore Kovacovsky has been producing since 2011 reflects this hybrid condition in a way that's timeless and contemporary in equal measure. These photograms are improvised compositions of leaves that Kovacovsky has collected throughout the years, many of which come from linden and alder trees. In her darkroom, Kovacovsky experiments with employing colour filters to arrive at prints of a hallucinatory nature. The leaves leave their imprint as if they're fossils from the deep past, while the process also returns to the earliest days of photography in which pioneers such as Anna Atkins made contact prints with algae. For Kovacovsky, the concept of symbiosis, as developed and described by biologist Lynn Margulis, is an important source of inspiration. In this case, Symbiosis also extends to the way in which she seamlessly interweaves the artificial and the natural.

Closely related in method and outlook is Suzette Bousema's series of photograms titled *Future Relics*. For a time, Bousema made photograms (akin to the Atkins-like cyanotypes from the 1840s) of every piece of plastic waste she found. The irony is in the contrast between a historical printing technique and the hint in the title that plastics will remain on Earth for a long time to come; the Anthropocene may as well be renamed the Plasticocene. In *Climate Archive*, the series with which Bousema graduated from The Hague Royal Academy of Art in 2019, a warped notion of time is again at play. Frontal monochrome photographs show samples of the ice cores that provide scientists with a record of up to 800,000 years of climate history.

In the face of current warming conditions, the impact of which, on a scale of epochs, must be considered sudden and swift, the work of photographers and other visual artists may seem futile. Nevertheless, I place my hope in art as an instigator of fruitful debates and as a means of imagining new or renewed man-nature relationships.



in the NOUN exhibition Good work, good work?, “good work”, The Greyspace in the Middle, The Hague, 25–30 January 2018.



Suzette Bousema, From the series Future Relics (2018).

Suzette Bousema, From the series Climate Archive (2019). Suzette Bousema, Installation view of Future Relics (2018)

Walter Costa

Fotolibros Latinoamericanos Photobooks

Sostenibles
(NO) TODO EXISTE PARA ACABAR EN UN (FOTO)LIBRO

No es el fin del mundo: hay proyectos fotográficos que no funcionan en formato libro. Escuchalos.
Auto publicación: el libro es un medio de comunicación. Si querés conectar contigo más que con lxs lectorxs, el libro que necesitás es un diario personal. Escuchate honestamente.
Si no hacés, no entendés: experimentá produciendo (muchas) maquetas, es fundamental para entender qué podés pedirle a un fotolibro.
Instagram es otra cosa: el libro persiste en el tiempo y necesita de tiempo para ser desarrollado.
Sostenibilidad es colectividad: nunca vas a tener la misma experiencia que editorxs, diseñadorxs y productorxs gráficxs. Colaborá con ellxs desde las primeras etapas.
Pagá las cuentas: remunerar de forma justa a todxs lxs profesionales involucradxs en el proceso editorial –no solo la gráfica– también es sostenibilidad.
Local y honesto: valorá materiales y técnicas que podés encontrar en tu territorio. Son parte de tu identidad.
Adaptarse o morir: renunciar a algunos deseos, trabajar con profesionales locales y evolucionar juntxs en el proceso es lo que transforma expectativas frustradas en prácticas sostenibles.
Rompé el círculo: no empieces un proyecto editorial sin tener en cuenta su circulación desde el momento uno.

Sustainable
(NOT) EVERYTHING EXISTS IN ORDER TO END UP AS A (PHOTO)BOOK

It's not the end of the world: there are photography projects that don't fit the book format. Listen to them.
Selfish publishing: the book is a medium of communication. If you want to communicate with yourself more than the readers, what you need is a personal diary. Listen to yourself honestly.
If you don't do it, you won't understand it: experiment by making (many) dummies, it's crucial in order to understand what you can ask of a photobook.
Instagram is another thing: a book is lasting and needs time to be developed.
Sustainability is collectivity: you will never have the same experience as editors, designers and graphic producers together. Collaborate with them from the very first steps of your book project.
Pay the bills: fairly remunerate all the parties involved in the editorial/production process -not only the printer- is creating sustainability too.
Local and honest: value materials and techniques that you can find in your area. They can be a vital part of your identity.
Adapt or die: to renounce certain desires, work with local professionals and evolve together during the process is what transforms frustrated expectations into sustainable practices.
Break the cycle: don't start an editorial project without considering its circulation from the very beginning.

Accesibles
CONOCE TU PÚBLICO COMO TI MISMO

No hay atajo sin trabajo: salí del mundo fotográfico; arriesgate a conectar con nuevos públicos y lenguajes. No es nada fácil, pero es necesario.
Hacemos historias: tratá de mostrar al público que los fotolibros contienen historias igual que los cómics y películas.
El lector es tu pastor: un fotolibro es un espacio de libertad artística y experimentación, pero tené cuidado de no intimidar a quienes nunca leyeron uno o creen que no saben leerlo.
Cantidad no define accesibilidad: no pienses en cuántas copias hacer hasta que reflexiones y definas quiénes son tus lectorxs.
Menos premios, más alcance: un fotolibro funciona cuando alcanza su público objetivo, no necesariamente cuando gana un reconocimiento.
Cobrar menos, comprar más: mantené un precio justo para que tu libro pueda estar en más estanterías.
Sé hormiga: por pequeño que parezca, cada esfuerzo es importante para alcanzar a nuestrxs estimadxs lectorxs.

Accessible
KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE LIKE YOU KNOW YOURSELF

There is no shortcut without work: go out of the photography world, take the risk of connecting with new audiences and languages. It's everything but easy, but it's necessary.
We craft stories: try to show the audience that photobooks can contain stories like comics and movies do.
The reader is your shepherd: a photobook is a space of artistic freedom and experimentation, but be careful not to intimidate those that have never read one or guess they can't.
Quantity doesn't define accessibility: don't think about how many copies you will print until you ponder who your readers will be.
Fewer prizes, more outreach: a photobook works when it reaches its audience, not necessarily when it wins an award.
Charge less, buy more: keep a fair price for your photobook, it will reach more shelves.
Be an ant: however small it may be, every effort is important in order to get closer to our beloved readers.

Rebeldes
LEAMOS FOTOLIBROS PARA NUESTRXS NIÑOS ANTES DE DORMIR

Pensar es rebelde: la fotografía no cambia el mundo, pero los fotolibros pueden ser herramientas de discusión que aborden asuntos urgentes para la sociedad.
Productos leíbles, temáticas cercanas: no olvides que el libro nació como un soporte democrático; trabajá para conectar el fotolibro con el mundo real.
Quiero que consumas lo que hago: tené cuidado de no imponer lo que hacés. Sé humilde y apasionadx.
Más mestizaje, más diálogos: el fotolibro puede alimentarse de hibridismos con otros lenguajes, circular por ellos y aproximarse a nuevxs potenciales amantes del formato.
Rebeldes con causa: recordá que incluir estrategias de artivismo en tu práctica editorial puede generar fotolibros que beneficien a grupos concretos.
Honor al sacrificio: respetá los árboles que se cortaron para convertirse en papel; publicar no significa vanidad, quiere decir hacerlo público.
Motores creativos: mantenete al tanto de lo que pasa a tu alrededor, trabajá con más gente y horizontalmente, discutí tus ideas para generar publicaciones eficientes, con un mensaje claro y un público objetivo definido.

Rebel
LET'S READ PHOTOBOOKS TO OUR CHILDREN BEFORE BED

To think is rebellious: photography doesn't change the world, but photobooks can be tools to foster discussions related to urgent topics that matter in society.
Readable products, close topics: don't forget that the book was born as a democratic format, work in order to connect photobooks with the real world.
I want you to consume what I do: be careful not to impose what you do. Be humble and passionate.
The more multiplicity, the more dialogue: photobooks can express hybrid interplays with other languages and media, circulating through these other fields might help get you closer to new potential photobook lovers.
Rebel with a cause: remember that including artivist strategies in your publishing practice can generate photobooks that are beneficial to specific groups of people.
Honour the sacrifice: respect the trees that have been cut in order to become paper, to publish doesn't mean vanity, it means to make public.
Creative engines: stay tuned to what happens around you, work with more people, work laterally, discuss your ideas to generate efficient publications, with a clear message and a defined audience.

ENCMYK Intendencia de Montevideo [cdF]

Propuestas recopiladas durante: 6° En CMYK Encuentro de Fotolibros 25-26-27/03/2019
Proposals collected during:

¡COPIÁ, COMPARTÍ, DISCUTÍ!
COPY, SHARE, DISCUSS!

Manifesto for the future of Latin-American photobooks
EnCMYK Photobook Festival
Montevideo Center of Photography (UY) 25-27/03/2019

ENGLISH VERSION

Sustainability
(Not)everything exists in order to end up as a (photo)book
It's not the end of the world: there are photography projects that don't fit the book format. Listen to them.
Selfish publishing: the book is a medium of communication. If you want to communicate with yourself more than the readers, what you need is a personal diary. Listen to yourself, honestly.
If you don't do, you don't understand: experiment by making (many) dummies, it's crucial in order to understand what you can ask a photobook.
Instagram is another thing: a book persists in time and needs time to be developed.
Sustainability is collectivity: you will never have the same experience as editors, designers and graphic producers together. Collaborate with them since the very first steps of your book project.
Pay the bills: to fairly remunerate all the professionals involved in the editorial process -not only the printer- it's sustainability too.
Local and honest: value materials and techniques that you can find in your area. They are part of your identity.
Adapt or die: to renounce some desires, work with local professionals and evolve together during the process is what transforms frustrated expectations into sustainable practices.
Break the circle: don't start an editorial project without considering its circulation from the very beginning.

Accessibility
Know your audience like you know yourself
There is no shortcut without work: go out the photography world, take the risk of connecting with new audiences and languages. It's all but easy, but it's necessary.
We craft stories: try to show the audience that photobooks contain stories like comics and movies do.
The reader is your shepherd: a photobook is a space of artistic freedom and experimentation, but be careful not to intimidate those that have never read one or guess they can't.
Quantity doesn't define accessibility: don't think about how many copies you will print until you ponder who will be your readers.
Less prizes, more reach: a photobook works when it reaches up its audience, not necessarily when it wins an award.
Charge less, buy more: keep a fair price for your photobook, it will reach more shelves.
Be an ant: however small it may be, every effort is important in order to get closer to our beloved readers.

Rebelliousness
Let's read photobooks to our children before bed
To think is rebellious: photography doesn't change the world, but photobooks can be tools to foster discussions related to urgent topics that matter society.
Readable products, close topics: don't forget that the book was born as a democratic format, work in order to connect photobooks with the real world.
I want you to consume what I do: be careful not to impose what you do. Be humble and passionate.
More miscegenation, more dialogue: photobooks can be fed by hybridism with other languages and media, circulating through them and getting closer to new potential photobook lovers.
Rebel with a cause: remember that including artivism strategies in your publishing practice can generate photobooks that are beneficial to specific groups of people.
Honour the sacrifice: respect the trees that have been cut in order to become paper, to publish doesn't mean vanity, it means to make public.
Creative engines: stay tuned to what happens around you, work with more people, work horizontally, discuss your ideas to generate efficient publications, with a clear message and a defined audience.

SPANISH VERSION

Sostenibilidad
(No) Todo existe para terminar en un (foto)libro
No es el fin del mundo: hay proyectos fotográficos que no funcionan en formato libro. Escuchalos.
Auto publicación: el libro es un medio de comunicación. Si querés conectar contigo más que con los/as lectores/as, el libro que necesitás es un diario personal. Escuchate honestamente.
Si no hacés, no entendés: experimentá produciendo (muchas) maquetas, es fundamental para entender qué podés pedirle a un fotolibro.
Instagram es otra cosa: el libro persiste en el tiempo y necesita de tiempo para ser desarrollado.
Sostenibilidad es colectividad: nunca vas a tener la misma experiencia que editorxs, diseñadorxs y productorxs gráficxs. Colaborá con ellxs desde las primeras etapas.
Pagá las cuentas: remunerar de forma justa a todxs lxs profesionales involucradxs en el proceso editorial –no solo la gráfica– también es sostenibilidad.
Local y honesto: valorá materiales y técnicas que podés encontrar en tu territorio. Son parte de tu identidad.
Adaptarse o morir: renunciar a algunos deseos, trabajar con profesionales locales y evolucionar juntxs en el proceso es lo que transforma expectativas frustradas en prácticas sostenibles.
Rompé el círculo: no empieces un proyecto editorial sin tener en cuenta su circulación desde el momento uno.

Accesibilidad
Conoce a tu público como a ti mismo
No hay atajo sin trabajo: salí del mundo fotográfico; arriesgate a conectar con nuevos públicos y lenguajes. No es nada fácil, pero es necesario.
Hacemos historias: tratá de mostrar al público que los fotolibros contienen historias igual que los cómics y películas.
El lector es tu pastor: un fotolibro es un espacio de libertad artística y experimentación, pero tené cuidado de no intimidar a quienes

nunca leyeron uno o creen que no saben leerlo.
Cantidad no define accesibilidad: no pienses en cuántas copias hacer hasta que reflexiones y definas quiénes son tus lectorxs.
Menos premios, más alcance: un fotolibro funciona cuando alcanza su público objetivo, no necesariamente cuando gana un reconocimiento.
Cobrar menos, comprar más: mantené un precio justo para que tu libro pueda estar en más estanterías.
Sé hormiga: por pequeño que parezca, cada esfuerzo es importante para alcanzar a nuestrxs estimadxs lectorxs.

Rebeldía
Leamos fotolibros para nuestrxs hijxs antes de dormir
Pensar es rebelde: la fotografía no cambia el mundo, pero los fotolibros pueden ser herramientas de discusión que aborden asuntos urgentes para la sociedad.
Productos leíbles, temáticas cercanas: no olvides que el libro nació como un soporte democrático; trabajá para conectar el fotolibro con el mundo real.
Quiero que consumas lo que hago: tené cuidado de no imponer lo que hacés. Sé humilde y apasionado/a.
Más mestizaje, más diálogos: el fotolibro puede alimentarse de hibridismos con otros lenguajes, circular por ellos y aproximarse a nuevos/as potenciales amantes del formato.
Rebeldes con causa: recordá que incluir estrategias de artivismo en tu práctica editorial puede generar fotolibros que beneficien a grupos concretos.
Honor al sacrificio: respetá los árboles que se cortaron para convertirse en papel; publicar no significa vanidad, quiere decir hacerlo público.
Motores creativos: mantenete al tanto de lo que pasa a tu alrededor, trabajá con más gente y horizontalmente, discutí tus ideas para generar publicaciones eficientes, con un mensaje claro y un público objetivo definido.

PORTUGUESE VERSION

Sustentabilidade
(Nem) Tudo existe para acabar em um (foto)livro
Não é o fim do mundo: existem projetos fotográficos que não funcionam em formato livro, escute-os.
Selfish publishing: o livro é um meio de comunicação. Se você quer se comunicar mais contigo mesmx do que com xs leitorxs, o livro que você precisa é um diário pessoal. Escute-se, honestamente.
Sem fazer, não vai entender: experimente produzir (muitos) bonecos, é fundamental para entender o que você pode pedir para um fotolivro.
Instagram é outra coisa: o livro persiste no tempo e precisa de tempo para ser desenvolvido.
Sustentabilidade é coletividade: você nunca vai ter a mesma experiência que editorxs, designers e produtorxs gráficxs. Colabore com elxs desde as primeiras etapas.
Pague as contas: remunerar de forma justa todxs xs profissionais envolvidos no processo editorial -não apenas a gráfica- também é sustentabilidade.
Local e honesto: valorize materiais e técnicas que você pode encontrar no seu território. São parte da sua identidade.
Adaptar-se ou morrer: renunciar a alguns desejos, trabalhar com profissionais locais e evoluir juntxs no processo é o que transforma expectativas frustradas em práticas sustentáveis.
Quebre o círculo: não comece um projeto editorial sem ter em conta sua circulação desde o primeiro momento.

Acessibilidade
Conheça seu público como você mesmo
Não há atalho sem trabalho: saia do mundo fotográfico, arrisque-se conectar com novos públicos e linguagens. Não é nada fácil, mas é necessário.
Fazemos histórias: procure mostrar para o público que os fotolivros contém histórias assim como quadrinhos e filmes.
O leitor é teu pastor: um fotolivro é um espaço de liberdade artística e experimentação, mas tenha cuidado para não intimidar aqueles que nunca leram um ou acham que não sabem fazê-lo
Quantidade não define acessibilidade: não pense em quantas cópias fazer antes de refletir e definir quem são teus leitorxs.
Menos prêmios, mais alcance: um fotolivro funciona quando alcança seu público alvo, não necessariamente quando ganha reconhecimento.
Cobrar menos para que comprem mais: mantenha um preço justo para que seu livro possa estar em mais prateleiras.
Seja formiga: por menor que pareça, cada esforço é importante para conseguir alcançar nossxs estimadxs leitorxs.

Rebeldia
Leiamos fotolivros para nossas crianças antes de dormir
Pensar é rebelde: a fotografia não muda o mundo, mas os fotolivros podem ser ferramentas de discussão que abordam assuntos urgentes para a sociedade.
Produtos legíveis, temáticas próximas: não esqueça que o livro nasceu como suporte democrático, trabalhe para conectar o fotolivro com o mundo real.
Quero que consumas o que faço: tenha cuidado para não impor o que você faz. Seja humilde e apaixonadx.
Mais miscigenação, mais diálogos: o fotolivro pode se alimentar de hibridismos com outras linguagens, circulando por elas e se aproximando a novos potenciais amantes do formato.
Rebeldes com causa: lembre-se que incluir estratégias de artivismo na sua prática editorial pode gerar fotolivros que beneficiam grupos concretos.
Honre o sacrifício: respeite as árvores que foram cortadas para virar papel; publicar não significa vaidade, significa tornar público.
Motores criativos: fique atentx ao que acontece ao seu redor, trabalhe com mais gente e horizontalmente, discuta suas ideias para gerar publicações eficientes, com uma mensagem clara e um público alvo definido.

Break the Cycle

Latin American photobooks and the audience

Walter Costa

The author sows, the reading fecundates.[171]

Photobooks have been the engine of exciting experiments in the book medium for the last fifteen years. We've never before had such a variety of titles circulating the globe, yet we're witnessing a saturation point. To blame the confrontation between print and online is misleading. Books should actually thank the Internet for intriguing potential, faraway readers before swooping in with their physical presence.

It's this very physical, intimate, two-way relationship that readers seek in tandem with the need to take a break from this hyper-connected world and escape the palimpsest of their lives by diving into a narrative, something they feel they can be a part of, or at least relate to. This is the best impact we can ask of a book, but photobooks struggle to achieve it on a larger scale.

The conditions necessary for increasing their outreach are out there waiting, above all the visual literacy of the 'latent' audience, which is significantly higher than just a few decades ago. To name a close and successful example, comics have been both contributing to and benefitting from this visual turn, constantly growing their circulation while offering, besides classic superhero titles, increasingly literary and experimental graphic novels.

Tagging the audience as 'latent' is not arbitrary: people with interests other than photography are likely to enjoy photobooks once they get to know them, but are they really offered this opportunity? A bubbly publishing ecosystem together with specialised events and fairs are spreading the word, yet those answering the call are normally already part of the photography scene, probably with a dummy to publish. No matter if it's the centre or the periphery of the cultural world, endogamy is what joins both under the same sword of Damocles: the future of photobooks has to be increasingly outside the photography cosmos, or there won't be any future at all.

Latin America is relegated to the cultural periphery, meaning there are far fewer resources available and it has serious difficulties making its cultural production circulate within and outside its boundaries.[172] Continental networks have indeed risen in the recent decades; nevertheless, knowing what's happening in a neighbouring country can still be hard. Big cities, where most culture-makers and audiences concentrate, are awfully far from each other, with loose or expensive connections. Great socioeconomic inequalities maintain a classism interwoven with racism, making minorities shamefully underrepresented on the makers' side[173] but overrepresented in the works that circulate, raising urgent issues of inclusiveness and 'speech positioning'[174].

An added difficulty fostered by this peripheral status is described by Chilean photographer and curator Luis Weinstein. He noted that on one hand, more and more pictures are made in Latin America, and on the other, the big market for these images is located in other, richer territories.

That imbalance establishes a cultural vector that drives many authors to generate and circulate works that affirm a local exoticism—commercially more successful—that fits into a view built over centuries from the cultural hegemony of the capitalist, Christian, White and wealthy West.[175] The situation is changing, but the legitimation that comes from being recognised by the centre nevertheless keeps tempting local authors to please the distant over the local.

This mismatch is connected to an original sin that needs to be faced. Brazilian critic and professor Ronaldo Entler nailed it when he wrote that there's a certain contradiction in our discourses celebrating the photobook: we value this format for its capacity to circulate, but we still want to collect them like artworks sold by art galleries. In doing so, we fail to let books be consumed in a less solemn way by a broader and less specialised public.[176] Solemnity is exclusivity, that is, self-referentiality, which is, again, endogamy—a self-imposed standing point around which a vicious circle keeps wheeling, delimiting an artsy comfort zone whose size tells it all about the lack of ability—or willingness—to actively increase photobooks' outreach.

But fresh energy is coming from the Latin American authors and publishers who face these challenges. In this context, continental venues and fairs come into play not as extensions of the same old comfort zone but as spaces to discuss ideas and practices aimed at engaging with broader audiences. The manifesto[177] drawn up during the sixth *EnCMYK Encontro de Fotolibros* (Photobook Meeting)—a biannual festival organised by the Montevideo Center of Photography (CdF)[178]—lists some bold cues to work on more sustainable, accessible and rebellious photobooks.

Against selfish publishing

When it's all about having one's name on the cover, there's little room for anything but the author's ego, let alone the reader; the same goes for the 'author/dictator' who wants the book to be interpreted in only one way. A good antidote is to always keep in mind what writer Steven Pressfield said: 'Nobody wants to read your shit.'[179] His statement brutally points out that publishing is above all a transaction based on a much-coveted commodity nowadays: attention. What do we give in exchange for the time and money donated by busy people who also happen to be readers? Pressfield gives a couple of tips: 'Reduce your message to its simplest, clearest, easiest-to-understand form' and 'Make it fun. Or sexy or interesting or informative.'[180] Somebody could argue that this equates to a loss of purity, but isn't empathy with readers the only possible starting point to getting out of the circle?

(Not) Everything exists in order to end up as a (photo)book

The mantra that once said you must have a nicely printed portfolio if you want to be a respected

171
Giannetti, Eduardo. 2016. 'Perante o leitor [Before the reader]'. In *Trópicos Utópicos [Utopian Tropics]*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

172
This is a problem that was already pointed out back in 1981 by Guatemalan photographer and publisher María Cristina Orive, who conducted the first ever research on photography books published on the continent: *Hecho en Latinoamérica. Libros Fotográficos de Autores Latinoamericanos [Made in Latin America. Photography Books from Latin American Authors]*, published and exhibited in occasion of the second *Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía [Latin American Photography Colloquium]* held in Mexico City. She came to three final conclusions. The first: nobody knows what's been done, even in their own countries. The second: there are photographers who paid for the publishing of their work. No doubt they think that once created and printed, the book will reach the reader because of its inherent value. The third: in many countries, books have been paid for by a company, an institution or a government. They're objects of prestige (like culture!), and unfortunately, they never reach an interested audience.

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It's interesting to look at the survey done before the *Encontro de Publicadores* (Publishers' Meeting) that took place in São Paulo in 2016. Considering that out of 310 replies, 80 percent were Brazilians, 68 percent of the total defined themselves as White. VVAA. 2016. *Entre, à maneira de, junto a publicadores [Between, the way, together with publishers]*. São Paulo: Tenda de Livros; Edições Aurora; Zerocentos Publicações. Survey booklet, 2. Also available at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GkZBagupVauwRaavUCJo8maOUKdg2v3B-KaDQkywbBTA/edit?usp=sharing

174
This is a term from critical race theory brought to current public discourse by Brazilian political philosopher Djamila Ribeiro. It refers to the privilege of talking in racist and patriarchal societies, where the legitimised discourse is that of White heterosexual men. It reveals how different voices are considered as 'others' and how this regime of discursive authorisation prevents those considered as 'others' from exercising the right to make their voices heard

author now states that you need a photobook. But the formats are incomparable both in terms of purpose and investment. Dutch artist and publisher Erik van der Weijde affirms in his publishing manifesto: 'Each published title must add value to the existing ones. ... All books that are not made are, at least, just as important.'[181] If after studying, testing and collaborating, you realise that a photobook is not the answer, more creative energy will be available to translate the project into other formats, without contributing to the above saturation. Colombian author and publisher Jorge Panchoaga realised that the best way to present *Dulce y Salada (Sweet and Salty)*—a project about a fishing village at the mouth of the Magdalena River—was to make both a photobook and interactive multimedia.[182] Tuning the contents according to the strengths and limitations of each medium, both were benefited by cross-references and synergies.

Panchoaga, Jorge (2018) Dulce y Salada [Seet and Salty]. Bogotá: Croma

Break the cycle

There are radical actions that can make photobooks more accessible to audiences beyond the fans of independent publishing. Brazilian publisher and researcher Fernanda Grigolin, with her project *Tenda de Livros*[183] (Book Tent), brought affordable photobooks, artist books and poetry to an open-air Sunday market in São Paulo throughout 2014. Between clothes and food, solemnity was soundly stripped down, bringing near many people who'd never flipped through a photobook before. Uruguayan photographer Federico Estol developed a project with a group of shoe-shiners in La Paz, Bolivia, creating *Héroes del Brillo*[184] (*Shine Heroes*). He chose to co-publish it as a supplement to the group's newspaper, offered to clients and passers-by to fund their activities. It's an 'artivist' strategy that, besides empowering the protagonists of the project, reached local audiences through an already established distribution network without impeding the publication's ability to circulate within the photobook world as well.

Estol, Federico (2018), Héroes del Brillo. 2018

Charge less, buy more

When even loyal readers are complaining about prices, making photobooks accessible to less specialised audiences necessarily means making them affordable too. Latin American resiliency in the face of limited resources and high production costs fosters creative achievements with little support; another factor is that the market isn't wealthy enough for making photobooks just for collectors a viable choice. Weinstein's project *Es lo Que Hay*[185] (*That's the Way Things Are*) is based on his archive of pictures taken during the years of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. He wanted to focus on narrative and budget so, in collaboration with designer Carolina Zañartu between 2014 and 2018, he published four thin and affordable books as independent chapters of a whole. The only wink at collectors is a cardboard cover to house them together.

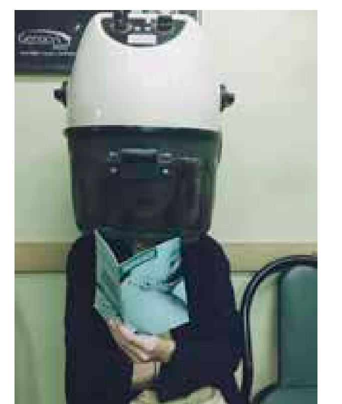
Weinstein, Luis (2014-2018)**Es lo que Hay. Santiago: Cenfoto. (image courtesy of the author)

**the books have been published during these years, don't know how Chicago deals with

The reader is your shepherd

Readers are always way smarter than we think, yet it's easy to fall into 'I-want-you-to-consume-what-I-do' attitudes. How can we tune our message better and be more reader-friendly, avoiding underestimation and imposition? The journey of a book is defined well before it's printed, so choosing and understanding the target audience during the process is a good starting point. In 2018, during a harsh debate around the legalisation of abortion, Argentinian Tamara Goldenberg and Martina Perosa published the photozine *Mamarazzi* with *Frente Editorial Abierto* (Open Publishing Front).[186] By appropriating images and texts used by a widespread gossip magazine to celebrate motherhood, they revealed the subliminal propaganda behind it. In addition to the use of easily recognisable materials, the next step they took to reach their audience was to distribute the publication in hairdresser shops around the Palace of the Argentine National Congress in Buenos Aires.[187]

Goldenberg, Tamara; Perosa, Martina (2018) *Mamarazzi*. Buenos Aires: Frente Editorial Abierto.



Mamarazzi being read in a hairdresser shop in Buenos Aires (image courtesy of the authors)

175
Weinstein, Luis. 2018. 'Sobre la circulación y distribución de nuestra fotografía [On circulation and distribution of our photography]'. In *Sur - Revista de Fotolibros Latinoamericanos [South – Latin American Photobooks Magazine] 1*, edited by Villaro, Leandro. 3. Buenos Aires: FOLA Fototeca Latinoamericana; Caracas: La Cueva Editorial.

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Entler, Ronaldo. 2019. 'Notas sobre o atrito entre o livro e a fotografia [Notes on the friction between book and photography]'. *Zum Revista de Fotografia [Zum Photography Magazine]*. revistazum.com.br/en/colunistas/livro-e-a-fotografia

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Costa, Walter. 2019. *Walter Costa.* https://waltercosta.site/writing/

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http://cdf.montevideo.gub.uy/

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Pressfield, Steven. 2009. 'The Most Important Writing Lesson I Ever Learned.' *Steven Pressfield* (blog). stevenpressfield.com/2009/10/writing-wednesdays-2-the-most-important-writing-lession-i-ever-learned

180
Ibid.

181
Weijde, Erik van der. 2017. *This Is Not My Book.* 16-17. Leipzig: Spector Books.

182
Panchoaga, Jorge. 2018. *Dulce y Salada.* http://www.dulceysalada.com/

183
Grigolin, Fernanda. 2014. *Tenda de Livros*. https://tendadelivros.org/historia/

184
Estol, Federico. 2019. *Heroes del Brillo*. Uploaded 2019. https://vimeo.com/302063565

185
The four titles (*Esto ha sido [This Has Been], Se vende ilusiones [Illusions for Sale], Apuntes del Edén [Eden Notes], Toque de queda [Curfew])* can be found here http://www.luisweinstein.com/

186
The Front's approach to publishing focuses on dissident publications in form of photozines, whose price can be a maximum of 3% of the minimum wage. For more information: https://frenteeditorialabierto.com.ar/

187
Photobook lovers can only download a free pdf. The printable version can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/10-UGC_U5qXm67B_4EMG-jysXiNkKrk_y_/view

Photobook history shows an extensive use of the medium to support or criticise political stances and trigger discussions on urgent issues.[188] Argentinians Sebastián Pani and Belén Grosso developed *Y un Día el Fuego* (*And One Day the Fire*),[189] a project about women burned by their partners in a country that suffers a new victim of gender violence every 30 hours. In addition to telling painful stories of survivors, the resulting publication, made possible by Buenos Aires-based platform Turma,[190] also serves as a guide for women to understand how gender violence works and how to denounce it before it's too late. With 3,000 copies printed, it's being used for informational talks that raise awareness and offer legal advice. On a different level of political engagement, the work of Mexican designer and publisher León Muñoz Santini fits with André Breton's declaration: 'One publishes to find comrades!'[191] His publishing house, *Gato Negro*,[192] prints very affordable and densely political publications from different genres and authors. These pamphlets, poetry, illustrations and photobooks are united by their sharp and often ironic criticism of politics, violence, migration policies, economics and other deformations of power.

Pani, Sebastián; Grosso, Belén (2018) *Y un Día el Fuego*. Buenos Aires: Turma

Some titles from publishing house *Gato Negro*

188
Critic Gerry Badger has long been collecting and studying propaganda and protest photobooks, a selection of which was exhibited in 2017 during the Photobook Phenomenon exhibition in Barcelona. A chapter about the topic can be found in the catalogue: VVAA. 2017. *Photobook Phenomenon*. Barcelona: RM Verlag.

189
A pdf version of the publication is available here: https://goo.gl/iKqkRE

190
Julieta Escardó founded Turma in 2016. After running the first photobook fair on the continent since 2001, when *fotolibro* the Spanish translation of 'photobook' didn't exist yet, she realised that to help spreading photobook culture, other activities were necessary. More can be learned here: http://somosturma.com/.

191
This declaration was made by André Breton in 1920, quoted by Gareth Branwyn, *Jamming the Media: A Citizen's Guide Reclaiming The Tools of Communication*, Vancouver: Chronicle Books, 1997

192
Gato Negro. https://www.gatonegro.ninja

Making the youth familiar with this format is another long-term path we can start walking right now, like the itinerant library[193] of CdF, which brings photobooks to different educational institutions, or the image-editing and photobook-making workshops for children led by Claudia Tavares and Rony Maltz[194] in Rio de Janeiro. Besides fostering an early connection with the format, playfully analysing photographic narratives helps in the forming of a critical attitude towards the images that have been pervading our daily lives since childhood.

Photobooks won't be viral or mainstream. Instead, they'll be patiently waiting on the shelves to be browsed over time. The challenge is getting to those shelves and offering more opportunities for impact. Like sowing seeds, if we want to create a sustainable environment for photobooks, hands need to get dirty, and grains must be selected according to the soil. And the harvest, if we work well, won't be ours.

What if We Stopped Claiming the Photobook?

Stefan Vanthuyne

In a written conversation with Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa, I asked him if the contemporary documentary photobook hadn't become subject to the same critiques to which people like Allan Sekula and Martha Rosler subjected documentary photography in the late 1970s and early 80s. Because if documentary is thought to be art 'when the work can be regarded, first and foremost, as an act of self-expression on the part of the artist',[195] as Sekula wrote, then the same can be said about the contemporary photobook. In his response, Stanley felt that it was 'dangerous to use their concerns as a fixed rule for this moment, because documentary's purchase on the broader conversation is many orders of magnitude smaller now than it was then.'[196] He also pointed at how, in the last decade, the work of both Rosler and Sekula—the latter with two gallery shows in London and New York just last summer—had been embraced by the art world and was itself now shown as fine art (rightly so, we agreed). Yet, there seems to be an annoying side effect to being embraced or taken in by the art world: being put under a glass bell where there's little oxygen tends to slowly kill the original scope of the work. And once in, it becomes very hard to reach out again.

It seems to me this is what David Campany meant when, a couple of years ago, he wrote that the term 'photobook' is recent and that both previous makers and audiences of photographic books really didn't require the term to exist. 'Indeed they might have benefitted from its absence. Perhaps photographic book making was so rich and varied precisely because it was not conceptualized as a practice with a unified name.'[197] Naming is claiming, and today the photobook resides firmly and comfortably within the art world, even the documentary photobook. This naming and claiming sometimes takes on strange forms, like in 2016, when Aperture's *The Photobook Review* coined the term 'the accidental photobook', referring to books that were never made with the intention of being 'photobooks' and therefore existed 'outside the photobook radar'.[198] Most examples given were vintage—and somewhat idiosyncratic—cookbooks, scientific books or manuals.

The fact that there is now 'a photobook radar' isn't a bad thing. The renewed attention—from both the art world and from scholars—for the phenomenon that the photobook has become has allowed the medium to claim its long-disregarded place within the history of photography. Since the turn of the century, books on photobooks have flourished, and the photobook is now the subject of several museum exhibitions. Within this context, and given that photobooks are treated as cultural products of their time, a lot of consideration goes into form and aesthetics, turning those aspects into prominent reference points for the contemporary photobook. For example, in 2014, when Vladyslav Krasnoshchok and Sergey Lebedinskyy made *Euromaidan* during the protests in Kiev, Ukraine, it was often noted how the small book resembled the Japanese protest books of the 60s—books that at the time were often produced anonymously, quickly and cheaply with the goal to distribute them as fast as possible so people would join the protests. *Euromaidan*—handmade with a designer and a publisher and limited to 250 copies—circulated in artbook fairs and was nominated for the Kassel Photobook Award. As Stanley said: different times, different concerns. Still, they're different in a significant way, altering how we perceive the medium.

Like Sekula, I'm not suggesting 'that we ignore or suppress the creative, affective and expressive aspect of cultural activity'[199]. Instead, I tend to agree when he states, albeit a bit strongly, that we should at least understand the extent to which art offers 'a wholly imaginary transcendence, a false harmony, to docile and isolated spectators.'[200] Martha Rosler argued that the art world was indeed important for any movement trying to bring about substantive changes, but it didn't suffice. She tried to make her work accessible to as many people outside the art audience as she could.[201] Considering the contemporary photobook, Krzysztof Pijarski writes that 'it quickly became apparent that the photobook revival, while an important development for the medium and (self-) understanding of photography, remained an inbred phenomenon'[202]—the endogamy Walter Costa refers to. And as Donald Weber aptly pointed out to me some time ago, today we find ourselves in a situation in which photobooks are made as objects for the museum, rather than for an audience. As such, the covers of the books are themselves the glass bell, not just containing but also retaining their content.

So how do we breach that? How do we, as Weber put it, *activate* the photobook? How do we keep its content alive? Think about the audience first, as is the moto of Mark Neville, who firmly believes we don't pay enough attention to the dissemination of the work. His *Port Glasgow Book Project* resulted in the production and distribution of 'a hardback book of social documentary images, with high-production values, that subverted conventional ways in which such books are disseminated as 'art'.'[203] Eight thousand copies were distributed uniquely to every home in Port Glasgow; the book was never commercially available. If today a photographer wants to see his or her book in university libraries, social or educational organisations or political institutions, he or she has to take that responsibility and go the extra mile, as current distribution models don't allow for such a follow-up.

Costa gives some fine examples that break the cycle, presenting wonderful efforts by Federico Estol, Tamara Goldenberg and Martina Perosa and Sebastián Pani and Belén Grosso. For her graduation project at KASK Ghent, Iris Janssens made *Did You Know?*, a book about the 1984 chemical disaster in Bhopal, India, the consequences of which are still painfully present today. The dummy was made up out of photographs and pink pamphlets, which could be torn loose and handed out. It won this

193
A brief log of their activities can be consulted here: Montevideo Center of Photography. 2019. *Mobile Book Library*. http://cdf.montevideo.gub.uy/articulo/mediateca-movil

194
A video summary of the activities can be viewed here: https://www.ateliedaimagem.com.br/curso/maos-a-obra-brincando-com-fotos-e-livros/

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Sekula, Allan. 2016. 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on The Politics of Representation)'. In Photography Against the Grain. Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983. 53-76. United Kingdom: Mack.

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Wolukau-Wanambwa, Stanley. 2019. 'The paradoxically perfect and utterly imperfect photobook: A three-part conversation with Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa'. The Belgian Platform for Photobooks (blog), 15 August 2019. http://belphotobooks.org/the-paradoxically-perfect-and-utterly-imperfect-photobook/

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Campany, David. 2014. 'The 'Photobook': What's in a name?'. In Aperture The Photobook Review 7, winter. https://davidcampany.com/the-photobook-whats-in-a-name/

198
Wolff, Denise. 2016. 'The Accidental Photobook'. In Aperture The Photobook Review 11, fall. https://aperture.org/pbr/accidental-photobook/

199
Sekula, Dismantling, pp. 53.

200 Ibid.

201
Rosler, Martha. 2006. 'For an Art against the Mythology of Everyday Life.' In Decoys and Disruptions. Selected Writings, 1975–2001. 3-8. Massachusettes: the MIT Press.

202
Pijarski, Krysztof. 2018. 'On Photography's Liquidity, or, (New) Spaces for (New) Publics?'. In Why exhibit? Positions on Exhibiting Photographies, edited by Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger and Iris Sikking. 17-30. Amsterdam: Fw:Books.

203
Neville, Mark. 'The Port Glasgow Book Project', www.markneville.com. http://www.markneville.com/#/the-port-glasgow-book-project

year's Kassel Dummy Award and is now being printed in a much larger edition. 'A manifesto of political activism',[204] as juror Markus Schaden calls it, hopefully the book will somehow find a way to fulfil the distribution potential that's so consciously and cleverly embedded in its form.

Thinking outside of the book is another line of investigation when talking about dissemination, one that Costa also addresses. But since the manifest that he presents departs solely from the viewpoint of the artist or photographer, I'd like to finish with an example of the photobook being thoughtfully handled by someone other than an artist. Kristof Titeca is an associate professor in development studies at the University of Antwerp. His book *Rebel Lives* presents an impressive visual account of life inside the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, based on photographs taken by the militia's commanders between 1994 and 2004. Here, we have an archive handled not by an artist but a scholar. Dealing with photographs, and also text and drawings, the book clearly makes use of the creative design used in contemporary photobooks—this comes as no surprise, as it was published by an art and photobook publisher. It also accompanies an exhibition at the Foto Museum of Antwerp. It reminds me of Forensic Architecture, another exciting example of researchers finding an entrance into the art world, using artistic media and platforms to present their results and, while they're at it, causing an interesting friction with and challenge to conventional ideas about art.

One of the characteristics of 'accidental photobooks' was that they were in fact free from an artist's agenda. Perhaps if we stopped claiming the photobook, the medium might find more breathing room and more space to move; it might find new forms and new life, perhaps even new audiences. It's possible that, in the hands of others, and in fields or disciplines other than art, the photobook can keep expanding.

Iris Janssens, Did You Know?

204 Schaden, Markus. 2019. 'Did you know? by Iris Janssens'. Kassel Dummy Award '19, Fotobook Festival. https://fotobookfestival.org/portfolio-item/kassel-dummy-award-2019/

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Donald Weber, prior to photography, was originally trained as an architect and worked with Rem Koolhaas' OMA. His work is concerned with making visible the technological, spatial, legal and political systems that shape our current condition – the infrastructures of power. He serves on the faculty of the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, and is a PhD candidate at Leiden University.

Colophon