Unfolding the act of photography

by

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the multifaceted status of the photograph, as a contribution to understanding the mechanics of the production of meaning within the photograph. In order to get a better view of how photographs function, I both revisit discourses that have dealt with medium specificity issues and use my own practice, designing an apprehension model which can assist in the achievement of a more rigorous conception of the photograph.

An integrative literature review, based on Photography discourses and debates shaped by both theorists and practitioners, provides the tools needed for defining the medium's unique and shared properties. Ontological synecdoches of the photograph, issues of representation, time, automatism, agency, the twofold nature –trace and picture- as well as depiction theories of the medium are put into scrutiny towards formulating an apprehension scheme. This body or knowledge, along with my visual practice's research outcomes, informs the construction of an appropriate model for understanding the medium's effect. In specific, this study designs and applies a synthesized model of thought which considers photographs as a fixed unity of interdependent links in the chain called 'act of photography'. This model is based on the parameters that contribute towards a photograph's apprehension –Operator, Apparatus, Scenery, Photograph, Viewer (OASPV).

A thorough illustration of the application of this model onto a specific photograph is provided, showing how a verbal articulation of apprehending a photograph can take place in order for bad or poor readings to be avoided.

An explanation of the working strategy I applied throughout my creative practice along with a discussion upon the images chosen for the portfolio accompanying this thesis, is offered. In specific, it is shown how the apprehension scheme is reflected in my practice, along with a contextualisation of my photographs -placing emphasis in notions such as the ordinary, ineffable, serendipity, trace and picture as well as similarities to the work of other practitioners.

This thesis discusses the elements that formulate the encrypted information inscribed on the surface of photographs, namely it unfolds their layers throughout creating, perceiving and conceiving them.

Contents

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 I dedicate this study to my family: Spyro, Stelio and Lambrini.

1. Introduction

The realisation of the problematic nature of some photographs which leads them to resist, confuse or escape an understanding of the reason of their appeal, energized the necessity of pursuing a research study that had as its aim the construction of an adequate model for preventing the bad or poor apprehending of photographs.

The difficulty in verbally articulating the reason why my photograph *Closed* stood out of my practice, why it actually resisted having a specific noeme attributed to it, was the motivation for this research.

Vasileios Kantas, *Closed*, 2008

While this photograph was created as an intuitive response, causing and demanding a study for synthesizing an appropriate model for its apprehension, the findings proceeded from my visual research – in the form of my own practice, influenced by, as well as reflecting, the theory behind the model - consciously aimed to initially feed and then challenge this model's effectiveness, fulfilling a rather bidirectional research route, which reflected the medium's unique properties.

Despite the extensive literature in the field of photography apprehension, theorists and practitioners have not yet agreed on *what is actually manifested in a photograph.* This study tackles this issue by shaping an apprehension scheme, emanated through both synthesizing relevant theories after executing an integrative review and through the use of my own practice. In this way, it offers a verbal way of approaching photographs adequately as well as a visual way of reflecting medium specificity issues.

This main research question arose out of contemplating my inquisitive practice, as much as other photographers' work. Having observed an ongoing change in my shooting approach and choice of

subjects over time, I have been wondering 'What am I photographing?' as well as 'What do my photographs actually show and/or are able to communicate?' I set this research question in order to better understand the nature of photographs, hoping to contribute to the field of photography by depicting in – or at least, connoting through - a photograph a reflection of the medium's qualities.

The phenomenological, ontological, aesthetic and epistemic question of 'What is manifested in a photograph', or to phrase it in a more pragmatic way, 'How should the effect of a photograph be considered?', lies at the core of the majority of the contemporary debates in the field. These debates range from old but recurring ones, such as whether photography is merely a mechanical form of technical reproduction or an aesthetic form, to recent ones, such as those examining the mutation of the medium's old form into new forms of imagery.[1] However, at the same time, a recent gathering of theorists to discuss the medium of photography attested to a need to return to, readdress, and clarify the ontological nature of photographs, which, in its turn, brings us back to a binary model consisting of the notions of the 'trace' and the 'picture', a perspective that is going to be extensively discussed in this thesis.[2] Acknowledging the valuable points produced by the often contrasting arguments to be found in the literature, this study accounts the existence of this ongoing intellectual conflict as a sign of the need for further investigation to be executed in the field of photography apprehension.

The main research question may sound generic, as it seems not to follow the usual tactic of narrowing down the field of inquiry into a tiny, controllable, area of research. However, the problem I am tackling in this thesis demands a return to core aspects of medium specificity, as it enters the realm of practically constructing a photograph as well as apprehending it later on. One of the main claims in this thesis, which emerged from both the literature's critical analysis and my practice, is that the problematic nature of a photograph's understanding may lie in the handling of the dynamic relationship between the photograph's two main characteristic modes: the trace and the picture. When I say 'trace', I mean what the world in front of the lens inscribes on the photograph's surface, and when I say 'picture', I mean what human intervention achieves in shaping on that surface. More specifically, I examine whether one of the reasons why a photograph acquires an undefinable interest lies in the appropriate dosage of each of the modes. It might be the case, I argue in this

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[1] For the artist Gerald Richter, the former debate is exhausted. Gerhard Richter's thoughts are deployed in the introduction of the book Gerhard Richter (ed.), *Jacques Derrida*, *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography*, 2010, to which he has contributed an introduction to Derrida's views.

[2] This debate is fully illustrated in James Elkins (ed.), *Photography Theory*, 2007.

thesis, that there is a way of balancing these two forces, through their subtle mutual osmosis, that is able to produce images for which the deciphering of their allure is a hard task.

1.1 The logic behind the research design, purpose and writing style

In order to better understand how such photographs work, or before that, how to avoid a poor or bad understanding of them, the viewer should first ensure that s/he is aware of how photographs, in general, are, or can better be, apprehended. This research study, which mainly owes its existence to my practice's inquisitiveness, takes into consideration the theoretical claims in the field regarding what photographs hint at, point at, present, represent, manifest, stand for, show, are, should be considered as, while also creating photographs that aim to both raise the question '*What is a photograph able to say'* and to feed as well as to test the apprehension model it suggests as the most adequate one.

To meet the research objective of how to prevent the bad or poor apprehension of photographs, this thesis adopts a core perspective, that of Van Lier's ontological treatise, which highlights the discrete roles of trace and picture, as it has been the most aptly communicable, effective tool for theorising both aspects of the medium's dual nature. Having reviewed the literature, it synthesizes the existing claims and theories into one, integrated model, the OASPV. Specifically, its five elements (O for Operator, A for Apparatus, S for Scenery, P for Photograph and V for Viewer), constituting the five zones of action upon the process in which a photograph takes shape and is then placed, host the areas of critical analysis on which the existing knowledge in the field has operated.

The experience gained throughout executing my practice also assisted in shaping this model. I would like to highlight the fact that the outcomes of my visual practice, executed during as well as after the theoretical review of the field, contributed to the formulation of the apprehension model. Thus, regarding the writing style of this thesis, I would like to note that the order of reporting on the findings does not follow a diary route, namely, that the thesis has been written not throughout the stages of executing my research project, but at its very end, imbuing in this way information related to the findings across the whole thesis.

I acknowledge that an objective, singular understanding of a photograph is an unachievable task. If one wants to be accurate, one has to meticulously describe the context in which a particular image is seen and the mental state of its onlooker, apart from the work itself and its mechanics of

production. This is actually what the OASPV model suggests. This is because meaning is not exclusively, if at all, inherent in the nature of things; it is rather "the photographer's cultural investment upon the reality he encounters", as Kostis Antoniadis writes, by the use of the apparatus and all the other aesthetic choices he can make.[3] Secondly, meaning is an extra cultural investment coming from the spectator who encounters the image, and thirdly it depends on other parameters which affect the apprehension, namely, its context of consumption, such as the exhibition site, the accompanying text, and others. Christian Metz declared that "an image is not an autonomous and isolated empire, a closed world without communication of its surroundings. Images, as words, as everything, cannot escape their interference in the game of concepts which regulate meaning in societies".[4]

The reason why I believe that this specific study was needed is, first of all, because it can contribute to the extensive contemporary debate that insists on returning to ontological treatises, as the notion of index still remains popular, and reviving medium specificity issues.[5] Secondly, it can offer a well-structured, synthesized, educational tool for the act of apprehending photographs, which could be useful to students of many academic disciplines that use photographs as research tools. It can also offer professionals in the field an insight into the medium's nature, dispelling the myths that govern many photographers' work.

1.2 Clarification of terms

This thesis examines photographs that do not belong – seemingly at least – in the spectrum of what is meant nowadays by the term 'photographic image'; it rather uses as its field of inquiry photographs which are technically formulated in the classical way and, for this reason, I will not use the above term in this thesis. Derrida reflected upon the term 'photography' and the relationship between this term and a certain concept of photography. He wondered: "Does what we have

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[3] Κωστής Αντωνιάδης, *Λανθάνουσα εικόνα*, 1995, p.116.

[4] My translation, from: Christian Metz, 'Au dela de l'analogie, L'image' in *Communications*, No.15, 1970, p.3

[5] The list is endless; from recent conferences in the *Tate Modern,* such as the 'Agency & Automatism' in June 2010, highly esteemed seminars led by professionals, such as the 'Practicing New Documentary' organised by *Foto8* in January 2012 and journal publications such as 'Allowing the accidental' in *Contemporary aesthetics* in July 2010, an ongoing discussion upon the 'mutually constraining forces' that shape the photographic surface has been taking place. Behind diptychs such as Automatism/Agency, Authorship/Story, Intentionality/Realism, etc., there is always the same play at stake: the index/icon one, which this thesis aspires to set up and close the debate once and for all.

available to us now deserve the name of Photography? Is it of the same order as what was possible with the earlier technology...?"[6] Jean Francois Chevrier distinguishes between 'photography' and 'photographic images'. My thesis looks neither at the 'photographic image' nor at 'art photography' or any other camera/lens based imagery belonging to new media disciplines, such as CGI (computer generated images) or AL (artificial life). These categories might have established a distinct field of inquiry; however they still search to define whether a new, distinct ontology, namely, the methodological tools to perceive these works, is needed.[7] My thesis looks at 'photographs' as they are conceived in the traditional sense of the term. That is why a medium specificity framework, that of Henri Van Lier, as well as relevant methodology has been chosen. It is a framework that distinguishes the 'photo-graph' from the 'photo-effect', namely, the different stimuli emanating from the 'pictorial intentional touches' and the 'non-intentional photonic imprints' accordingly.[8]

The mechanics of production in its classical sense do not signify an absolute passivity. The recording process has always involved a productive inscription shaped by choices, which have also been varied while technological progress has been ongoing. It is rather airy and superficial to claim that the medium should change its name at a specific point in time, that of the digital era. A photograph's truth has been rather 'made', ever since its inception. As Derrida noted, "The digital treatment of

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[6] Gerhard Richter (ed.) *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography*, 2010, p.5.

[7] Dr Mark Guglielmetti, an AL researcher from the University of Monash, wonders whether ontological remarks from moving and still imagery are adequate to describe the perceptual experience of the viewer of artificial life creations. In his paper 'Alternative ontologies for the Photographic Image', presented on 25/05/2012 in the conference *Beyond Representation: Photography, Humans, Computers* held at London South Bank University, he suggested that a mix of Andre Bazin's and Vilem Flusser's writings has been until now adopted as the most appropriate methodological tool for understanding how the AL images he creates are perceived. He proposes, though, that the main structural element of his imagery is the 'algorithm', implying a possible need for a different ontology because the algorithm is not indexical to the world, it is just an interpretation of what he is trying to model. According to him, the algorithm intends to produce the effect of an 'amplifier of imagination'. This amplifier of imagination starts from 'life-as-we-know-it', moving towards a broader context of 'life-as-it-could-be'. The photographs examined in this thesis tend to create 'life-as-ongoing-mystery', as they resist apprehension.

[8] Another similar distinction – however not adopted in this thesis due to it being more complicated than Val Lier's one – between three types of photographs is suggested by Dawn Phillips: photo-object, [material object, the photograph I am holding], photo-image [indice] and photo picture [index]. "Image is the broad category which includes visual images produced in nature as well as ones produced by human manufacture. Picture is a sub-category which includes only those visual images which have intentional content as products of human design." Dawn Phillips, 'Fixing the image: Rethinking the mind-independence of Photographs' in *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.6, No. 2, August 2009, p.5. Retrieved from http://www.dawnphillips.co.uk/files/Dawn-M-Phillips-Fixing-the-Image-Re-thinking-the-Mind-independence-of-Photographs.pdf, accessed on 10/06/2011.

the image obliges us more than ever to reconsider the supposed referentiality or passivity in relation to the referent from the very beginning, the very first epoch, so to speak, of photography".[9]

The type of imagery encountered in my practice, as well as in the other practitioners' photographs to be discussed in this thesis do not tackle medium specificity issues via a point of technological determination and are therefore insusceptible to the influence of technological progress. To avoid conceptual/ontological confusion, 'heavily/digitally' manipulated imagery has not been chosen for examination in this study.[10]

The underlying logic of this thesis is that, in order to be able to adequately articulate a speech about what a photograph is potentially able to communicate, one has to unfold the layers that constitute the surface of that specific photograph, to finally realise that its meaning is intertwined with many factors and spread across many conceptual zones, to consider, in other words, the photograph as part of a larger entity, which I call the 'photography act'. Derrida too avoided referring to the 'photograph', but preferred also to adopt the term 'photographic act'; however, he even objected to

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[9] Gerhard Richter (ed.) *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p.7. I acknowledge the impact that the digital era has had on the discourse of the field; it has even defined, in a way, the higher education courses' curriculum across UK institutions. However, one has to critically stand opposite to it, wondering what kind of reasoning lies behind its spread. For a discussion on the debate, see Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or Faking Photographs' in Karen Beckman & Jean Ma (eds) *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). "The difference between the digital and the film based camera has to do with the way the information is captured. But storage in terms of numerical data does not eliminate indexicality...Further, it would be foolish to closely identify the indexical with the photographic...Long before digital media were introduced, medical instruments and other instrument of measurement, indexical instruments par excellence – such as devices for reading pulse rate, temperature, heart rate, etc, or speedometers, wind gauges, and barometers – all converted their information into numbers."(p.2); "digital manipulation can hardly be seen as transforming the nature of photography as an art form, although it offers both new exciting techniques and new processes of discovery in the exploration of those techniques."(p.6); "Traditional photography, therefore, also possesses processes that can attenuate, ignore, or even undo the indexical. No question digital processes can perform these alterations more quickly and more seamlessly, but the difference between digital and film based photography cannot be described as absolute."(p.3)

[10] What comes into play here is the idea of whether there is an extent of intervention in an image's content, which draws the line of the borders one needs to discern in order to classify it outside the realm of the photography medium, placing it in a new media spectrum. This query was discussed as a key one, once more, amongst other ontological concerns, between the delegates of the conference *Beyond Representation: Photography, Humans, Computers*, at London South Bank University, 25-26 May 2012. The photographic practice literature has extensively discussed this idea; for example, the view that a document is a document as long as it has a degree of credibility is examined through case studies of contemporary photographic practice in the article of Francesco Jodice, 'A document' in *Exit*, No.45, 2012.

reproducing exactly it as it had been previously encountered in the French literature of photographic theory. He preferred the term photographic 'operation' or 'experience'.[11]

I also avoid using the term 'reading' when it comes to the action of looking at a photograph's surface. Arnheim suggests: "To speak of 'reading' a picture is appropriate but dangerous at the same time because it suggests a comparison with verbal language, and linguistic analogies, although fashionable, have greatly complicated our understanding of perceptual experiences everywhere."[12] I prefer instead the term 'apprehending', as a word which combines two physical processes, those of looking and thinking, that are interconnected and overlapping; contemporary research has shown the impossibility of separating seeing from thinking.[13] The term 'apprehend' provides a more apposite description of the process involved in the case of photography than do terms such as 'comprehend', 'understand', 'grasp', 'perceive' or 'conceive'; apprehension includes linguistic epexegesis, but is not limited to it.

1.3 Thesis outline

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides information concerning the research design – methodological concerns, discussion on methods used, limitations of research study - as well as the presentation of the apprehension scheme and a thorough analysis of its elements. It revisits main medium specificity issues and provides an overview of the established models of apprehending photographs, bringing them together under the same roof, that of a synthesized model, the OASPV. Its five factors – operator, apparatus, scenery, photograph, viewer - involved throughout executing, perceiving and

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[11] The argument that a photographic act took place has been met, in similar formulations, mainly in the writings of Cavell, Dubois, Hoper, Batkin, Snyder, Flusser, and in some others too, whom we are going to discuss later on in this thesis. Derrida's quotation is taken from Gerhard Richter (ed.) *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography*, 2010, p.44.

[12] Rudolf Arnheim, 'On the nature of Photography' (first printed in *Critical inquiry* , Fall 1974,Vol.1, No.1) in Peninah Petruck (ed.) *The Camera Viewed: writings on 20th century photography*, 1979, p.156-157

[13] Rebecca Fortnum, a member of the Visual Intelligence research project at Lancaster University, argues that "thinking is part of looking, we choose what it is we look at, and understand what we see is often not what is". For more, Simone Gristwood, 'Beyond vision: The ongoing reconfiguration of the human demonstrated through Photography, Artificial Intelligence and Art'. Paper presented in *Beyond Representation* conference in LSBU, 24-25 May 2012.

conceiving a photograph into five clearly distinguished zones, are scrutinized, demarcating the boundaries of their zones and showing their impact on the apprehension of the act of photography.

The next chapter continues this process by offering the main body of the literature review, which also contributed in formulating the OASPV model, by examining philosophical debates relevant to studying contemporary practice in photography. Ontological perspectives of the photograph, depiction theories, core aspects involved in the apprehension scheme such as representational issues and time, as well as the coexistence of the modes of the photograph are put under scrutiny.

The mechanics of applying the OASPV model to specific imagery is provided in the fourth chapter. A thorough application of it, to a photograph for which an adequate amount of information has been gathered, is rigorously illustrated.

Chapter 5 refers to the directorial strategies and the different approaches and attitudes governing the whole of my visual practice. It also clarifies the rhetoric of the 16 images chosen to constitute my portfolio, justifying their relation with the OASPV model and their role in the research process. It deconstructs their potential function, showing how specific medium properties can be reflected, as connotations, on their surface; establishing in this way links with the theory discussed in the previous chapters. It goes on to contextualise my work in the medium's field of practice, indicating a conceptual affinity with other photographers' work and showing the extent to which my practice is differentiated. It also provides an example of bad or poor reading of photographs, showing how the OASPV model would have been more effective had it been applied to that specific body of work. Finally, my practice, consciously including both modes of photography, contributes visually to my research by forming an inextricable part of the discussion, as the portfolio illustrates the mechanics of constructing the 'subtle, wise dynamic' between the trace and the picture.

The epilogue reports on the findings, suggesting that due to the medium's unique quality, the inability to adequately define the content, or the effect, of a photograph is rather an inescapable state. However, the OASPV model is considered able to fulfil the act of apprehending a photograph in a satisfactory extent.

2. Models for apprehending photographs

2.0 Chapter's summary

This chapter provides the reasoning behind setting this study's main research question –*What is manifested in a photograph?* – and explains why, in order to be able to tackle the question, it is firstly necessary to establish a model for apprehending photographs. Consequently, this chapter begins with the integrative review of the literature in the field of photography 'reading' - to be completed at the end of the next chapter- by distributing the claims emanating from different existing models for apprehending photographs according to five channels. Adopting this type of review provides the basis for developing a synthesized model that gathers all approaches into one: the OASPV model (accompanied by the 'apprehension scheme'). The factors constituting the model are analysed one by one, as well as the notion that connects them, namely, the 'act of photography'. It also revisits Van Lier's model of thought upon the real, as it considers it to be a key framework for understanding and deploying a core argument, namely, the coexistence of a presential and a consciential mode. It also discusses the sources and the methods of collecting data and what the role of photographic practice as a tool for unfolding the layers of a photograph's construction is. Finally, it notes the limitations of the study due to the subjective and at times chaotic nature of this field of inquiry.

2.1 Methodology outline

The main research objective to be tackled is how to prevent the bad or poor apprehension of photographs. The method I adopted, as a visual practice-led researcher who aims to create a body of consciously formed photographic practice and provide an adequate understanding of photographs, involved the following steps:

1. formulating an apprehension model by reviewing and validating the existing claims in the field of photography reading (Chapters 2 & 3)

2. supporting a core argument, which considers the twofold identity of a photograph, that of trace and picture, as well as a core logic, specifically, that a photograph's apprehension should involve a whole spectrum of determining factors, all together accounted as an 'act', while taking into account the medium's nature (Chapters 2 & 3)

3. applying the apprehension model to specific photographs, having examined practitioners' work and considered relevant statements, and discussing its potential effectiveness in pragmatic terms (Chapter 4)

4. executing my own practice as a method of ascertaining whether some of the theoretical models discussed in this thesis, and their corresponding notions, are sufficient to answer questions that might emanate from some challengingly unique cases of visual practice and moreover, using my practice as a way of ascertaining whether/how photographs that are able to display problematic apprehension can be intentionally constructed (Chapter 5).

2.1.1 Methods

2.1.1.1 My practice as method

I consider my own practice to be a tool of reflection upon tackling the research questions of this thesis. I tend to align my view with that of Hilde Van Gelder, who argues that in order to deliver visual information about the world surrounding us, the medium of photography should be used effectively: "'Medium' here is no longer to be understood in modernist, autonomist terms of self-definition but in terms of a method that researches reality rather than aspiring to reinvent an updated realist style. Method does not aim to find reality's essence; it has boundaries and limits as a technique and aspires to do, at best, what it can do: critical reflect on reality." [14] I want my practice to introduce the feeling/concept of self-reflecting medium specificity and to generate theoretical space for projecting onto my images the notions and theories discussed in the literature, deconstructing the photographs into their production strategies and reception versions. My aim is to repeat the main research question, in a visual way; I want my photographs to be able to communicate the query: *What is manifested in a photograph?* or more specifically, *What is manifested in this photograph?*

Johannes Sjoberg and Jenny Hughes, discussing the outcomes of 'practice as research' in fine art academic environments and noting that they emanate from research processes that draw on a range of methods, explain that the term includes a broad range of activities. They suggest that such activities may aim to produce (a) an understanding of a range of social and cultural phenomena, (b) new kinds of artistic products, (c) outcomes of relationships or (d) insights into art processes. In the case of practice-led PhDs in the field of photography specifically, the following could be considered

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[14]Hilde Van Gelder, 'The theorization of Photography today' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.303.

as examples of research that correspond to these aims: (a) Carole Baker, *Representations of the animal investigated through creative photographic practice*, 2001; John Darwell, *A black dog came calling: A Visualization of Depression through contemporary photography*, 2008; (b) Eva kalpadaki, *The Empty Space in Abstract Photography: a Psychoanalytical Perspective*, 2007; Juliet Chenery-Robson, *The Visualisation of the Invisible Illness ME through the Production of Contemporary Photographic Practice in Collaboration with Sufferers, Carers and Medical Researchers*, (due in 2013); and (c) Paris Petridis, *Landscape as Manscape*, 2010. Regarding the fourth research aim (d), this thesis visually and verbally illustrates exactly this aim of throwing light onto the imagery itself, examining the process of photography; as Sjoberg and Hughes contend, "Research might start or end in arts practice, draw on arts practice as a part of its process, or be wholly integrated into the shifting forms and outputs of an arts project [...] Practice as research is therefore not a 'method' as such. Arts practices draw on a variety of creative methodologies that might be incorporated into interdisciplinary research projects as methodological innovations, providing new perspectives on and extending existing knowledge as well as materialising a different kind of knowledge practice."[15]

I tend to agree with the aforementioned researchers' suggestion that practice benefits and prioritises action as a methodological imperative, as actually making the visual work is an important means of understanding the medium. In my field of inquiry, namely the philosophy of photography, it is extremely rare that the researcher is also a practitioner; thus, the role expands on exploring, testing and extending a diverse range of creative methodologies in order to illustrate the relationship of creative interventions to both producing and apprehending photographic depictions.

Donald Schon's notion of 'reflective practice' clearly applies to the process I followed towards building and then articulating the research outcomes of this study. Three key concepts Schon has suggested can aptly describe the mechanics of my practice: that of 'tacit knowledge' – the photographer recognizes in the scenery in front of his/her lens a quality that matters to him/her and already knows how to compose the image in a way that makes a particular sense- as well as that of 'knowing-in-action' when applying to the photograph a knowledge that can be revealed only in the way the photograph is shaped. Schon claims that his tacit knowledge is derived from research and from the practitioner's own mental state, repertoire and experience. In the case of the research outcomes presented in this thesis in the form of photographs, they do indeed display elements of

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[15] Retrieved from http://www.methods.manchester.ac.uk/methods/practiceasresearch accessed on 20/08/2013. Dr Johannes Sjoberg teaches Screen Studies in Drama at the University of Manchester and Dr Jenny Hughes is a lecturer in Drama and a member of the Applied Theatre Research Cluster in the University of Manchester.

Schon's account of a reflexive practice. I consider my directorial strategy to have been one that combines an awareness of the reviewed literature, especially of the apprehension model I am suggesting, and of consciously embedded elements that challenge a photograph's apprehension. At the same time, it is open to 'reflection-in-action' – the third key concept of Schon- that is, to possible challenges on assumptions regarding, for example, what can make a photograph interesting or undecipherable or ambiguous.[16]

2.1.1.2 Research integrative literature review as method

The literature review executed in this thesis is presented as an integrative one; it summarizes in the apprehension scheme what is currently known in the field of photography reading. Specifically, the review here is partially historical, for example, locating the different uses and alterations of medium specificity terms, and partially theoretical, such as when discussing different depiction theories. In fact, due to the nature of the field, the approach that underlies the examination of claims to be illustrated later on could also mean the review can be characterised as a methodological one.[17]

The literature review in this thesis can also be viewed as a research one, as it systematically examines all relevant fiducial literary sources and describes the logic behind their choice and justifies their use, so a future researcher can reproduce the method and decide objectively whether to accept the results of this review. Arlene Fink provided the above framework for conducting research reviews, as opposed to subjective reviews, which include subjective examinations of recorded information and might fall in the trap of being idiosyncratic: "Subjective reviewers may give equal credence to good and poor studies. The results of subjective reviews are often based on a partial examination of the available literature, and their findings may be inaccurate or even false."[18]

Viewed from this perspective, it can be claimed that this literature review is itself a research method, as it takes raw data from the annotated bibliography and converts it into a synthesized model based on a critical appraisal of the collected information. Due to the subjective, elusive nature of the data that could be collected through rigorously structured interviews where practitioners were asked to describe verbally how they think their images work or how they could be apprehended by viewers, the sources of data were limited to practitioners' statements and short

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[16] Donald Schon, *The reflective practitioner*,1983; Donald Schon, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner,* 1987.

[17] The claim that the literature review is itself a research method and the terminology adopted here owes to Professor Lisa Weiser Friedman. Retrieved from http://cisnet.baruch.cuny.edu/friedman/rm/litreview.htm, accessed on 10/09/2013.

[18] Arlene Fink, *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper,* 2010.

questions addressed to themselves or to other theorists' writings, concerning the particular images. While it is the nature of the OASPV model that it would welcome a rigorous case study on each photograph under scrutiny, actually, any research method could provide helpful information to feed the apprehension model. The aim of this study is not to provide in-depth and abundant data about a specific image; it instead aims to show precisely the method and the channels through which any kind of data could feed the model suggested here.

2.2 Core thinking

Having adopted a framework that distinguishes the 'photo-graph' from the 'photo-effect' as suggested by Van Lier, namely, the different stimuli emanating from the 'pictorial intentional touches' and the 'non-intentional photonic imprints' (to be discussed in greater depth in §2.4), this thesis acknowledges the importance of giving serious consideration to both of those existential modes, roughly speaking, that of a picture (consciential) and that of a trace (presential).

While acknowledging that the majority of ontological approaches have prioritised the presential mode over that of the consciential, and by taking into account epistemological approaches to the medium, this study attributes equal value to all analytical viewpoints on photographs' reception in order to avoid any poor apprehension.

Specifically, it claims that a synthesized approach to the medium of photography is necessary; for example, phenomenology – what the image looks like; ontology – what its subject is made of; semiotics - what its subject signifies; pragmatics - what is its effect on the viewer; and aesthetics – how the subject is represented and how form and content interact - are all important methodological viewpoints that should be considered. The OASPV model, which examines separately the elements which shape what one perceives and conceives from a photograph, offers a multifaceted apprehending as it hosts objective standpoints based on a photograph's creation mechanics while simultaneously allowing space for subjectivity.

Also strongly supported in this thesis, based on both the literature review and my own practice findings, is the idea that although the presential mode is rather closer to revealing and locating those qualities not met by other media, what essentialist theorists would call its 'substance', it is rather the dynamic between the two modes that finally shapes our apprehension of a photograph.

Finally, what has been deduced from executing the whole body of this research, and what underlies the core logic of my approach, is that *the referent of a photograph is the whole 'act of photography'.*

2.3 Apprehension scheme

Photography's apprehension scheme
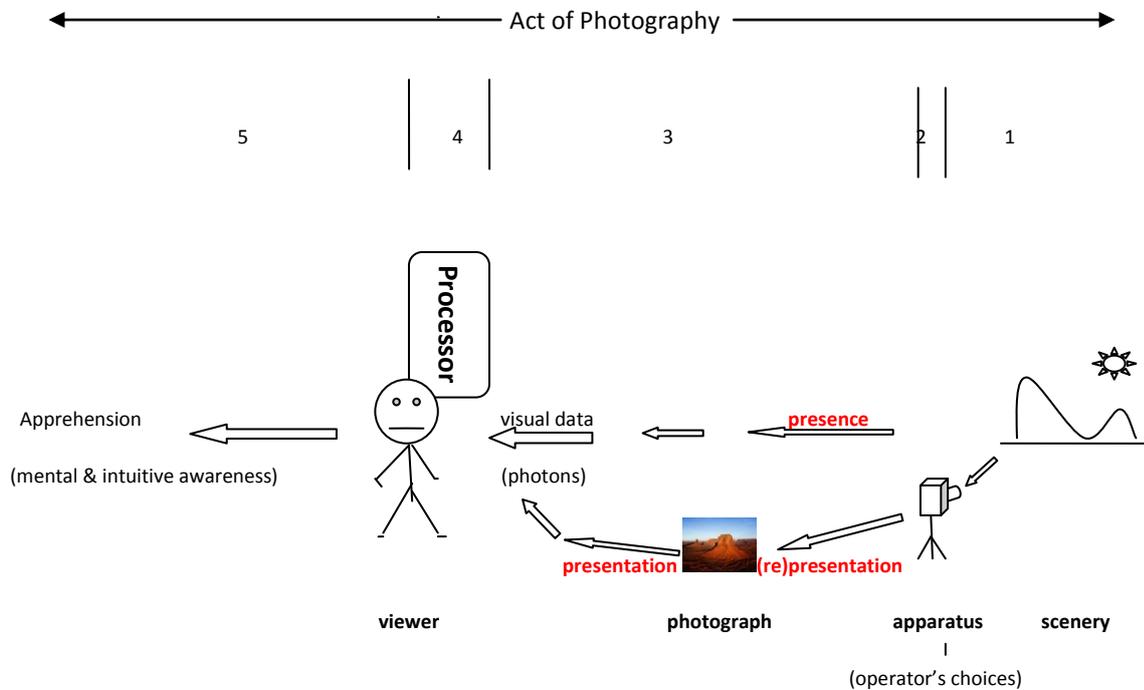
Apprehension scheme's correspondence to the OASPV model

Apprehension:	Viewer	Photograph	Apparatus-Operator	Scene
5	4	3	2	1

2.3.1.0 Introduction to the OASPV model

It would be difficult to classify the OASPV model into one of the established strands of a philosophical approach. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of this task as the subject under scrutiny – the act of photography – is a synthesised entity of which the constitute elements have been examined in the existing photography reading models, either separately or jointly, using the prism of many viewpoints, such as ontology, epistemology, phenomenology and

hermeneutics.[19] As mentioned earlier, I consider the OASPV to be a multifaceted, rather pragmatic approach. Despite the choice of Van Lier's theoretical framework as a guiding one throughout my thesis, I claim that this study equally applies all the aforementioned methodological viewpoints. Furthermore, when examining photographs or statements - either mine or others'- aspects of interpretation come in. In fact, each element of the OASPV model is examined under different philosophical approaches. The function of O (operator) loosely hovers between phenomenology and hermeneutics as it involves human subjectivity; the A (apparatus) strictly belongs to epistemology, as the notion of the technical image involves processes; the S (scene) adheres rather de facto to phenomenology; the P (photograph) is open to all of the above four approaches; and finally, the V (viewer) demands a multidisciplinarity that extends them.

Neville Spencer has highlighted the problem of the overlap between these viewpoints, or areas, of philosophy. Considering ontology as the study of being – essentially examining what kinds of entities exist – and epistemology as the study of knowing – essentially studying what knowledge is and how it is possible – focuses attention on the epistemic fallacy that questions of ontology are reducible to questions of epistemology. As he states, "The epistemic fallacy would assume that for any question of whether or not such and such exists, we should substitute the question of how we know that such and such exists."[20] Spencer also points out, as an interesting case of confusion between ontology and epistemology, the case of hermeneutics, which concentrates on the study of society rather than nature – usually abandoning the field of nature to positivism – as it considers the study of society as a radically different one from the study of nature.

The OASPV model provides a solution to the problem that Abigail Solomon-Godeau put forward of where exactly the medium itself is to be located. In the discussion held at a gathering of medium experts, Godeau identified three 'zones/areas' in which the medium, and therefore the discussion about its inherent qualities, can potentially be found: "It is unclear if the participants are situating it [the index] in the camera that takes the picture, in the negative upon which the image is registered,

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[19] The etymology of these philosophy strands, rooted in the ancient Greek language, can throw light onto understanding the differences between them. As found in *Wiktionary*: 'Epistemology': ἐπιστήμη (epistēmē, "science, knowledge") < ἐπίσταμαι (epistamai, "I know") + -λογία (logia, "discourse") from λέγω (legō, "I speak"); 'ontology': ὄν ("on"), present participle of εἰμί ("being, existing, essence") + λογία; 'phenomenology': φαινόμενον (phenomenon, "what appears") < φαίνεσθαι (fainaisthai, "to appear") + λογία; 'hermeneutics': ἑρμηνεύς (ermeneus, "translator, interpreter") < ἑρμηνεύω (ermenevo, "translate, interpret").

[20] Neville Spencer, *On the significance of distinguishing ontology and epistemology,* March 2000, retrieved from http://ethicalpolitics.org/seminars/neville.htm, accessed on 11/06/2011.

in the final print, or in all three components"[21]. The OASPV model, though, suggests a more extended realm of the index's location.

This thesis shifts the idea of the index away from the notion of the Barthesian referent, substituting the latter with the notion of the 'act of photography', described here as five elements/zones of an action model, the OASPV. This thesis supports the claim that what is indicated/shown in a photograph is not just an object, time, or mental schema or indeed any other rare conceptual entities that will be discussed later on; rather, it displays the fact that an act - which places the photograph at its centre but does not exhaust the elements of the act on the photograph - has taken place. The OASPV model has been constructed in order to describe this act in a more efficient way than other reading models have done in the past, as it accumulates the existing knowledge and synthesises them under a simple scheme.

Operator	**A**pparatus	**S**cenery	**P**hotograph	**V**iewer
	Structural elements determining the photograph's form			
Choices that shape the photograph's representational style			Outcome reflecting the process that gives materiality on a chosen visual form (print, projection, etc.)	
Mental schemas	Technological determinism	Directorial strategies imposed		Context, viewer's beliefs/repertoire, time of viewing, intertextuality
Gesture, identity	Production of indexes	Source of indices	(re) presentation	Recognition of states and objects, production of meaning

Table of main processes across the O, A, S, P, V zones

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[21] Abigail Solomon Godeau, 'Ontology, Essences, and Photography's Aesthetics: wringing the goose's neck one more time' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.266.

2.3.1.1 O (operator)

Under the factor 'Operator', I refer to those aspects involved in zone 2 of the act of photography, for which the person who actualises the recording/capturing/inscribing is responsible in a direct way through handling the camera, or in some cases, indirectly, through having programmed the recording phase/conditions in advance. It concerns the mechanics of producing/allowing traits on the photograph's surface due to human intervention, including choices - conscious or unconscious ones - of any nature: aesthetic and directorial ones, along with somatic performativity. The consciential mode of the photograph, that is, the ability of the operator to shape its pictorial aspect through rendering visible his/her mental schemas, is related to this factor. Subjective issues, such as taste, culture, image repertoire, individual concerns and imagination, come into play. Flusser's theory of the 'photographic gesture', Laruelle's concept of 'posture vision' and Kaggelaris' claims about the 'self-referential act of portraiture' are just some examples of approaches that owe their basis to the examination of this factor, and these will be discussed later on. Studies, such as John Onians' readings of artists' work in relation to the individual or Ian Jeffrey's attempts of reading photographers' work in relation to biographical elements, as well as a vast array of critical reviews in photography journals and curatorial statements on practitioners' work, have based their claims on this factor: the author.[22] It should be noted that data extraction was attempted by investigating the operator's zone, and this has the potential to be both remarkably indicative of the author's intentions and highly formative towards constructing meaning; however, it is possible for it to lead to infertile speculation, as it is not always the case that authors' intentions manage to appear in a communicative way on the photograph's surface.

2.3.1.2 A (apparatus)

The factor of Apparatus refers to technology-related directorial choices (camera, accessories and their consequent approach of the subject), handling of lighting conditions (reflectors, extra lighting sources etc.), and the developing, displaying, manipulating and finishing processes. It involves all mechanical procedures around the image capture, and the inscription and production of the finished outcome. It is the stage throughout which the encoding, that is, the formation of indexes, occurs. It is also the stage throughout which the photon transfer, that is, the inscription of indices, occurs.

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[22] See John Onians, *Neuroarthistory,* 2007. Professor Onians is Director of the World Art Research programme at the University of East Anglia. Also, see Ian Jeffrey, *How to read a photograph*, 2008. Ian Jeffrey is an English writer and art historian.

Many practitioners have highlighted the importance of the need for the viewer to have knowledge of the construction processes in order to better understand a photograph; this is indeed one of the characteristics that have formulated styles, movements and genres in the medium's history. However, attributing a photograph to a category due to the materials or the processes used is a rather marginal issue for its apprehension. At the same time, being aware of the mechanics of creation of a photograph can give information about the intentions of its author as well as about the reason why the representation has occurred in this way, namely, why a photograph looks the way it looks. McCauley, for example, noted that the knowledge of how the image is made changes the way in which the spectator thinks of the image: "It is not that photographs necessarily *are* the 'that-which-has-been', but that we have concentrated within them all the documentary weight that was formerly contained within an array of mimetic drawings, life casts, icon paintings, relics, and any sort of pictures that claimed to be in some way 'authentic'."[23]

The key text on the Apparatus notion has been offered by Vilem Flusser.[24] Ideas such as informing the image by changing the camera's programme have been very influential amongst practitioners, especially those that favour experimentation and creativity over standardised figuration. I would like to clarify that the factor of apparatus I use here consists strictly of the aforementioned choices; it does not include the wide range of cultural practice involved after the production of the photograph, as is usually meant by this term in film and media critical texts. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, for example, when suggesting an appropriate approach to what photography is/does, used the notion of the 'apparatus' in an extended way, which is much closer to what I refer to in this thesis as the 'OASPV model': "In thus attempting to conceptualize photography...it would be minimally necessary to go beyond such unitary quasi-platonic essences as *the* photograph, or perhaps even photography, and begin with a more complex notion of an *apparatus*. Just as contemporary film theory understands film to be not the negative, nor the individual or serial linkage of images, nor the camera, nor the experience of viewing, but the entire complex orchestration of elements in which film is technologically, culturally, and ideologically forged, so too does any conceptual thinking on photography require that we consider all those elements of photography that exceed the camera, the individual picture, and the individual photographer. As with film, this includes the entire social, spatial, temporal, and phenomenological context in which these technological forms are variously

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[23] Anne McCauley, 'The trouble with Photography' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.423.

[24] Vilem Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion books, [1983] 2000). Barthes, too, foreshadows the Flusserian idea of 'information' as the photographer's duty: "the photographer, like an acrobat, must defy the laws of probability or even of possibility" Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp.33-34.

viewed and received; the psychic determinations by which modes of spectatorial identification and projection are secured; and not least, the industrial (or alternatively, independent artistic) structures that underwrite, shape, manufacture and disseminate them."[25]

Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, used the notion of the apparatus in a way that is closer to Flusser's and to the one I suggest in this thesis, raising it to an ontological level, as for him the essence of photography is 'the spectral'; by this, he means the kind of visual rendering permitted and conditioned by the medium's technology.[26]

2.3.1.3 S (scenery)

The Scenery stands for what is in front of the lens at the time of shooting. It includes all elements that could reflect and direct light towards the light sensitive surface of the camera. The subject of the photograph is necessarily either part of or caused by the scenery; its imprint in a two dimensional version owes its 'looks' to the photons transmitted from the scenery. The scenery is understood as the host or the creator of the referent (Barthes), the trace (Sontag), the thing itself (straight photography), the occurrence (Wall), the indice (Van Lier), the states-instances (Matzer) and other similar terms of a synonymic quality that are going to be illustrated later on.[27]

Although the notion of the scenery seemingly implies the transfer of unmediated nature, in the case of staged photography, a degree of arrangement can occur as well. Moreover, in the case where the object is a living organism, the presence and attitude of the photographer can have an impact on the way it is depicted; even some complementary choices can define how a scene is shaped and rendered: "A photographer...imposes an order on the scene – simplifies the jumble by giving its structure. He or she imposes this order by choosing a vantage point, choosing a frame, choosing a moment of exposure, and by selecting a plane of focus".[28]

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[25] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Ontology, Essences, and Photography's Aesthetics: wringing the goose's neck one more time' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.269.

[26] Conversation between Hubertus von Amelunxen, Michael Wetzel and Jacques Derrida, first published in Hubertus von Amelunxen (ed.) *Theorie der Fotografie IV* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2000). Reprinted in Gerhard Richter (ed.) *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography*, 2010.

[27] Ulrike Matzer, in Van Lier's book review, suggests that "instead of *things*, it would be more apposite to talk about *Instances-states*". Ulrike Matzer, Book review, 'Henri Van Lier: Philosophy of Photography' in *Photography & Culture*, Vol.2, issue 2, July 2009, p.219.

[28] Stephen Shore, *The Nature of Photographs*, 2007, p.37.

Theoretical approaches, such as the two following ones, based on the medium's power either to attest – documentary – or to transform – staged – have examined the role of the scenery by dealing with what has been in front of the lens at the time of shooting. Eduardo Cadava's study argued that photography comprises a mode of writing with light and that photography and certain modes of textuality might be conceived as comparable forms of image inscription, whose relation to history is one of citation or quotation. Michael Fried's notion of theatricality examined issues of performativity in the staged genre of a tableau.[29]

2.3.1.4 P (photograph)

The Photograph domain refers to what can be articulated for the final outcome of the (re)presentation process that has taken place, resulting in the form of an image, be it a print, a projection, or something else. Looking at the image's surface without considering any aspects of spectatorship and ignoring any information or knowledge regarding its production, is an account which considers simply what appears on it and how it could function.

I acknowledge here that an attempt to consider the photograph itself, extricated from any context, sounds rather unreasonable; actually, that is why this study avoids it, by taking into account all aspects involved in a photograph's apprehension rather than just examining what appears on its surface. Ariella Azoulay, aligning herself with this view, expressed her inability to apprehend a photograph for what it is on its own and suggested that it is "the product of an encounter of several protagonists, mainly photographer and photographed, camera and spectator".[30] Nevertheless, a need for modelling an autonomous domain, that of P, for 'asepticizing' a theoretical space, where notions such as the trace, imprint, window, transparency, index, time and objectivity are brought forward, seems imperative in order to examine within it such issues, which are scrutinised in the next chapter, thus, offering a space that is not susceptible to the influence of subjectivity, preconceived knowledge, representational forms, and other factors.

In other words, distinguishing this P domain is an act of giving potential space to the application of ontology, regarding any issues that might exclusively ask for such a philosophical approach if, indeed, at the end, there are any, as it is widely established that understanding photographs is context dependent and consequently any adequate discourse upon a photograph's conception

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[29] Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*; Michael Fried, *Why Photography matters as art as never before*, 2008.

[30] Ariella Azoulay, 'What is a photograph? What is Photography?" in *Philosophy of Photography,* Vol.1, No.1, 2010, p.3

should involve parameters which are external to its material form. However, the domain of P allows space for any possible objective elements appearing on the surface of the photograph and only there.

Two of the elements that have been extensively discussed when considering the photograph in its own unity, are time and indexicality; both of these are discussed at length in the next chapter. These two notions are strongly immersed in each other, according to theorists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. For Derrida, the photograph works towards preserving memory. It achieves this through its ability to bear a trace, a signature of the loss; the photograph attests "this took place, it is lost"[31]. It supports it through its materiality – by producing copies – which altogether create the archive, in order to preserve the loss as a loss. Here, according to Derrida, is where the emotion of the photograph lies. The encounter with the archive, that is, the figuration of an instant that once took place and is now lost, is aligned with the Barthesian 'punctum'. Barthes, in *Camera Lucida,* searched for the essence of photography, indicated as punctum, amongst photographs that wounded him, not just shouted at him, that made the places depicted in them habitable, not just visitable, and of which the effect was love, not simple interest. Barthes distinguished a field of cultural interest – studium – from a field of personal interest – punctum. Being private, Benn Michaels observed, the punctum brings forward the problem of subjectivity, as well as undoing the opposition between good art and bad art by treating all photographs as if they were not art.[32]

There have also been some theoretical viewpoints that do not base apprehension upon signification, considering the photograph in itself as a dead end, an agent of the ineffable. Barthes, for example, thought of the photograph as a process of reflection without an outcome, admitting that it has no depth and its 'noeme' is simple, banal: "I live in the illusion that it suffices to clean the surface of the image in order to accede to *what is behind* [...] Alas, however hard I look, I discover nothing [...] Such is the Photograph: it cannot *say* what it lets us see."[33] Apart from showing no clues, for Barthes, the photograph also hallucinates its reader: "false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination...on the one hand 'it is not there', on the other 'but it has indeed been'".[34] Johan Swinnen too, discerned the paradox that it seems real but, however, is fictitious, due to its

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[31] Gerhard Richter (ed.) *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography*, 2010, p.18.

[32] Walter Benn Michaels, 'Photographs and Fossils' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.441.

[33] Barthes, Roland, *Camera Lucida: reflections on photography*, 1984, pp.98-99.

[34] *Camera Lucida: reflections on photography*, p.115.

ability to create a duplicate world that is more dramatic than the natural world. From a point of view of epistemological tools, photography and philosophy display a similar ambiguity for Swinnen; they "both point out something and are therefore a knowing, but they also pose a question and are therefore a nonknowing."[35] For Jacques Ranciere, the photograph provides a 'game of multiple gaps', denying decipherment but offering aesthetic ideas instead.[36] Finally, for Kracauer, the photograph "gathers fragments around a nothing", as it does not encompass the meaning to which it refers.[37]

Apart from the above partially nihilistic approaches to the photograph itself, the debatable field of objective aesthetics, that is, what, if any, universal laws regarding the geometry of depicted objects shape the viewers' conception towards specific values such as beauty, calmness and so on, can also find fertile ground for discussion in this domain.

2.3.1.5 V (viewer)

Under the factor of Viewer, I refer to those processes that affect apprehension by projecting onto the photograph's surface elements that are external to what is depicted in the photograph and that are brought into play by the person engaged with the acts of looking at and contemplating the given photograph. Context, spectatorship, intertextuality, social practice, taste, culture and image repertoire are amongst the notions that play a role. A poststructuralist framework, which speaks of the discursive effects of specific photographs in different locations/contexts, can be involved here. Considering contemporary critics who have shown that photography's meaning is context bound, inexhaustible, dependent on other sources of information, and refashioned when involved in cultural practices, this rather vast pool of thought sets its ground on arguments against

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[35] Johan Swinnen, 'Signs that trigger a philosophical response' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.290.

[36] As Jacques Ranciere explains in his article, 'Notes on the photographic image' in *Radical Philosophy,* issue 156, July-Aug 2009, retrieved from http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/default.asp?channel_id=2188&editorial_id=28229, accessed on 02/01/2012, "under the name of aesthetic idea Kant designated 'a presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] concept can be adequate.' The aesthetic idea is the indeterminate idea that connects the two processes that the destruction of the mimetic order left separated: the intentional production of art which seeks an end, and the sensible experience of beauty as finality without end."

[37] Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" (first published in 1927, in the daily newspaper *Die Frankfurter Zeitung)* in Thomas Y. Levin (ed.) *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, 1995, pp. 56-57.

essentialism.[38] Rejecting any kind of intrinsic essence of photography, it mostly gives emphasis to a series of uses to which the various photographic media can be put.

Diarmund Costello argued that it is not possible to distinguish between artistic media in principle but that it should rather be diagnosed as a pictorial continuum between them. David Bate noted that, despite the indexicality carried on the surface, the meaning attributed to the picture may have no relation with it whatsoever.[39] Moreover, Martin Lefebvre pointed out that in order for a sign to fulfil its indexical function, it must be interpreted. Therefore, we should not limit our investigation solely to the sign-object relation but rather, take into consideration the way the sign is interpreted too: "In themselves, that is, without any supplemental indexication or collateral knowledge about the world, neither a photograph nor a painting can say anything about the moment being represented".[40] The necessity of addressing the issue of perception when thinking about how a photograph is represented was stated by Jonathan Friday, too, and even expanded into a multi-sensoral realm by Edwards.[41] Edwards – building on research findings in the field of body perception that have claimed links between images and corporeal reactions, such as shifting attention, physical movements and visceral responses – suggested that bodies literally perform images: "For the experience of photographs, their meaning and impact, cannot be reduced merely to a visual response. Rather, they must be understood as corpothetic, and sensory, as bearers of stories, and of meanings, in which sight, sound and touch merge."[42] Edwards contemplated whether we should position the apprehension of photographs across the complex exchanges of sensory experience.

From the same standpoint of physical experience, an interdisciplinary approach in reading photographs was utilised by Eugenie Shinkle. Informed by recent theories of cognitive neuroscience and related fields, which have demonstrated the inseparability of emotion from rational thought and normal human function, Shinkle considered that our sense of self is biological and not simply

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[38] See, for example, Jonathan Culler, L*iterary theory: A very short introduction*, 1997; Jan Baetens, 'Conceptual limitations of our reflection on Photography' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007; John Berger, *Ways of seeing*, [1972] 2008; Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A middle-brow Art,* 1990.

[39] David Bate, 'The emperor's new clothes' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007.

[40] Martin Lefebvre, 'The art of pointing: On Peirce, Indexicality and Photographic Images' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.241.

[41] Jonathan Friday, *Aesthetics and Photography*, 2002, p.49; Liz Edwards, 'Thinking photography beyond the visual' in *Photography: Theoretical snapshots*, J.J. Long, Andrea Noble & Edward Welch, (eds.), 2009.

[42] Liz Edwards, 'Thinking photography beyond the visual', p.45

mental.[43] During a presentation at the conference *The real thing? Staging, Manipulation and Photographic truth*, she suggested that some imagery belonging to the fashion category and dealing with raw realism can be read based on ideas derived from the field of cognitive neuroscience and especially from that of 'visuo-affective mapping'.[44]

Visuo-affective mappings comprise a relatively new category as the focus of an emerging field of emotion-related research, based on the function of mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are a particular type of neuron that discharge when an individual performs an action as well as when he/she observes a similar action performed by another individual. The properties of mirror neurons indicate that the primate brain is endowed with a mechanism for mapping the pictorial description of actions. Recent findings concerning the brain mechanism's underlying visuo-affective mappings, which are regarded as the foundation of 'empathy', suggest that we transform visual information about someone else's emotional state into similar emotional dispositions of our own.[45] The mirror mechanism explains how what is valid for the emitter of a message becomes valid also for the receiver. Shinkle's reading of imagery created for advertisement campaigns proposed that photographs depicting models in postures of suffering, apathy or nonchalance cause an affective response in the viewer, just because s/he witnesses them. She claimed that there is no such thing as a pure visual impression, and what a viewer thinks of as a visual impression is mixed with other perceptual inputs.

Regarding meaning formation, Victor Burgin has argued that photography is framed as a site of meaning; the latter is created and expanded by the subjects that use it and consume it. Burgin's consistent theme is that of the 'space of visual representations' and the overarching issue is that of the 'fragment' and the 'images as bearers of ideological meaning.[46] Having started with phenomenological questions of perception, he then moved on to semiotic approaches, which

[43] Alexa Wright, Eugenie Shinkle & Alf Linney, 'Alter ego: computer reflections of human emotions', retrieved from http://www.alteregoinstallation.co.uk/wright_shinkle_linney.pdf, accessed on 20/05/09.

[44] Eugenie Shinkle, 'Fashion Photography, bodies and meaning' in *The real thing? Staging, Manipulation and Photographic truth,* conference held at Westminster University, London, 25/04/09. Shinkle is a Senior Lecturer in Photographic Theory and Criticism at the University of Westminster. For more about cognitive approaches to Photography, see Vasileios Kantas, *Photo-Ambiguity*, 2010.

[45] See India Morrison & Tom Ziemke, 'Empathy with computer game characters: a cognitive neuroscience perspective', retrieved from http://osiris.sunderland.ac.uk/~cs0lha/Empathic_Interaction/Morrison.Ziemke.pdf, accessed on 20/05/09.

[46] Alexander Streitberger, "The Psychotopological Text: Victor Burgin's writing in perspective" in Alexander Streitberger (ed.) *Situational Aesthetics,* 2009.

culminated in his essay 'Photographic Practice and Art Theory', an analysis of the rhetoric of photographic images and ended up using psychoanalytic theory, as he concluded that classical semiotics was incapable of revealing anything about the affective dimensions of images.

Professor Sarah Edge, considering photography as a means of a mass communication, has suggested that we need to understand a photograph's production, circulation and consumption according to 'cultural continuities', namely, how people in the digital era use and perceive the photograph. This is an approach that examines communication theory from a viewpoint closer to that of cultural determinism, where the users' needs define the communication tools, rather than that of technological determinism, where the material production sets the needs. In any case, the discourse is set outside of the photographic print as the meaning is constructed contextually.

According to Edge, one of the important issues that arise from the digital era is that it brings back the need to consider the importance of indexicality: "Indexicality is not part of the iconical elements of a photograph; it is rather part of its structure, of the very making of the photograph. It exceeds representation."[47] Edge notes that indexicality is not the same as the notion of the realism of the photographic message. The realism that photography provides is not inherent to the photographic process; it rather draws on existing visual codes.

Peter Bialobrzeski adopted a similar position to that of Edge, considering photography as a cultural practice. Examining the medium's usage as this has evolved in the new millennium, he suggests that the prior knowledge and understanding that its users have of the culture and civilisation through, amongst other ways, the observation of photographs, become conditions for the production and reception of newer photographs.[48] The seemingly popular, and still expanding, branch of 'Participatory photography' is based mainly on this notion. Using mainly the camera as a visual research tool to provide a better understanding of culture and social engagement within communities, the facilitators of such workshops introduce working platforms, such as trace-hunting, photo-elicitation and storytelling, motivating participants to create visuals that capture their

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[47] Sarah Edge is Professor of Photography and Cultural Studies at the University of Ulster. The above thoughts were included in her paper 'What is a Photograph', presented on 25/05/2012 in the conference "Beyond Representation: Photography, Humans, Computers" held in London South Bank University. Edge has claimed that what distinguishes Photography from other forms of communication are the elements of stillness and indexicality.

[48] Peter Bialobrzeski is Professor of Photography at the University of the Arts in Bremen. His view on the aspect of the medium's use as a cultural practice can be found at his article 'Documentary Photography as cultural practice' in *Exit*, No.45, 2012.

individual perspectives. At its extreme, this act of cultural understanding can be also seen as a way to appropriate and take possession of the world around us "with a cannibalistic voracity".[49]

In his essay, Peter Osborne traced the historically changing modes of being of 'the photographic', namely, dealing with the ontology of photographic imagery. He considers all ontology to be historical ontology, specifically in the case of photography due to it being a practice affected by technological and cultural-economic determinations. For Osborne, the question of medium-specificity is the wrong question to ask of the photographic, since it is the peculiar generality of the photographic image that has resulted in a 'transmedia' condition. Osborne argued that the photographic field is an expanding one and that the question of the ontological significance of the technological forms that the photographic may take should deal more with the effect/social uses of the photographic technologies, rather than with their materiality. For Osborne, photography is "a cultural category, the unity of which is based on the imagined and practiced unification of a particular technological process (optical/mechanical/chemical) and a particular set of social functions."[50]

2.3.1.6 The act of photography and its relation to medium specificity issues

By using the term 'the act of photography', I intend to imply that apprehending a photograph has, as its prerequisite, the examination of the whole spectrum – from creation to consumption - which is related to the static visual stimuli we call photographs, because the latter entails information that might not be apparent and because its content is differentiated according to viewing factors. Therefore, the photograph is just the core link in the chain of a process which takes place around, due to, and for the photograph; I choose to call this process an act, as it involves one or more agents, the information embedded in it, the information extracted from it, and the duration.

Denis Roche covered a big part of the above perspective when he stated in a somewhat laconic, way: "What one photographs, is the act of taking a photograph".[51] This sophisticated claim reflects,

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[49] Rosa Olivares, editor of the *Exit* magazine, in her article 'On the need to document everything', No.45, 2012, describes this growing tendency to greedily create archival material of even insignificant things due to the ease of owning image capturing devices, handling them and rapidly transferring the outcome.

[50] Peter Osborne, 'Photography in an Expanding Field: Distributive Unity and Dominant Form' in David Green (ed.) *Where is the photograph*, 2003, p.69.

[51] Denis Roche was a photographer, writer and poet. The quote **"**Ce qu'on photographie, c'est le fait qu'on prend une photo" can be found in Denis Roche, 'Photographier. Entretien avec Gilles Delavaud' in *Education*

through the viewpoint of a practitioner, an advanced level of thinking upon the medium's ontology; it should be noted that it was expressed even before the key ontological treatises of the 1980s appeared. This statement partially replies to the main research question of this thesis, 'What is manifested in a photograph?'

The theorist Philippe Dubois elaborated at length the meaning of the above claim. In order to define the nature of photographic representation, Dubois introduced three qualities, or characteristics, that are manifest in a photographic sign: unicity (each shot is unique), testimony (by its nature, every photograph bears witness to something), and indication (the photograph shows something that is there).[52] These three qualities could be taken as an extended schema of the Barthesian referent. Dubois's suggestion is that photography cannot say anything and will probably remain enigmatic. This statement is also in accordance with Norton Bartkin's claim, according to which photographs depict the fact that a world exists but say nothing about that world. My practice in this thesis is built around this claim and examines its validity. Nevertheless, if a theorist wants to be exact, instead of being a nihilist, s/he can claim that what photographs portray is a process that has taken place, an act around the medium, which involves the photographer and the apparatus, as well as the viewer; according to this logic, the decipherment, or to put it more aptly, the apprehension, of a photograph is a multifaceted, on-going process. As Dubois commented, "[the photo is an image] *in work*, something that we cannot conceive outside of its circumstances, outside of the game it animates, without literally doing the *examination*: something that on the one hand is, consubstantially, an *image-act*, having known that this act does not limit itself, trivially, to the only gesture of the production properly called 'of the image' (the gesture of 'taking') and on the other hand it also includes the act of its reception (its contemplation)*"[53]*. Dubois adopted a pragmatic standpoint, considering the photograph as an inseparable unity of the whole of its enunciation. For him, photography is a medium pretending to have objectivity and raising the ontological question of the

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2000, Sep 1978, Vol.10; reprinted in Denis Roche, *La disparition des lucioles*, 1982, p.73. Moreover, Roche has also said "We photograph what we have looked at, therefore we photograph ourselves." Retrieved from http://www.christianbasin.book.fr/citations, accessed on 30/03/2012. This viewpoint aligns with Fotis Kaggelaris' claim, to be discussed later on, that every photograph is a self-portrait.

[52] Philippe Dubois, *L'acte photographique et autres essays*, 1990. For the Belgian scholar Dubois, all semantics should be resolved into pragmatics. He considers the photograph as a live, mutating object, positioned in the world and therefore subject to different understandings. Dubois has objections to Van Lier's distinctions of signs and suggests these three properties of the photographic sign; in his turn, Sonesson rejects the three principles that Dubois proposes.

[53] Philippe Dubois, *L'acte photographique et autres essays*, p.312.

subject and more specifically of the 'subject in progress'. Towards the end of his book, he defined what the essence of the medium is: a cut, a unique section through time and space. Because it is a section, it entails an 'out-of-the-frame' that can arouse our imagination.[54]

Speaking of medium's specificity, Walead Beshty has contributed to this photography discourse in the recently launched blog of the Photomuseum Winterthur. On that online platform, Beshty has dealt, among other issues, with what constitutes the characteristics of a medium, suggesting that institutional acts define it. Beshty has analysed different aspects around the definition of a medium from its etymology, "the intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed to the senses", to its dialectic of applied use.[55]

Beshty, in his main article in that blog, stressed the elasticity of the term 'photography' to describe practices across its many genres and the consequent cause of methodological problems within art history and criticism, claiming that there is a crisis in the theorisation of the photography medium: "The peculiar instability of photographic meaning has led many on a fool's errand, leaving its history littered with false ontologies and misplaced certainties, diverting attention from the political implications of aesthetics to the phantasmagoric world of likenesses."[56] Beshty gives the example of Flusser's approach to photographic imagery, considering it as an effective way of dealing with photographs: "Something more akin to information theory, or enunciation theory, seems better able to describe the conditions of photography, neither of which necessitate the organization of communication according to medium, nor seek to ontologize media."[57]

Beshty considered the term 'photography' as a dynamic, ever changing system rather than a category in which we place certain types of objects, claiming that the use of medium specificity tools

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[54] Dubois' view of 'Out-of-the-frame' ('hors champ') has been extended into the 'Cracks effect' concept by Kostis Antoniadis, referring to the spectator's imaginary journey back to time through speculative cracks which occur on the photograph's surface, allowing the viewer to enter through them into a past reality. For more, see Vasileios Kantas, *Photo ambiguity: Ways of reading quasi-documentary photographs,* 2010, p.79.

[55] Walead Beshty is an artist, writer and Associate Professor at the Art Center College of Design ('The question of a medium's identity', published online on 23/04/2012, in *Still searching: An online discourse for Photography,* retrieved from http://blog.fotomuseum.ch/2012/04/3-the-question-of-a-mediums-identity, accessed on 10/05/2012). This text was written for the conference 'Is Photography Over?', held in *SFMoMA* in 2010, a symposium that debated the value of continuing to speak of Photography as a specific practice, medium or discipline.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

to approach photographic images seems to be problematic: "What, if anything, is to be gained by approaching photography as a discrete medium? Is there truly any solidity to a category that links together everything from the gelatin silver print, to the magazine page, the computer screen, the billboard etc. all of which have distinctly different modes of address, access to audience, and distributive networks? Do they all require the same or similar questions? Even if the 'same' image occurs in each of these instances, does it make them, for all intents and purposes, equivalent?"[58]

Jan-Eric Lundstrom, responding to Beshty's concerns, agreed that photography stretches the notion or concept of a medium, as its ubiquity renders any categorization a difficult task and its sheer quantity seems to demand new tools of analysis. Lundstrom claimed that photography can be better understood as a meta-medium. Beshty's questioning of terms like 'category' or 'medium' actualises a need to think about the nature and power of language: "Rather than trying to answer the question of whether photography is a medium or not, we ought to, perhaps investigate what photography actually does with the concept of a medium [...] how is it that photography again seems to crush or upset or upturn language, our notions of communication, our paths to Knowledge, or, even, our sense of what constitutes a concept, a term, a word, a medium?"[59]

This perspective of photography as a meta-medium is actualised in my practice; the images accompanying this thesis aim, in Lundstrom's words, to show how photography upsets language and our notions of communication by constructing images that communicate no particular content, images that contemplate the intractable relationship between the object itself, the object depicted (representation), and the object perceived (meaning). My practice, bringing the photographic medium to a situation of mirroring itself, asks exactly what Lundstrom wondered: 'What is a photograph able to say?'

In his recent book, Francois Laruelle, wishing to disentangle photography from the theories imposed on it by the Humanities disciplines, attempted to attribute to the medium a quality of 'human

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[58] 'Conventions, Conditions, and Practices of Photography Conceived as a System of Relations', published online on 14/04/2012 in *Still searching: An online discourse for Photography,* retrieved from http://blog.fotomuseum.ch/2012/04/3-the-question-of-a-mediums-identity, accessed on 10/05/2012.

[59] Jan-Erik Lundström is a Swedish lecturer, curator and former director of BildMuseet, Umeå. "Trojan Horse, scandals et al." published online on 16/04/2012, in *Still searching: An online discourse for Photography,* retrieved from http://blog.fotomuseum.ch/2012/04/3-the-question-of-a-mediums-identity, accessed on 10/05/2012.

universality'.[60]   In this view, one could discern a propinquity of ideas with Van Lier's 'anthropogenesis', which considers photography as acting as part of an ambient Universe. Laruelle's heretical view has scarcely been reviewed; even when it first arose, it was mainly met with scepticism by its reviewers, due to it containing complex, unclear, indigestible ideas. Allow me, however, to explain in brief here some of his core thinking, as apart from considering it to be a valuable source of advanced ontological thinking on the medium, it clearly implies that instead of looking at what is depicted in a photograph, one would be better considering the act that surrounds its production and consumption; this viewpoint clearly supports the holistic model towards the apprehension of photographs suggested in this thesis.

Laruelle considered the photograph not in its representational content, but in its essence. For him, the photographer 'produces' the world, and the act of photography is an act of philosophy; the photograph is a proof that philosophising has taken place but nothing more though, nothing specific about the world it depicts. Such an approach is in line with that of Batkin, namely, that the photograph is just a proof that the world exists, nothing more. Laruelle emphasised this by using the term 'empty essence' to describe the content of a photograph, a photograph that is "condemned endlessly to reflect itself".[61] He suggested that, in order to find the essence of photography, one has to think in a radically abstract way. One should consider it neither as an event of the world, nor as a knowledge that doubles the world, nor as a product of technology and image production. One should rather encounter it as a technique that simulates science: "a hybrid of science and perception ensured by a technology".[62] In order to explain how one can understand photography as an act of 'being-in-the-world', Laruelle introduced two key notions: first, the viewers have to forget questions of style, history or techniques, and second, they must focus their perception on a 'certain specific relation to the real' that has been actualised by the subject's lived-body, which adopted a 'photographic stance' and applied a 'vision-force'.[63] For Laruelle, the photograph carries on its surface, apart from traits of the object depicted and the camera used, the stance and the vision of the subject, transferring in that way a corporeal and psychic intentionality. In his words, the

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[60] Francois Laruelle is Professor Emeritus at the University of Paris West Nanterre La Defence. For a review of his book *The concept of non-Photography,* 2011, see E.W., 'Photography Disencumbered' in *Source*, Issue 69, Winter 2011, p.78.

[61] Francois Laruelle, *The concept of non-Photography,* p.3.

[62] *The concept of non-Photography,* p.11.

[63] *The concept of non-Photography,* p.6.

photographer "postulates a use of (less than a rapport or a relation with) the World, of his body, of his camera".[64]

Laruelle suggested that photography produces, traverses, and describes an unlimited surface of fiction, the only fiction that is true in terms of essence rather than of verisimilitude. As he explained, this 'true fiction', this essence, lies in the knowledge that is immanent to vision. Laruelle acknowledged that photographs, in the first instance, represent the world in a specular manner and through their content. However - and here lies Laruelle's contribution to the field - photographs, in the last instance, also reflect their own essence in a non-specular manner, without even reproducing it. What exactly this essence represents and describes, he claimed, is an identity: the identity of the 'force of vision' itself, the identity of the subject as 'posture of vision', namely, the gaze imposed by the subject, the stance adopted from it against the world.

Laruelle asserted that photographs are ideas in the form of an image, rather than concepts, and they introduce an experience of identity; they postulate an experience of the real-as-identity. Photography is considered by him as a practice of the symbolic figuration of ideality, of the being-as-image.[65] The specific 'object' depicted in a photograph, that is, 'what is seen in a photograph', is for Laruelle the 'being-in/as-photo' ('etre-en-photo'), the manifestation of an identity. A photograph "represents invariants drawn from the World but presents or manifests Identity."[66]

What I have found extremely difficult to discern in Laruelle's text is whether this identity belongs clearly to the photographer or to the objects depicted, whose identity is manifested. In other words, what is the location as well as the direction of the starting point of the force vision? If this latter term was used by Laruelle as a synonym of the gaze –and this is how I understand it - then it is quite possible that the force vision could be located in either of them, as it is an interdependent, shared property between the Subject and the Other.[67] Fotis Kaggelaris adequately explained the

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[64] *The concept of non-Photography,* pp.15-16.

[65] *The concept of non-Photography,* p.37.

[66] *The concept of non-Photography,* p.45.

[67] On p.115 of *The concept of non-Photography*, Laruelle reminds us that Philosophy attributes to the word 'image' a double reference, related to both the subject and the object. It might be the case that when he discusses the vision force as a property to be found in the image he avoids clarification, implying that it could refer to both subject and object. For more on the use of the Lacanian approach of the gaze in Photography theory, see Fotis Kaggelaris, Το *βλεμμα και το ειναι στη ψυχωση*, (2003); moreover, 'Καποιος να με κοιταζει, γαμωτο', *Φωτογραφια*, issue 1, Sep-Dec 2000.

relationship between the Subject and the Other as follows: "What do we really photograph each time we photograph? What else could it be rather than our inner world, our inner landscape that takes shape by using the object depicted as alibi? The outer will exist – and to avoid being absolute, I add: as photograph – should it be able to talk about the inner. And the inner will exist should it be able to be looked at, at the outer. In that way, the photograph becomes a signifier of not the real object. On the contrary, it completely ignores it, by using it. It becomes the 'place-of-the-Other', whom I would like to be; and by photographing: I am."[68]

Laruelle expressed the same thing that Kaggelaris claimed, agreeing that the photograph itself is with no doubt a 'stranger', the Other, that does not have its place in the world. Laruelle suggested that the photograph manifests the 'Other-as-Identity'.[69] For Laruelle, photography is a 'hyperphenomenology of the real'; in it we attest to "the real-as-image and an image-as-real".[70]

2.4 Van Lier's model of thought (reality, indice)
The decision to use Van Lier's model of thought was because he provided a framework (real ~ reality) in which his categorisation of signs into indexes and indices -and consequently the photograph's definition as a 'contingently indexed indicial imprint'- is of a twofold benefit. Firstly, it is helpful towards illustrating what photographs consist of and secondly, it engages in a comprehensive way with the medium's double nature, as the first two words of the definition term refer to the values of a picture – what in this thesis I refer to as the 'consciential' mode or aspect - while the last two refer to that of a trace – what I refer to as the 'presential' mode or aspect. This study aims not to examine whether Val Lier's categorisation of photographic signs is an apposite one.[71] I consider, though, that the ontological framework that Van Lier provided has been helpful,

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[68] Fotis Kaggelaris, 'The photograph as the place-of-the-Other', paper presented in *8th Kythera Encounters conference for the History of Greek Photography,* 25 Sep, 2009, Kythera, Greece.

[69] Laruelle, *The concept of non-Photography*, pp.104-105

[70] Laruelle, *The concept of non-Photography*, p.116

[71] Van Lier's treatise dealt with the photographic sign in its specifics while most other semiotic treatises refer to many types of signs. It is logical for a medium-specificity study to take into serious consideration a sign-specific viewpoint. Van Lier's attempt to alter the notion of index, as it was initially articulated by American philosophers such as Pierce and Krauss, into another terminology, is more or less what Dubois did too, and has been examined by Katia Schneller's study on the French-American intellectual exchanges during the 1980s. For more, see Katia Schneller, 'Sur les traces de Rosalind Krauss: La reception française de la notion d' index' in *Etudes Photographiques*, Vol.21, 2007, pp.123-143.

both as a navigation guide for the reader of the integrative literature review included in this thesis as well as with regard to what can be articulated about photographs *through* it.[72]

Van Lier made particular use of the terms 'the real' and 'reality'. Reality is the real as it is 'already seized and organised in sign systems'. The real is 'all that is not yet domesticated by our technical, scientific and social relations'; it is non-semiotic, unstructured, unsystemised. Indices seem to hover between the real and reality. Val Lier further extended the distinction by using the Greek opposition between Chaos – non information, noise – and Cosmos – order. The medium specificity emerges from a series of opposing categories: order/disorder, information/noise, cosmos/chaos and reality/real. As Van Lier stated, a photograph is reality emerging from the real. Van Lier was fascinated by photography's affinity to the 'disparate and uncomfortable real', making it allusive to a system fully controlled by language.

In the case of photography, some artists have managed to disguise the referent to such an extent that it appears absent, for example, Thomas Demand's models, constructed from cardboard, which look like specific daily objects, and the use of image manipulation software that has achieved the creation of believable objects despite them having no existential link to a referent via Artificial life

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[72] Photography researcher Ulrike Matzer found the book difficult to understand due to the author's use of methods and knowledge of diverse disciplines all combined in a science he terms 'Anthropogeny'. However, she suggested that Van Lier's approach, because he focused on the medium's material aspect as well as on its use and effects, its 'transmutability', as she called it, makes his work useful when dealing with interdisciplinary questions. She concluded by stating that, due to Van Lier's viewpoint on the medium as a hybrid, the book possesses aspects that reach far beyond the time of its writing; see Ulrike Matzer, Book review, 'Henri Van Lier: Philosophy of Photography' in *Photography & Culture*, Vol.2, issue 2, July 2009, p.218. Photography theorists Jan Baetens and Heidi Peeters' paper also favoured hybridity approaches in photography. They believed that Van Lier brought in valuable arguments to start thinking afresh about photographic medium specificity, identifying the Belgian philosopher's work as a "little known but interesting contribution to the debates in the field"; see Jan Baetens & Heidi Peeters, 'Hybridity: The Reverse of Photographic Medium Specificity' in *History of Photography*, Vol.31, No.1, Spring 2007, p.9. They highlighted, as the most important characteristic of his work, the revaluation of subject matter. Nevertheless, they pointed out two flaws: that of the persistent influence of the 'great artist' and that of a relative neglect of the verbal, textual and discursive elements that surround photography in general. From my point of view, Van Lier's distrust in linguistic control over imagery should not be viewed as a flaw but rather as a warning, a raising of a danger flag, and nor should his belief in the capable practitioner be seen as a romantic twist at odds with postmodernist ways of contextualising practices, as it is just a hint that the ability to perceive might vary between image creators. While Jan Baetens and Geert Goiris claimed that Van Lier's book is one of the greatest reflections of Photography that has ever been written, Professor of Photography Mark Durden adopted a slightly more modest view; he acknowledged that it is not dated at all, that it is especially competent in explaining the medium's documentary powers, welcoming Van Lier's work to "the limited number of distinctive and original theoretical writings on photography"; see Mark Durden, 'The stuff of extraterrestrials' in *Source*, issue 52, Autumn 2007, p.81.

and Computer Generated Imagery. The theoretical framework of indices is rendered incompetent. This is because, in the former, the source of the photonic imprint, does not correspond to what we think it does and, in the latter, there is no photonic imprint at all.[73]

From this perspective, one could argue that a photograph or, to be precise, an image that is conceived to be a photograph, can be a picture without simultaneously having to be a trace too, due to the absence of nature from the production process. What about the opposite, though? Can a photograph be purely indicial? Can indices be clearly shown on the photograph's surface? In what form will they appear? This task can only be examined through practice itself. Theory can just theoretically consider issues, such as what exactly an indice is. If it is a pathway of probability, in a state of entropy, not yet organised into something we can perceive, then does it make sense to talk about it? Is it what pre-exists and feeds our perceptual system in the form of some kind of data? Is it elements of chaos that come into order after we compute them through our camera/brain? During exposure, photons strike halide crystals (or not) as a result of the wave-particle dualism of light, its constant speed and the discontinuity of its energy. During the development process, chemically induced energy transfers are involved that, aleatorically and successively, necessitate multiple granularities, including the grain of the print.[74]

Speaking of technical images, that is, images that have been produced through the use of an apparatus, Vilem Flusser's writings come to mind. It seems that what we call photo-graphy implies the creation of an image via a camera; therefore, in this case, the appearance of the index is unavoidable. It should be noted here that technological change formulates the characteristics of the index in each case. For example, the form/view/appearance of the minimum element that the photographic image is made of has changed from grains of different physical qualities to pixels of different non-physical qualities. In the same way, the quality of the lens or the flatness of the film holder could also have the same effect.

Due to human intervention being rather unavoidable throughout the act of photography, indexes necessarily play a part in the image's formation. Or maybe there is a way to avoid them completely

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[73] Dr Weibke Leister, senior lecturer in Photography at the University of the Arts, London, has researched the possibility of 'image-ness' or 'index-ness' in the case of photographic portraits. See note 27 in p.171 and also p.165 in Weibke Leister, 'Mona Lisa on a bad day' in *Photography & Culture*, Vol 3. Issue 2, July 2010.

[74] Ulrike Matzer, Book review, 'Henri Van Lier: Philosophy of Photography' in *Photography & Culture*, Vol.2, issue 2, July 2009, p.218

by not using a camera, as in the exhibition *Shadow Catchers: Camera-less Photography,* recently presented at the Victoria and Albert Museum, shaping a 'purely indicial' image. The answer, as mentioned previously, can only be given by the medium's practice itself and is susceptible to ongoing change.

2.5 Other models of apprehending photographs

Apart from some main issues evolving while looking at photographs, such as representation, nature, the kind of the referent, time, objectivity, and others, which are going to be extensively discussed in the next chapter, let me briefly illustrate here some other models of apprehending photographs which have been suggested in the field.

During the 1960s and 70s, John Szarkowski attempted to thoroughly consider photographs according to the medium's inherent qualities. Proposing five interdependent qualities - the thing itself, the detail, time, the frame, and the vantage point - he managed to include in his essentialist model both the presential - by the first two elements - and the consciential mode - by the last two.[75]

A less content-specific, more abstract in a way, regarding apprehending photographs comes from Victor Burgin, who stated that the "objects formed are intentionally located partly in real, exterior, space and partly in psychological, interior space", arguing that the specific nature of any object is largely contingent upon the details of the situation.[76] Burgin's later writings, though, considered the medium from a more concrete way, through the viewpoint of semiotics.

A remarkably rigorous survey of what had been accomplished in the field of semiotics in photography, up to the end of the 1980s, was provided by Goran Sonesson. Semiotic theory, dealing with the status of photographs as signs, discusses whether or not photographs are 'natural' signs, by virtue of being causal traces, meaning that they indexically signify or otherwise denote objects and occurrences. Having distinguished four semiotic approaches, characterised by system analysis, text analysis, experiment and text classification, and also having considered the findings of experimental semiotics, Sonesson concluded that what is peculiar in photographs is the combination, in one sign relation, of indexicality and iconicity. Sonesson brought forward the consciential aspect by claiming that "the photograph is not only the trace of the objects, or even the photons, but also of the

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[75] John Szarkowski, *The photographer's eye*, 1966. Szarkowski was the director of Photography in MoMA during the 60s and 70s. His writings have been very influential in America. Professor Stephen Shore's book *The Nature of Photographs* (London: Phaidon, 2007) follows closely Szarkowski's approach, despite being edited forty years later.

[76] Victor Burgin, 'Situational aesthetics' in *Studio International*, Vol. 178, No.915, Oct 1969, p.119.

properties of the film, of the lenses, of the photographic device generally, of the space travelled through by the photons, and so on."[77] Sonesson acknowledged that Van Lier had made a significant attempt to specify what kind of trace the photograph is. However, he accused him of a lack of certainty in his distinctions of signs and, specifically, of having done very little to clarify the peculiarities of the indice and, furthermore, of inconsistency, imprecision and a lack of references to the work of other thinkers in the field.[78]

Neuroaesthetics, a developing tendency in examining artworks according to the conditions of their production and specifically related to the personality of their author, has put photographs too under its scope. The most prominent attempt offered in the field has been that of visuo-affective mapping, by Shinkle, as mentioned previously.

Another perspective, which does not directly examine the viewer, but rather is closely related to elements of 'agency', such as the camera, the photographer's mental schemas, the arrangement of space in front of the lens, etc., feeding the consciential mode of photography, is suggested by Vilem Flusser, through the notion of the 'gesture'. Flusser examines the gesture that photography elicits. For him, the essential feature that defines the 'noeme', or meaning, of photography, seems to lie not in something such as the Barthesian punctum or the Benjamian 'aura' (of the print), but rather in the 'gesture' (of the photographer). Such an approach attributes sovereignty to the operator rather than to other factors, such as the print, apparatus or nature. It is through taking into consideration the technological determinism underlying Flusser's writings that this anthropocentric viewpoint can be understood. In the notion of the gesture, Flusser includes periods of reflection and moments of action, encompassing in this way both the ideological and objective modes of thinking, which altogether formulate the operator's need to situate him/herself in the world. It seems that, for Flusser, photography is the expression of an existential query, executed through an apparatus, the

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[77] Goran Sonesson, 'Semiotics of Photography: On tracing the index' report no.4 from the project *Pictorial meanings in the society of information*, Institute of Art History, Lund University, 1989, p.60. Sonesson is Professor of Semiotics at Lund University.

[78] Sonesson wrote on p.55 of the 'Semiotics of Photography: On tracing the index': "For a physical point of view, the production of a single photograph depends on an infinite list of factors, some of them stemming from the inception of the universe. Therefore, we can only be interested in those of these factors which somehow stand out to human consciousness, and thus carry signification. In this sense, Van Lier´s notion of 'indice' is conceptual nonsense, for either the physical effect is also a signification, or it is not merely physical." Sonesson has also noted that Dubois, who is much more of a real Peircean, has rejected Vanlier´s distinction between index and indice offhandedly, but Schaeffer, who has also claimed to follow Peirce, has adopted a favourable stance to it.

camera, which is able to impose on its product the intermingled modes of perception. Such a belief sounds affinal to a Lacanian viewpoint: both the need for someone to confirm and identify his/her existence, as well as the use of an external device in order to achieve it, i.e., the gaze of the other. The Flusserian notion of gesture shares many characteristics with Laruelle's notions of photographic stance and force vision that were analysed previously. It could be claimed that their common denominator is the expression of the body who bears the camera, or in Richard Shusterman's words, a 'somatic projection': "Taking a picture is a bodily act that requires a certain effort and competence of somatic self-use [...] Her somatic style needs to display a quality of keen attentiveness and interest regarding the person photographed. This quality of attention and interest, somaesthetically projected by the photographer and perceived by the subject (often only implicitly by both parties), will be displayed in posture, gesture, and facial expression."[79]

2.6 Working methods, data and methodological issues

Using photography-related texts from theorists in the field and imagery from practitioners who have produced medium-reflecting photographs, as well as the body of work I actualised in parallel with the written part of this thesis as sources for collecting data, the method chosen is a synthesis. It comprises correlations between models of understanding the medium of photography, of analysis of established ontological frameworks referring to medium specificity issues, of examination of practitioners' work through their statements upon directorial strategies and concerns about subject approaches, and of the creation of images that aim to render visible queries regarding medium specificity. Having undertaken these tasks, I synthesised the OASPV apprehension scheme, which includes all the aforementioned information, collected and processed it, and then distributed it in channels (five zones). The OASPV model has also taken into account the sum of the methodological suggestions that have appeared in debates on contemporary photographic theory and practice, the most influential of which are displayed below.

Shusterman, while proposing an adequate account of the medium, has actually done it through referring to the factors of the OASPV model: "there is more to photography than the photograph. The photograph and its aesthetic perception are only part of a larger complex of elements that constitutes photography as an activity and as an art, we first need to examine these other elements,

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[79] Richard Shusterman, 'Photography as performative process' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.70 (The Media of Photography), issue 1, Winter 2012, p.69.

which include the photographer, the target that he photographs, the photographic equipment, and the spatiotemporal context or scene in which the target is posed and photographed."[80]

Diarmuid Costello and Dawn Philips have spotted that those theorists who want to indicate what is distinctive about photography focus on the process of inscription of the information on the sensitive surface, attributing in this way to material the means of production the medium's qualities. Costello and Philips imply that there is usually a purpose for such an essentialist approach, be it the nomination of photography as a distinct art form or the opposite. They suggest that a comprehensive account of the photograph regarding discovering which characteristics are significant, should be one which does not draw conclusions only by examining ontological or technological features but rather one which examines the various uses for which photographs are placed, circulated, and consumed. The OASPV model gives total justice to this claim through the factor (V).

Patrick Maynard, too, believes that photography can be conceptualised simply by looking at its several uses and functions, avoiding any literary jargon, and that there is much to investigate in photo functions based on their causally formative processes. As he explains, "Causally formative factors such as the quick or slow actions of the camera shutter, original and reflected light sources, the reflectances of the objects photographed and their distances and movements relative to the photo-receptor, dye-transfer processes, and digital bit-depth may all be relevant aspects of the picture's meaning.[...] It would be best to develop such ideas further in the context of a close study of the works of individual artists [...] By putting aside notions of theory and trusting our own resources, new conceptual tools will arise inductively, through attention to particular cases."[81]

Shepherd Steiner also agrees that the experience of looking at a particular photograph is important and cannot easily be replaced by a theoretical concept, especially if this is based on indexicality. He states: "The only way to stabilize the many uncertainties that we currently encounter as photography and photographic criticism is through close reading."[82] What the OASPV model actually enacts is a meticulous reading of the photograph's stages.

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[80] 'Photography as performative process', p.68.

[81] Patrick Maynard, 'We can't, eh, Professors? Photo Aporia' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.332.

[82] Shepherd Steiner, 'Give me examples' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.358. Professor Steiner teaches Art History at the University of Florida.

The voices raised against the need for indexical perspectives on photography have increased in recent years, where semiotics is now confronted by the majority of critical theorists as an antiquated method of analysis. Anne McCauley argues that indexicality, as a conceptual way of describing the relationship between a photograph and its mode of creation, gives no adequate clues to the meaning of the photograph to its viewers. McCauley, agreeing with Godeau and Frizot, suggests that we should consider photography as a social praxis rather than an object: "Rather than trying to prove that 'a photograph is x' or 'a photograph reveals y' because of the way it is made or its relationship to its referent, one might more productively consider the photograph as an idea as much as a thing, in which repressed human concerns about making, keeping, and losing resurface."[83] McCauley agrees with Snyder in that photographs are much more than indices of past events and that considering only the causality element neglects, firstly, the transformations that take place during the transition of the object from how it actually appears to how it finally appears on the print and, secondly, the different potential uses made by the spectator. The OASPV model, however, takes into consideration all of the above. It also aligns with Michel Frizot's claims on factors one should consider in the conception of a photograph: the physical characteristics of its production, the practice of photography by an operator, the diversification of its technical forms and of the operator's intentions and, finally, the reception of the image.[84]

Liz Wells suggests the need to broaden and organise the methodological framework so that it covers as many aspects of the medium as possible. She writes: "Photography invites complex interrogation [...] Critical analysis needs to be eclectic in method, carefully considered methodologically, and clear about research aims and precise problematics. At minimum we need to ask questions about purpose and sociohistorical contexts of production, and creative provenance; about content, aesthetics, and photographic coding; about readability and interpretation, context of engagement and audience subjectivity... Rethinking Photography now requires, at minimum, a more detailed route map!"[85]

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[83] Anne McCauley, 'The trouble with photography' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, p.420. Citing McCauley's clarification, the elements of making, keeping, and losing are argued as needs of a mix of photographic viewers and photographic snap shooters in Serge Tisseron's psychoanalytic research *La mystere de la chambre Claire: photographie et inconscient*, 1996.

[84] Michel Frizot, 'Who's afraid of photons?' in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007.

[85] Liz Wells, 'Navigating theory now', in James Elkins (ed.) *Photography Theory*, 2007, pp.345-346. Professor in Photographic Culture at the University of Plymouth, Liz Wells writes, curates and lectures on the history, theory and practices of Photography.

2.7. Limitations of this research study

I would like to note that I have perhaps unintentionally omitted some theoretical viewpoints throughout my integrative literature review of the existing models of photography apprehension; this could be due to them being cited only rarely, and thus they are as yet relatively unknown in the field. It is also possible that such models can be traced in magazines that host photographic practices – usually series of work – or in the form of accompanying statements for exhibitions and publications; it is even more possible that they exist in publications of languages other than the English, French and Greek publications that I have researched. Texts in German, Japanese and Russian, for example, could potentially act as rich sources for the philosophy of the medium for further research. However, I contend that any further viewpoints to be suggested or traced could fit too, in the five zones of the model I have suggested.

Moreover, the elusive nature of the photographs chosen to form the visual data in this study attracts the risk of subjective judgement. However, I limit my apprehension of the photographs to be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 to the domains in which I feel able to articulate adequate viewpoints. Furthermore, using my own practice as a research method presupposes that my level of practice is as advanced as needed to tackle medium specificity issues; it is possible that future practice-led visual researchers in my field of inquiry can produce a more efficient outcome.

Finally, regarding the OASPV model, I had to include the notion of time - which is of a great importance to the medium - in the P zone. I acknowledge that time's distinct nature could locate it above or along all the five domains; however, it was done only for the sake of keeping the apprehension scheme as simple as possible. I hope future researchers will further develop this initial attempt to map the field of photography apprehension.

Before continuing with the application of the OASPV model on specific photographs, it is imperative to give a theoretical overview of medium specificity issues, such as the nature of the referent and the close relationship between the trace and the picture, which has been best illustrated in Van Lier's account of presential/consciential. In the next chapter, the sum of debates which shaped the OASPV model is presented, providing further aid towards understanding what concepts should be employed when applying the model to photographs, a task to be executed in Chapter 4.

3. Philosophical debates relevant to studying contemporary photographic practice

3.0 Chapter's summary

This chapter discusses medium specificity issues which play an important role in apprehending photographs by assisting the compilation between the factors of the OASPV model. Inherent in the construction of this model is the strong debate on whether a photograph presents or represents, what it represents and how, and what kind of - access to - reality it offers. Different theoretical viewpoints upon the nature of the photograph are offered, regarding tracing the (re)presentational quality a photograph stands for, such as those of index, trace, imprint, pointer, fossil, gauge, fingerprint, natural image, the thing itself, and others. Furthermore, conceptual frameworks are put under scrutiny in order to provide the seams of the critical synthesis which formulated the OASPV model; these include the manifestation thesis, transparency thesis and make-believe theory, presentation thesis and ESI condition, spatially agnostic informants theory, displacement theory, recognition theory, experience resemblance theory and twofoldness. Links between the OSAPV elements and the medium specificity parameters, such as the referent, agency, automatism and time, as well as a revisiting of depiction theories, are provided. Finally, a short review of texts that have implied the coexistence of the consiential and presential mode of photography is illustrated.

3.1 Medium specificity issues

Before starting to unfold photography's specificity issues, looking at the medium from the established 'prejudice' that it must somehow be different from the other media and the decipherment of this uniqueness that would provide its essence, it would be fair to mention a view that casts doubt on this certitude. Noel Carroll argued against medium specificity, suggesting that such approaches enjoin us to forgo potential excellence for the sake of purity. He claimed that behind the need to secure purity and to differentiate between art forms lies the idea that the arts avoid waste by avoiding duplication and achieve efficiency exactly as society promotes the division of labour, maximising production and implying that a person does a specific job better than someone else. For Caroll, notions of medium specificity simply attest to the need to legitimize arts

such as photography. Even if a medium manages to achieve a result that no other medium does, this effect has to have a worth, Caroll contended.[86]

Having mentioned this rather heretical viewpoint, there now follows a review of theoretical treatises upon the medium which have tried to locate and describe its substance, if any, often through providing synecdoches of the same aspect, the majority which, of necessity, bear an essentialist flavour.

3.1.0 Automatism and Agency

Diarmuid Costello and Dawn Wilson, in a jointly written paper, implied that the tension between the epistemic and aesthetic aspects of photography, often met as a diptych in terms such as 'automatism' and 'agency', 'causality' and 'intentionality', 'realism' and 'fictional competence', has been underlying most of the medium's philosophical debates. What Van Lier distinguished as presential and consciential modes have described the same issue, and that is why his model of thought has been adopted in this study as a core one to examine photographs.

Costello and Wilson noted that many of the current debates in the field usually focus on the roles of causality and intentionality in photography and on whether this duality distinguishes photography as a unique kind of depiction, thus for many theorists rendering it epistemically privileged. They suggested that despite the seemingly competitive position of the two aspects, that is, the more photography defends causation, the less capacity for aesthetic value it is considered to have and vice versa, "one chief desideratum for any comprehensive philosophy of photography is that it must be able to do justice to both".[87] The OSAPV model is aligned with this claim, as it does not claim primacy of any of the five elements it consists of; in particular, agency - represented by (O) - and automatism - represented by (A) - are examined separately, having been given the same importance.

Regarding agency specifically, Wilson, when examining the case of self portrait in photography, suggested that an account of photography should seek to accommodate, rather than exclude, the perspective of agents where they are involved in the production process.[88] Wilson's view justifies the

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[86] Noel Carroll, 'Medium specificity arguments and self consciously invented arts: Video, film and photography' in *Millenium Film Journal*, Vols.14-15, 1984-85, pp.127-153. Carroll has criticised in his writings essentialist theorists such as Sontag, Cavell and Barthes.

[87] Diarmuid Costello & Dawn Philips, 'Automatism causality and realism: foundational problems in the Philosophy of Photography' in *Philosophy Compass*, Vol.4, issue 1, 2009, p.2.

[88] Dawn Wilson, 'Facing the Camera: self portrait of photographers as artists' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.70 (The Media of Photography), issue 1, Winter 2012. Dawn Wilson, nee Phillips, is a lecturer in Philosophy at Hull University.

existence of the (O), (A), (S) parameters of the OASPV model. Many practitioners and theorists defend the argument that photography is quite often a product of artistic agency because the photographer is responsible for choices of aesthetic resonance, such as choices regarding the setting of a scene, the exposure, and the developing and editing process. Wilson examined this idea from its opposite side, namely, that photographs hold mind-independence or belief-independence (that is, they can be produced naturally, mechanically, accidentally, or automatically). This idea contends that, although their production depends on natural or mechanical processes, photographs can be produced independently of the human agency and, particularly, human beliefs. In its strongest form, this idea asserts that although the human agency is heavily involved in the production processes, still the definitive characteristics that constitute the photograph are independent of human minds. Wilson noted that even if in epistemic debates this idea is essential, in the philosophy of art, such claims as mind-independent processes are confronted with scepticism: "Applied dogmatically, mind-independence stands in the way of a full understanding of photography as it restricts photographs to the category of image and obscures the fact that photographs can also be pictures."[89] Wilson explained how, with a proper understanding of the photographic process, mind-independence need not be a defining feature of photographs. By offering a substantive account of the photographic process and by discussing how photographs can be pictures as well as images, she formulated a mind-independence thesis. For her, such an approach can alleviate the problems of both dogmatism and scepticism in the philosophy of photography.

On the opposite side of the importance of agency, there are philosophical concerns in the field which support the idea that even if the photographer is responsible for determining the shooting and processing variables, still the picture is not totally handmade by him/her, but rather merely selected from a matrix of possibilities that could relate to the automatic, mechanical nature of the camera. The automatism lying behind this account of the medium's practice stands in competition or in conflict with the account of agency. Photographs viewed through this prism are characterised as natural, mechanical, and belief-independent, and photographers, correspondingly, can have only a limited authorship of the content of their pictures.

Since the 1970s, Stanley Cavell has been suggesting that photography has overcome subjectivity in an unprecedented way through automatism, distancing the human factor from the cause of reproduction. Emphasising the mechanical, manufactured character of the medium, Cavell has

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[89] Dawn Phillips, 'Fixing the image: Rethinking the mind-independence of Photographs' in *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.6, No. 2, August 2009, p.2 Retrieved from http://www.dawn-wilson.co.uk/files/Dawn-M-Phillips-Fixing-the-Image-Re-thinking-the-Mind-independence-of-Photographs.pdf, accessed on 11/01/2012.

focused his attention on who is responsible for what is depicted on the surface of a photograph. Expressing a difficulty in placing the photograph ontologically, his suggestion is that the heart of the matter lies in the connection between a photograph and what it is of: "a painting is *a* world; a photograph is *of* the world".[90]

3.1.1 Ontological synecdoches

3.1.1.1 Physical reality, spark of contingence

The first, most rigorous ontological treatises of the medium were introduced by Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, long-time friends who had corresponded with each other for many years.

Kracauer suggested, in his protocanonical text *Photography*, that the photographic image is a kind of compromise product between physical reality as it impresses its own optical image on the film and the picture-maker's ability to select, shape, and organise the raw material.[91] Kracauer was not interested in putting brackets around the term 'reality'. He was, rather, concerned about the importance for us of its presence 'out there' and he usually referred to it as 'physical reality'. In a later essay, *History,* he highlighted that photographs do not copy and, thereby, arrest nature; they just metamorphose it.[92] Kracauer also suggested that there are unavoidable transformations emerging from different kinds of dimensionality and colour and from the partly irrepressible subjectivity of the photographer's perspective. Regarding the photographer's 'formative tendency', Kracauer claimed that it does not have to conflict with the realistic tendency. However, as he stated, whatever formative tendencies or talents the photographer may have must be put in the service of the documentary potential of the medium. The issue for Kracauer is not the externalisation of the photographer's vision but rather the "right mixture of his realist loyalties and formative endeavours

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[90]Stanley Cavell has been an Emeritus Professor of Aesthetics at Harvard University. Stanley Cavell, *The World viewed: reflections on the ontology of film*, [1971] 1979, p.24. The same view was adopted by the philosopher Norton Batkin in his PhD thesis at Harvard University, *Philosophy and Photography*, 1981, where he argued whilst reading Paul Strand's work that photographs reveal the fact of the world, e.g., the fact that the world exists, though without being able to reveal the world, namely, its life.

[91] Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" (first published in 1927, in the daily newspaper *Die Frankfurter Zeitung*) in Thomas Y. Levin (ed.) *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, 1995, pp.46-64.

[92] Sigfried Kracauer, *History: Last things before the last*, 1969. Kracauer considered 'nature' as time; in other words, the manifestation of time in the photograph is the indice for him, rather than the materiality of the referent. It should be highlighted here that Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* seems to have been deeply influenced by Kracauer's claims. For more on Kracauer's claims on the appearance of time in photographs, see a later section in this chapter.

[...] in which the latter, however strongly developed, surrender their independence to the former."[93] Kracauer emphasised his preference over photography's "outspoken affinity for unstaged reality" due to "fortuitous complexes which represent fragments" bringing into play the feeling of endlessness, indeterminacy and vagueness.[94] Professor Dagmar Barnouw aptly described the epitome of Kracauer's claims on photography, in the following statement: "Presentational and representational, shaped by her historicity, the photographer's perspective is composite. She cannot but construct what she sees through the camera lens; at the same time, she is true to her medium, she cannot repress the presence of unseen things."[95]

Benjamin too, in accordance with Kracauer, highlighted the importance of the presential aspect and referred to it as "the tiny spark of contingency [...] with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject".[96] It should be noted here that Van Lier too used the term 'contingent', right next to that of the 'indice', in his account of the photograph. Benjamin returned to describe the same notion in his later writings on photography, referring to it as the 'optical unconscious' and explaining that the devices of slow motion and enlargement reveal the secret of the object depicted in the photograph: "Only the camera can show us the optical unconscious, as it is only through psychoanalysis that we learn of the compulsive unconscious."[97] Indeed, six decades later, Rosalind Krauss titled her book using the same term. In *The Optical Unconscious,* Krauss wondered whether the optical field – the world of optical phenomena: clouds, sea, sky, forest- can have an unconscious. She had already presupposed that the camera could stand for the psychoanalyst, and the hitherto unseen visual data could operate as a parallel to those slips of tongue through which the patient's unconscious surfaces into view.[98]

Benjamin also tried to describe the existential quality of the image by using the term '*hauchkreis'* or 'aura'. He noted that this delicately pneumatic halo or aura could easily be discerned in the early stage of photography as, for example, in Julia Margaret Cameron's portraits, between the subject of

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[93] Kracauer, *History: Last things before the last*, p.16.

[94] Sigfried Kracauer, *History: Last things before the last*, 1969, p.16.

[95] Dagmar Barnouw, *Critical Realism: History, Photography and the work of Siegfried Kracauer*, 1994, p.116.

[96] M. Bullock & M.W. Jennings (eds), *Walter Benjamin: Selected writings,* vol.2, part 2, 1999, p.510. For more on Benjamin's approach, see Walter Benjamin, "A short history of Photography" (1931) in Alan Trachtenberg (ed.)*, Classic Essays on Photography*, 1980, pp.199-216.

[97] Walter Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of the mechanical reproduction*, [1936], 2008, p.30.

[98] For more, see Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 1993, pp.178-179.

the photograph and its technique, a correspondence that later, for example, in Atget's street photographs of Paris, is disrupted, the aura withering in the age of mechanical reproduction and the objects liberated from it.[99] Researchers into Benjamin's writings have interpreted his view as a belief that photography's aura seems to reside in its apparent artlessness.[100] Other researchers have expressed objections in relation to the clarity of Benjamin's claims, accusing his use of terms as being "inconsistent and also infuriatingly imprecise".[101] Whatever Benjamin intended to mean, it can be seen that the focus of his attention was the issue of the conditions that define a photograph's effect, and it seems that he chose to trace them between images that had a strong connection with realism. The unclear positioning and vagueness in his arguments perhaps reside in the dynamic between the presential and the consciential aspects of the photograph.

The problematic effect of Benjamin's multivalent meaning attribution can be shown in his viewpoint on the work of practitioners of his era. Benjamin admired the work of August Sander, which was based on a shooting approach that fully respected the willingness of the portraitee to display her/himself as s/he wanted and its mainly unstaged positioning in front of a natural background – elements that allow a recording of as much truthfulness as possible. On the other hand, Benjamin viewed Patzsch's photographic method as poor, stating that his photographs do not reveal the real, in opposition to what Patzsch claimed. Using Brechtian-Marxist thought, Benjamin argued that those photographs were lying, as a simple reproduction of reality does not reveal the real and that the latter can only be found in the artificiality of constructive photography developed under the influence of surrealism and in Russian film. Finally, in Atget's work, he discerned a 'snapping' of clues. As far as I can understand his viewpoint, by the way he positioned himself in relation to photographic practice, and relating it to this thesis, it seems to me that the optical unconscious is

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[99] Drawing on the insights of Benjamin's essay 'Work of Art in the age of mechanical reproduction', John Tagg emphasised the withering away of the aura associated with unique works of art in favour of a photographic democratisation of the image. For more, see John Tagg, 'A Democracy of the Image', in *The Burden of Representation*, 1988, pp. 56-59.

[100] Jeannene M. Przyblyski, 'History is Photography: The afterimage of Walter Benjamin' in *Afterimage*, Vol.26, issue 2, Sep/Oct 1998, pp.8-13. Przyblyski is a photography historian and critic.

[101] Jonathan Davies, 'Questioning the work or art in the age...A stroll around the Louvre after reading Walter Benjamin', in *Contemporary aesthetics*, 2008, retrieved from http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=493, accessed on 10/12/2011.

directly linked to the indice's effect, while the aura emanates from a specific handling that combines the author's mental schemas projected in the photograph with the indicial aspect. This consideration of both modes – trace and picture - of the photograph has been implied in the work of many other later theoretical viewpoints expressed in the field, and this will be discussed later on in this chapter.

3.1.1.2 The thing itself

At about the same era in America, we find practitioners who followed the principles of straight photography, such as those who founded the group *f.64* (the tiny size of the aperture's opening, namely, the maximum depth of field), reflecting the wish for clarity while capturing the subject as well as, while processing the negative, ensuring that every possible detail of the negative be rendered visible by using fine print glossy-surfaced paper and the zone system in photometering. The manifesto stated the group's credo that 'pure' photography, as an art form, "must develop along lines defined by the actualities and limitations of the photographic medium, and must always remain independent of ideological conventions of art and an aesthetics that are reminiscent of a period and culture antedating the growth of the medium itself."[102]

One of the most renowned advocates of straight photography, who introduced concepts such as the 'respect of the thing itself' and 'intensity of vision', was Paul Strand. He declared the objectivity of the camera to be the very essence of photography, considering this objectivity to be simultaneously its contribution to the art world and its limitation. Despite his obvious faith in attributing the medium's unique quality to the presential character of the photograph, as can be attested by his images and texts, he nonetheless allowed some space for the possibility of a plastic handling, apart from the automatic inscription. In a phrase, he brings together the definition of the indice and the consciential aspect: "The objects may be organized to express the causes of which they are the effects, or they may be used as abstract forms, to create an emotion unrelated to the objectivity as such."[103]

The main theoretical writings of that era come from practitioners. Apart from the aforementioned Paul Strand and Ansel Adams' manifesto, Edward Weston was one of the most influential voices and openly championed primacy over the medium's presential mode: "The camera should be used for a recording of 'life', for rendering the very substance and quintessence of the 'thing itself', whether it

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[102] Ansel Adams, *An Autobiography,* 1985, p.110.

[103] Paul Strand, 'Photography' (first printed in *Camera Work* , No. 49/50, June 1917) in Peninah Petruck (ed.), *The Camera Viewed*, 1979, p.3. Paul Strand, together with others, such as Alfred Stieglitz, was amongst the pioneers of the movement of straight photography in America.

be polished steel or palpitating flesh [...] I shall let no chance pass to record interesting abstraction, but I feel definite in my belief that the approach to photography is through realism."[104] A meticulous observation of his words can reveal his hesitation as to whether the 'thing itself' governs the image's formation or there is space for creation on behalf of the photographer too - referring to it as 'interesting abstraction'. It seems Weston simply could not ignore the consciential aspect, as abstraction finds its shape through composition, not automatically; it seems that the 'thing itself' needs a little bit of human intervention in order to display or reveal its qualities. The apprehension scheme of this thesis provides space for considering it, through the factors (O) and (A).

A few years later, on the other side of the Atlantic, the movement of straight photography as being ruled by indicial primacy finds devotees in the form of the 'Neue Sachlichkeit' (the 'New Objectivity') movement. Reflecting a growing experimentation in form through photo-technology, it began to raise lively discussions on the different methods of photographic representation. In 1925, the year of the seminal 'New Objectivity' art exhibition in Mannheim, Laszlo Moholy Nagy published his 'Malerei, Photographie, Film' in the Bauhaus series, discussing the 'true qualities' of photography. In 1927, *Deutsches Lichtbild* published statements by Moholy Nagy and Albert Renger Patzsch on the significance of the new medium, both emphasising strongly its artistically independent status.[105] For Moholy Nagy, the medium's main issue in relation to specificity was sensitivity to light. In his earlier concerns with the medium's essence of function, he clearly took the position that, despite photography serving creative purposes, the camera mainly captures light effects.[106] Some years later though, searching for an exact language in photography, he enriched this presential aspect by adding the element of guided image creation: "Photography records [...] but this recording method - we must emphasize it again and again - has its own, still unfathomable laws with respect to technique and design."[107]

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[104] Nancy Newhall (ed.), *The Daybooks of Edward Weston, Vol.1*, *Mexico*, 1973, p.55. Also see Edward Weston, 'Seeing Photographically' in Liz Wells (ed.), *The Photography Reader*, 2003.

[105] Dagmar Barnouw, *Critical Realism: History, Photography and the work of Siegfried Kracauer*, 1994, pp.62-23.

[106] Laszlo Moholy Nagy, 'Production-reproduction', in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the Modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, pp.79-82. Originally published as 'Produktion-reproduktion' in *De Stijl 5*, Leiden, no.7, July 1922.

[107] Laszlo Moholy Nagy, 'Photography in advertising', in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the Modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, p.89. Originally published as 'Die Photographie in der reklame' in *Photographische Korrespondenz*, Vienna, no.9, September 1927, pp.257-260.

For Patzsch, under a somewhat absolute and strong indicial perspective, the medium's aesthetic qualities were to be found in its particular kind of realism. Patzsch's approach to photography was one that denied any loan from art, attempting to make visible aspects of the natural world. By pointing his camera at objects' details, he allowed the subject to display its form; in this way, he believed, meaning emanated from the subject itself. With hindsight, it is easy to recognise that what Patzsch's beliefs lack is the underlying level of manipulation and meaning attribution/creation that the photographic act inherently entails, through directorial choices/effects of composition, lighting, apparatus, and materials. In other words, what an object can be made to look like is related to the way it has been staged/chosen to be shot. Nonetheless, even if Patzsch considered photography as unequivocal and truthful, having its own technique and its own means, he did not omit to imply its ability to attract, due to image qualities of the kind to be found in other arts: "The secret of a good photograph, which can possess artistic qualities just as a work of art can, resides in its realism."[108]

Amongst the proponents of the New Objectivity movement, there were theorists who adopted an unbending attitude for the presential aspect, such as Ossip Brik, who wrote extensively against photography imitating art and Man Ray, who declared, "I maintain that Photography is not artistic! [...] Photography [...] is a marvellous explorer of those aspects that our retina never records."[109] However, it could be argued that Man Ray's work is very much linked to design values; the photograms he produced owe a great part of their value to composition due to the non-figurative image that dissolves the referent into an abstract shape.

3.1.1.3 Natural image

While in America in the 1930s it was mainly the practitioners who were formulating the medium's principles, in France, it was critical theorists of culture and visual media who, around the time of the Second World War, introduced the first rigorous writings upon the ontology of the medium. Andre Malraux discerned the presential power of the medium – the ability to provide extreme likeness – as well as its special relationship with time – the ability to block rather than to create narration: "For

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[108] Patzsch has been amongst the most influential German photographers. This quotation is taken from Albert Renger Patzsch's, 'Aims', in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, pp.104-105. Originally published as 'Ziele' in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1927, p.xviii.

[109] Man Ray, 'Deceiving appearances', first published in Paris Soir, March 23, 1926. Reprinted in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the modern era*, 1989, p.11.

the purposes of an Identity card the photograph is wholly adequate. But for representing life, photography is inevitably coming up once more against all the old problems of the painter...with the added handicap that it has no scope for fiction."[110]

Five years later, Andre Bazin, another French cultural theorist, presented the first treatise in photography that included in its title the term 'ontology', even if Kracauer's work had already treated the medium with the same logic.[111] Bazin deployed his ontology by positioning photography in the plastic arts, putting the emphasis though on the role of realism: "If the history of plastic arts is not just a matter of their aesthetic but mainly of their psychology, then its [photography's] is essentially that of resemblance, or if you prefer, of realism".[112]

Bazin advocated the presential aspect during his main argument regarding the originality of photography, that of its 'essential objectivity', implying, however, that the recording apparatus plays a role too, shaping the final outcome to some extent. As he explained, "between the initial object and its representation nothing interposes except from another object [...] an image of the exterior world is automatically formed, without creative intervention of man, according to a rigorous determinism. The personality of the photographer comes into play only through the choice,

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[110] For Andre Malraux, photography's invention was just a way station towards the desire for showing movement and, specifically, for showing tempo, something that was finally achieved through cinema by capturing the photography of movement and then processing it in a proper way to express tempo. Andre Malraux, 'Esquisse d'un psychologie du cinéma', *Verve*, Vol V, No 2, (*1940*). Translated as 'Sketch for a Psychology of the motion picture', published in Sussanne Katherina Langer (ed.), *Reflections on Art*, 1958, p.319. It is possible that Malraux's viewpoint was influenced by Jean Paul Sartre's *Psychology of the Imagination*, published in the same year. This was a book that also later influenced Roland Barthes, specifically with regard to the same two issues that concerned Malraux, namely, the adherence to the referent and the role of time. There might have been a parallelism between the Sartrian dreamer and photography's reader. In the dream, one encounters elements of reality, though transformed, disguised; in the photograph, it could be argued, indices cannot appear as they are because they are necessarily coded by the apparatus, so they appear as indexed - disguised.

[111] Andre Bazin, 'Ontology of the photographic image'. First published under the title 'Ontologie de l'image photographique' in Gaston Diehl (ed.), *Les problems de la peinture* (Paris: Confluences, 1945) reprinted in Andre Bazin, *Qu est-ce que le cinema?,* 1958. While reading the English translation from Hugh Gray, I found it difficult to understand Bazin's thoughts and, given the importance of this highly influential – and to an extent ignored by the Anglo Saxon literature – text, I decided to read the original version. The excerpts I include in my thesis are translated into English by me; however, I also display the original quotations in French, in the following footnotes.

[112] "Si l'histoire des arts plastiques n'est pas seulement celle de leur esthetique mais d'abord de leur psychologie, elle est essentiellement cele de la resemblance ou, si l'on veut, du realisme". Andre Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photogaphique', p.12

orientation, pedagogy of the phenomenon. All the arts make fond of the human presence; only in Photography do we enjoy his/her absence".[113]

Bazin placed even greater emphasis on the importance of the indice when he described the effect of the photograph on the viewer's perception of representations: "The objectivity of the photograph confers on it a power of credibility that is absent from all pictorial works. No matter what objections our critical spirit might have, we are obliged to think of the existence of the object represented, actually/effectively re-presented, that is to say, rendered present in time and space. The photograph benefits from a transfer of the thing's reality onto its reproduction".[114] A few pages later on in his essay, in the short excerpt that follows, Bazin raised three claims which were to become very influential in the years to follow: first, that the indice - in the form of nature - performs as the creator; second, that because of the indice's character, the viewer can invest feelings in a photograph; and third, that the photograph shows us a new world. As he wrote, "The aesthetic qualities of photography reside in the revelation of the real [...] only the impassivity of the lens, stripping the object of habits, prejudices and all the intellectual grime with which my perception has been coated, could render it [the object] pure to my attention and consequently to my love. Onto the photograph, a natural image of a world that we do not know or we cannot see, nature finally does more than imitating art: it imitates the artist. It [the nature] can even surpass the artist in terms of creative ability. The aesthetic universe of the painter is heterogeneous to the universe that surrounds him/her. The [photographic] frame encloses a microcosm which is substantially and essentially different. The existence of the photographed object, in a contrary way to that of the existence of the model [in painting], participates as a fingerprint. Wherefore, it [the nature] actually adds to the natural creation, instead of substituting the latter for another [nature]".[115]

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[113] "Entre l'objet initial et sa representation, rien ne s'interpose qu'un autre objet [...] une image du monde exterieur se forme automatiquement sans intervention creatice de l' homme, selon un determinism rigoureux. La personnalite du photographe n'etre en jeux que par le choix, l'orientation, la pedagogie du phenomene...Tous les arts sont fondes sur la presence de l'homme; dans la seule photographie nous jouissons de son absence". Andre Bazin, "Ontologie de l' image photogaphique", p.15.

[114] "L'objectivite de la photographie lui confere une puissance de crédibilité absente de toute oeuvre picturale. Quelles que soient les objections de notre esprit critique nous sommes obliges de croire a l'existence de l'objet represente, effectivement re-presente, c'est a dire rendu present dans le temps et dans l'espace. La photographie beneficie d'un transfert de réalité de la chose sur sa reproduction." Andre Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photographique', pp.15-16.

[115] The words in brackets are added by me, in an attempt to help the reader to understand Bazin's thoughts. The meaning of this specific excerpt is distorted in Hugh Gray's translation. For example, Gray wrote, "Photography can even surpass art in creative power", having misunderstood Bazin, who talks about nature

In his essay, Bazin adopted a critical eye based on a historical review, discerning that, for many years, practitioners of photography were mainly searching for ways to imitate art, resulting in them copying, in a naive way, the pictorial style, and that a large amount of time was needed for them to realise that they could copy anything other than nature itself. Kracauer, however, had already spotted this attitude: "With the increasing independence of the technology and the simultaneous evacuation of meaning from the objects, artistic photography loses its justification: it grows not into an artwork but into its imitation... [artistic photography] does not explore the object assigned to photographic technology but rather wants to hide the technological essence by means of style. The artistic photographer is a dilettante artist who apes an artistic manner minus its substance, instead of capturing the very lack of substance".[116] What Kracauer had stated as 'loss of justification', wanting to express the distancing from the medium's main characteristic – the relationship with the referent – Bazin also used later on, in the last words of his essay, rephrased as 'ceased to be the reason'.[117] It seems that both of those key early theorists pointed at the indicial aspect in order to define what distinguishes the medium of photography.

3.1.1.4 Index, imprint, trace, analogon

Arguably the most influential theorist regarding the medium's indexical nature – which is, however, a resurrection of the Peirceian account of the indexical character of photographs - has been Rosalind Krauss. In the early 1980s, searching for an aesthetic discourse around photography, Krauss rephrased, in a way, Walton's argument about the photograph's special nature in the realm of

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rather than photography. "Les virtualités esthétique de la photographie resident dans la revelation du reel...seule l'impassibilité de l'objectif, en depouillant l'objet des habitudes et des prejudges, de toute la crasse spirituellle dont l'enrobait ma perception, pouvait le render vierge a mon attention et partant a mon amour. Sur la photographie, image naturelle d'un monde que nous ne savions ou ne pouvions voir, la nature enfin fait plus que d' imiter l'art: elle imite l'artiste. Elle peut meme le depasser dans sa pouvoir createur. L'univers esthétique du peintre est heterogene a l'univers qui l entoure. Le cadre enclave un microcosme substantiallement et essentiellement different. L'existence de l'objet photographie participe au contraire de l'existence du modele comme une empreinte digitale. Par la, elle s'ajoute reellement a la creation naturelle au lieu de lui en substituer une autre." Andre Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photographique', p.18.

[116] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography' in Thomas Y. Levin (ed.) *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* 1995, p.53.

[117] "...photography permits us to admire, in its reproduction, the original that our eyes wouldn't like that much and in painting, a pure object of which the referent in nature ceased to be the reason." My translation, from Andre Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photographique', p.19.

images, legitimising it through the use of semiotics.[118] She explored the indexical value of photography as a sign that, like a trace, a fingerprint, or a shadow, is capable of verifying an authentic presence. As she wrote, "Photography is an imprint or transfer off the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers in a manner parallel to that of fingerprints or footprints or the rings of water that cold glasses leave on tables. The photograph is thus generically distinct from painting or sculpture or drawing. On the family tree of images it is closer to palm prints, death masks, the Shroud of Turin, or the tracks of gulls on beaches. For, technically and semiologically speaking, drawings and paintings are icons, while photographs are indexes."[119]

For Krauss, photography produces the paradox of reality constituted as a sign or presence transformed into representation. Regarding the transformation of reality's 3D space onto the 2D print, Krauss highlighted this problem as the reason why a simultaneous presence cannot be achieved by naming it the 'transmutation of presence into succession'. She explained that the photographic image "shows things sequentially, either one after another or external to one another", giving the feeling that we are not looking at reality itself but "at the world infested by interpretation or signification".[120] For semioticians, such as Goran Sonesson, on the other hand, indexicality should not be the primary signifying quality of photographs; for Sonesson, the photograph is first and foremost an iconical sign. He clarified that semiotics' subject matter, as well as distant goal, when applied to pictures, should be that of identifying generalities rather than individual characteristics. Yet, his proposed model of study, in the case of photographs, may possibly begin from particulars.[121]

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[118]See Rosalind Krauss, 'The Photographic conditions of Surrealism', in *October*, Vol.19, Winter 1981; Rosalind Krauss, 'A note in photography and the simulacral' in *October*, Vol.31, Winter 1984, pp.49-68. Krauss is an acclaimed art critic and theorist, currently a professor at Columbia University.

[119] Rosalind Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism" in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 1985, p.110. For more, see 'Photography's discursive spaces', ibid, pp.131-150. It should be noted here that the Shroud of Turin was illustrated in 1945 in Bazin's essay in its original publication. It is quite possible that Krauss has been strongly influenced by post 2nd World War French writers, amongst whom semiotics had been very popular.

[120]Rosalind Krauss, 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism' in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 1985, p.107. Also see R. Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies art in America' in *October*, No.3 (part I) & No.4 (part II), 1977.

[121] Goran Sonesson, 'Semiotics of Photography: On tracing the index', report no.4 from the project *Pictorial meanings in the society of information*, Lund University, 1989. Sonesson owes his approach to Jean Marie Floch's paradigm; see Jean Marie Floch, *Les formes de l'empreinte*, 1986.

Krauss considered photographs not to be interpretations of reality but, rather, presentations of that very reality as configured, or coded, or written. Both Van Lier and Krauss described the photograph from the same viewpoint, though by using different terms. Krauss's key phrase that explains the index is 'the experience of nature as representation'; Van Lier simply dichotomised Krauss' index into indice and index, to provide the photograph with a more analytical definition, that of 'contingently indexed indicial imprint'. To what extent such an analysis pointlessly complicates, or can effectively contribute to the photographic practice itself, is a debatable matter, upon which a short discussion is given in section 3.1.1.12.

Rudolph Arnheim was also amongst those who elevated the role of the indice to a higher level of importance, pointing at the photonic impact as the fundamental peculiarity of the photographic medium: "The physical objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light".[122] Arnheim, however, admitted that, despite the fact that photographs are viewed as something made by nature, "the manifest presence of authentic physical reality", they are coproduced by nature and man, and this is where the challenge lies for the photographer, whose desire is to visually articulate form.[123]

About eight years before Krauss, Susan Sontag's treatise on the medium had placed similar importance on the 'light waves reflected by objects', highlighting the aspect of photographs that renders them a kind of trace: "a photograph is not only an image [...] it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask."[124]

This adherence to the role played by the presence of the object in front of the lens reached its highest popularity in Barthes' last book *Camera Lucida* in which he wrote, "Photography authenticates the existence of a certain being" and that it "offers an immediate presence to the world"[125]. In his writings, from the early 1960s and over the following two decades, one can find a

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[122] Rudolf Arnheim, 'On the nature of Photography' in Peninah Petruck (ed.) *The Camera Viewed: writings on 20th century photography,* Vol 2, 1979, p.152-153. First printed in *Critical inquiry*, Fall 1974, Vol.1, No.1. Arnheim had been a distinguished author and Professor of Psychology of Art at Harvard University.

[123]Rudolf Arnheim, 'On the nature of Photography', p.158.

[124] Susan Sontag, *On Photography,* 1977, p.154. Sontag was an American essayist; *On Photography* is a collection of her writings, which originally appeared as a series of essays in the *New York Review of Books* between 1973 and 1977.

[125] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: reflections on photography*, trans. by Richard Howard, 1984, p.107 and p.84 accordingly. *La chambre Claire* - its original title - written in 1980, though multiply objected, is arguably considered as the most influential text in the history of the medium.

thorough piece of work upon the ontology of photography. Driven by a deconstructive approach, Barthes attempted close readings of advertising, press, street and vernacular photographs in order to find what constituted their structure, that is, to decipher any possible code responsible for the creation of meaning. Barthes' view on reading photographs throughout his publishing career executed a circular route; in the beginning, he acknowledged its presential aspect, while later on he defined the main structural elements, namely, trick, pose, objects, photogeny, syntax and aestheticism, and finally, he returned to the primacy of the referent – either object or time. According to him, the photographic referent is "not the optionally real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph."[126] For Barthes, every photograph is a certificate of presence because, for him, "The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here."[127]

I presume here that when Van Lier referred to the same effect using the term 'photon' instead of 'radiation', it was probably because he had already read *Camera Lucida*, although their books were published around the same time. Surprisingly, while not having any evidence that this could be the case, one more treatise on the ontology of photography, Batkin's PhD thesis, published in the same era, acknowledged and highlighted the manifestation of time as the substance of photography, in the same way as Barthes does: they both broaden the notion of the referent. Barthes did it in the second part of his book, expressed as the actuality of a life that once existed, explained by the well-known dictum 'ca a ete' –'this has happened'- while Batkin considered the photograph as an indication of the world's existence. This view was repeated a year later by John Berger and Jean Mohr, who argued that photographs testify, through what is depicted in them, to the existence of the world and consequently, the feeling of our existence in the world.[128] Berger and Mohr adopted a rather Lacanian view, explaining that the act of executing vision, the act of looking at something, confirms our existence in the world.

Barthes' oscillation between the coded and uncoded character of the photograph reflects the dynamic relationship evolving from its twofold nature. In his early writings, he stated, "In order to move from the reality to its photograph it is in no way necessary to divide up this reality into units and to constitute these units as signs, substantially different from the object they communicate;

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[126] *Camera Lucida*, p.76

[127] *Camera Lucida*, p.80

[128] John Berger & Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling*, 1982.

there is no necessity to set up a relay, that is to say a code, between the object and its image. Certainly the image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect analogon and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph."[129] In his latest writings, he recognised that the purity of the indice cannot be absolute due to intervened coding but, however, it still holds the key to the photograph's essence: "What does the photograph transmit? By definition, the scene itself, the literal reality. From the object to the image there is of course a reduction – in proportion, perspective, colour – but at no time is this reduction a *transformation* (in the mathematical sense of the term)... Certainly, the image is not the reality, but at least it is its perfect *analogon* and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph."[130]

3.1.1.5 Fingerprint

One of the first uses of the term 'fingerprint', as already shown above, is found in Bazin's seminal text, stated as 'empreinte digitale'; Villem Flusser is amongst those theorists that revived it. Flusser in his early writings aligned himself with the Barthesian school of thought, in which the referent reigns. He defined the photograph as "a kind of 'fingerprint' that the subject leaves on a surface, and not a depiction, as in painting. The subject is the cause of the photograph."[131] However, Flusser later acknowledged that photography, apart from inscribing itself on a surface, imposes the structural canons on how this inscription will take shape by setting principles of physics, perspective, and so on. In other words, photography carries ideas that are both captured as such and altered/processed too. That is why Flusser believed that the medium's invention has contributed to the theoretical conflict between the empirical and rationalistic idealism – ideas having imprinted themselves versus ideas designed by us. This debate, rooted in 17th century philosophy, is omnipresent and is still adhered to in photographic discourse, as this review shows by tracing the conflict between the

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[129] Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic message', in *Image Music Text,* 1977, p.17. Originally published as 'Le message photographique' in *Communications*, Vol.1, 1961.

[130] Barthes analysed the coding parameters in his 1964 essay 'La Rhetorique de l'image'. The quotation here is from Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text,* 1977, pp.16-17. Another structuralistic study on photographs' coding comes from René Lindekens (*Eléments pour une sémiotique de la photographie*, 1971). Lindekens argued for the structuring of photographs in binary features because nuance diminishes as contrast is increased, and vice versa, so that one of these factors must always be untrue to reality. This implies that photographs are, to some extent, conventional; Lindekens' claim that they have double articulation or duality of patterning is not substantiated.

[131] Vilem Flusser, 'The gesture of Photographing' in *Journal of Visual Culture*, p.283. Originally published in *Gesten*, 1991. Reprinted, introduced and translated by Nancy Ann Roth in *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol.10, No.3, Dec.2011. Vilem Fluser started writing his essay in 1982.

presential and consciential modes, simply because the prevailing views on both sides were generally more or less accepted.

3.1.1.6 Picture

Joel Snyder has been amongst the most passionate exponents of the consciential aspect, that is, that a photograph is foremost a picture, made by an agency. From his early writings, he attacked the idea of photographic specificity and, specifically, that photographs have a kind of essence. Snyder expressed his opposition to the foundational principles of modernist photography, opening the way to a more conceptual use of the medium acknowledging the camera operator's contribution. A decade later, Snyder insisted on the consciential aspect, claiming that photographs are representations, that they reproduce the world, sharing characteristics with other types of imagery. He suggested that categorical differences between photographically originated pictures and handmade pictures do not exist, and any questions should be solved only within the context of viewing particular photographs and particular handmade pictures.[132] Snyder argued against the 'whimsical' theories that favour elements such as 'the visual facts of a moment' or the 'reliable index', by supporting his arguments with technical details on specific photographic imagery – images shot using a fast shutter speed and those shot using a slow shutter speed – emanating from the photographic processes that, for him, theorists tend to ignore. Snyder questioned what relationship these photographs have to the 'visible reality'. He also gave examples of photographs taken with a small aperture, so all scenery objects are in focus; he argued that the observer of the real scene would not be able to see all objects with equal definition/clarity as human vision performs a selective focus. I would like to highlight here that Snyder's argument against a puristic adherence to the indice – namely, of an unmediated rendition of reality – is increasingly justified as we move on to contemporary photographic practice, such as, for example, in Andreas Gursky's constructed

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[132] Snyder argued that there is no general, theoretical way of answering the question 'In what way is a painting of someone different from a photographic picture of him?' and that the only useful answers would follow a careful examination of both pictures. In order to illustrate his anti-essentialist view, he gave a pragmatic description of what a photograph is: "A photograph shows us what we would have seen at a certain moment in time, from a certain point if we kept our head immobile and closed one eye and if we saw things with the equivalent of a 150mm or 24mm lens and if we saw things in Agfacolor or in Tri-X developed in D76 and printed in Kobabromide 3 paper. By the time all the conditions are added up the original position has been reversed: instead of saying that the camera shows us what our eyes would see, we are now positing the rather unilluminating proposition that, if our vision worked like photography, then we would see things the way a camera does" (Joel Snyder & Neil Walsh Allen, 'Photography, Vision and Representation', in *Critical Inquiry,* 1975*,* Vol 2, pp.151-152). Professor Joel Snyder, member of the Arts faculty at the University of Chicago, has been a photographer too. It seems that amongst the theorists mentioned in this thesis, the preference for the consciential aspect is stronger when the theorist has been a practitioner too.

imagery, where the viewer encounters, on the surface of a photograph, things that never coexisted spatiotemporally and do not correspond to a unified referent.

Snyder objected to automatism, suggesting that it equivocates about the meaning of 'reality'. He highlighted automatism's inability to tell us what the standards of likeness are: "Blurs, fuzz, gross over – and under – exposure and the various other infelicities of the photographic process (that are also, when used intelligently, its felicities) end up, on the theory, being accorded equal ontological status with human faces, racing horses and rhododendron shrubs."[133] Snyder acknowledged the resemblance in construction between camera-lens-film and eye-iris-retina; however, he thought that any attempt to explain photographs in terms of the way we see will end up in a net gain for confusion and a net loss for clarity, as the photographic process and the various visual processes are simply incommensurate. Snyder, apart from rejecting the 'visual' model upheld by Bazin – and Scruton too– also objected to the 'automatism' model, supported by Cavell, according to which the notion of object-relatedness and the necessity of objective reference are central.[134] Snyder provided an example of a photograph that, due to the camera's movement at the moment of shooting and out-of-programme development process, is blurred and grey; it corresponds to no particular object. What we tend to read in it is based on the context/knowledge of the photograph's production, as well as our speculation on the scene, not on what is shown on the photograph.[135]

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[133] My belief is that this problem could have been overcome had Snyder adopted Van Lier's distinction/definition between real and reality. Joel Snyder, 'Photography and Ontology', p.32.

[134] As Snyder noted: "A pure photograph, i.e. one made solely by optical and chemical means, fails to achieve the sort of object-relatedness demanded by automatism." Joel Snyder, 'Photography and Ontology', p.29.

[135] Snyder illustrated his view with the following example: "I set out to take a portrait of a young, squirming child and find that I must use a slow shutter speed because of the low lighting conditions. Let us say that the child moves during the long exposure and that the resultant print shows a very blurry creature seated in a perfectly delineated chair [...] What reality does this blur have? [...] What reality does a blurred figure in a picture have? [...] How can we explain the presence of the blur in the picture? [...] An amorphous grey blur sat for its portrait? And it is at this point that the relaxation of the requirement that a photograph of an object have an objective referent in reality that is like the object in the picture comes back to haunt the automatist. Because this kind of blur can be produced in many different ways in photographs [...] It is always some kind of electromagnetic radiation and never objects that are causally efficacious in the production of photographs. If we were to follow out this line of reasoning, it would soon become clear that an automatist must identify *reality* with electromagnetic radiation. (of the visible and invisible variety) and I suspect that very few of us would have much patience with the identification [...] Now the claim is that photographs are 'about' or 'of' electromagnetic radiation [...] " Joel Snyder, 'Photography and Ontology' in Joseph Margolis (ed.) *The Worlds of Art and the World*, 1984, pp.29-31.

3.1.1.7 Indexical icon

Amongst the theorists who found it rather problematic to attribute the meaning of a photograph to a sign, implying an end in itself, there can be traced texts by some French critics in the mid-1980s, such as that by Jean Marie Floch, who attempted to account for the particularities of a given photograph, obviously influenced by the Barthesian 'punctum'; Jean Delord, who claimed that a photograph might be an index, although this is not enough for its understanding; and Jean Marie Shaeffer, who suggested a bridge between the presential and consciential aspects, considering the photograph as an 'indexical icon'.[136] Floch admitted that the photograph can be, at least technically, an imprint; however, this does not offer any importance in the actual perception of the photograph. He somewhat rejected the doctrine of signs in favour of another study, that of 'significant forms', namely, the systems of relations, the forms of the imprint, that render a photograph, like other types of images or texts, an object of a possible sense and, once we recognise them, we realise that we should not speak of photography in general. Floch's position oscillates between the creator's ability to input his mental schemas and the recognition of the special detail, spatial or temporal, that shapes the meaning. What his view implies, through leaving open the issue of who creates these forms and how they are rendered significantly, is exactly the dynamic between the presential and the consciential mode. It is what drives Shaeffer into a rather complicated intellectual space, resulting in him arguing that photographs can be indexical icons, or, in other cases, iconical indexes. For him, photographs cannot be explained by conventionality as there are both iconic and indexical elements in photography; the photograph must be understood as a perceptual unit, and we can only apprehend the photograph as such when starting out from the assumption that they are photographs in the classical term and that notions of time and space are essential in photography.

3.1.1.8 Depictive trace

Adopting Gregory Currie's usage of the term 'trace' as referring to the dependence typical of photographs, Mikael Pettersson found the term to be apt, agreeing that photographs are literally traces of what photographs are of, and he added that they depict what they are of.[137] That is why

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[136] See Jean Delord, *Le temps de photographier*, 1986. Dr Delord is a researcher in Philosophy and Arts. Also see Jean Marie Floch, *Les formes de l´empreinte*, 1986. Floch has been a researcher in semio-linguistics. Finally, see Jean Marie Schaeffer, *L' image precaire: Du Dispositif photographique*, 1987. Shaeffer is a researcher into art and his book presented critical observations on the writings of earlier writers who applied semiotics in photography, such as Barthes, Eco, Lindekens, Van Lier and Dubois. His study, which is remarkably thorough, presented a system of analytical taxonomy of photographic imagery types using Pierceian semiotics and is quite difficult to understand.

[137] Gregory Currie considered photographs to be source-based representations, stating in pp.274-275: "A painting is with its model. The source of a photograph leaves a direct trace upon the photograph itself, the

Pettersson considered photographs to be 'depictive traces'. Moreover, he argued that they typically allow for a greater epistemic access than do other kinds of images, due to a dense natural dependence on their subject matter. He highlighted that it is the viewer's beliefs that allow this dependence to take place, which is why Pettersson chose to refer to the experience of the photograph, rather than to the photograph only, when it comes to the medium's phenomenology.[138] The apprehension scheme of this thesis follows the same logic, referring to an act of photography rather than to the photograph in itself only, including both the production of the photograph as well as the involvement of the viewer.

3.1.1.9 Fossil

Ted Cohen supported Jonathan Friday's claim that photographs stand in some peculiar relation to the world, and specifically one similar to that held by fossils.[139] On the one hand, the photograph must be of something, implying a causal sequel from something's reflection or emission of light; on the other hand, the photograph has its specific look due to the conditions of its production.[140] Cohen

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photograph being in this respect like a footprint or shadow." (Gregory Currie, 'Pictures of King Arthur: Photography and the power of narrative', in Scott Walden (ed.) *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, 2008, pp.265-283.

[138] "The experience is, typically, a kind of seeming-to-see the object, combined with awareness that one is not really seeing the object; the experience is, in this sense, a quasi-illusionistic experience." (Mikael Pettersson, 'Depictive traces: The phenomenology of Photography', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.69, issue 2, Spring 2011, p.9). Pettersson discerned a 'proximity' aspect in photographs, a notion also noted by theorists such as Bazin, Barthes and Walton, who located it, accordingly, in the name of trace, nearness and immediacy. He maintained that pictures, by allowing us to see things in their surfaces, by establishing a connection between perception and spatial proximity, yield an experience of closeness to them. Pettersson submitted his PhD thesis, *Seeing What Is Not There: Essays on Pictures and Photographs,* in 2012 to Stockholm University, where he also currently teaches Aesthetics.

[139] Ted Cohen, Professor of Philosophy at Chicago University, has suggested that photographs could be considered as fossils: "The conviction that photographs hold a special relation to the world seems most often to amount the idea that a photograph is a fossil. Perhaps this idea is defensible, but fossils are not, in general, pictures." Ted Cohen, 'What's Special about Photography?' in Steven M. Cahn (ed.), *Philosophy for the 21st Century*, 2003, p.847. A similar idea was expressed three years later by the artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, when he stated that fossils are a kind of pre-photography. Jonathan Friday's claims will be illustrated later on, in a later section.

[140] Cohen illustrated his view by giving the following example: "To see this photograph, of my son and his wheels, as if it were merely contingently, incidentally, insignificantly connected to the fact that once he and it were there, on Dorchester Avenue, is a possible achievement, I suppose. It is however, an arch aestheticization, a diminution, I think. Another kind of diminution is achieved by those who view this as the only relevant fact, as it were trivial that the film was Kodak's MP5247, ASA 200, that the f-stop was 8 and the

noted that the fact that cameras produce likenesses, and do so automatically, is neither a guarantee of, nor a barrier to, the artistic possibilities of photography. For him, both the intimate relationship of photographs with reality and the mechanical character of the camera can bring an interest in photography.

3.1.1.10 Icon/index under criticism

The idea of the photograph as index and/or icon was extensively discussed in a gathering of photography theorists, in the form of an art seminar, of which the content resulted in the book *Photography Theory*, bringing together a group of essays that reflect contemporary thinking about the medium. Throughout this seminar, many critical positions were expressed, such as that of the notion of indexicality being introduced as a way to legitimate photography or that aesthetic values from other media were appropriated due to the lack of inherent ones.[141] Michael Leja highlighted once more the importance of photons as an explanation for the physical relationship of a photograph to things in the world, in complete alignment with Michel Frizot's belief that the photographs point only to light itself as they are produced by the action of photons on a prepared sensitive surface.[142] On the same group of indicial exponents, Abigail Solomon-Godeau insisted that "whether characterised as trace, inscription, analogon, message without a code, imprint, transfer, stencil, impression, motivated sign, and so forth, the resulting image is thought to have a relation to

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shutter speed was 1/250 of a second, and the rest of those things. Drop those things out and you are practicing *voodoo*. If those things weren't as they were, you wouldn't see him in the photograph as you do." Ted Cohen, 'What's Special about Photography?' p.849.

[141] These views were introduced by the organiser of the art seminar and editor of the book James Elkins (*Photography Theory*, 2007).

[142] Michael Leja, 'Index Redux', in *Photography Theory*. Leja teaches History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania. Michel Frizot, 'Who's afraid of photons?' in *Photography Theory*, p.276. Frizot is a senior researcher in the CRAL at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. He defines the photographic operation as a particular precise operation in physics. There are three characteristics: accumulation (of photons, through the camera and specifically through projective homology, which preserves the relative proportion of things, giving resemblance), quantification (of photons over a length of time) and the fixing of this quantification in a stable state. For Frizot, "the photographic image is the result of the interaction between this specific, highly regulated physical process and the desires, intentions and wishes, as well as the mistakes or the gaps in knowledge, of a human being who learns how to play with all the characteristics of the apparatus" p.278.

the real that is a function of its means of production. It is precisely this assumption that has underwritten all the juridical, evidentiary, scientific, and veristic uses of the medium."[143]

Martin Lefebvre, reminding us that the basic idea behind the index, that is, that a sign may stand for its object by virtue of an existential connection with it and has been wrested out from the context of Peirce's philosophy, acknowledged that the index is not in any way a panacea to the many problems raised by the photographic image. Lefebvre believed that restricting photographs to their indexical status is an unproductive method of gaining knowledge, as the index in itself says too little about the photograph. As he aptly explained, "It is absurd to pretend that a photograph is more indexical than a painting or a CGI, since it is impossible to quantify the number of ways in which something may serve as sign. For instance, among the different things to which a photograph is existentially connected, we find not only the object that once stood before the lens, but also the photographer, the lens that was used, the choice of film stock, an aesthetic taste or aesthetic movement, a defective camera mechanism, as well as everything else to which any given photograph may be associated existentially either permanently or merely in passing fashion. If this is the case, then we must contend that a single photograph can serve to indexically represent a great number of things, many of which are neither photographic or artistic in nature, nor even connected with whatever object stood before the lens at the time the image was struck."[144] Lefebvre's claim justifies the apprehension scheme suggested in this thesis and is in complete accordance with Philippe Dubois' view, which claims that the referent of a photograph is a sum of the parameters involved rather than the object depicted on it, upon which I lay the support for claiming the appropriateness of the OSAPV model, defending an 'act of photography'.

Lefebvre highlighted that it is important to avoid searching for an essence of the medium in its indexical character. Aligning his view with Pierce's pragmatic approach, according to which things should be defined through their use rather than through a metaphysical quest for essence, Lefebvre suggested considering indexicality as a foundation of one of the many possible ways of using photographs. Margaret Iversen agreed with him, stating that indexicality is a necessary but insufficient condition.[145] There have also been some theorists who have argued for the consciential

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[143] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Ontology, Essences, and Photography's Aesthetics: wringing the goose's neck one more time' in *Photography Theory*, p.260.

[144] Martin Lefebvre, 'The art of pointing: On Peirce, Indexicality and Photographic Images' in *Photography Theory*, pp.228-229. Martin Lefebvre is University Research Chair in Film Studies at Concordia University.

[145] Margaret Iversen, extract from the discussion 'Art Seminar', published in *Photography Theory*, p.156. Professor Iversen researches and teaches Photography and Contemporary Art at the University of Essex.

aspect, having found indexicality to range from being inaccurate to pointless. Snyder gave the example of producing a white print in two ways, trying to show that there are plenty of candidates for the thing/cause of which the index is that white print: "What might be an index of disturbances caused by interactions of light in the crystals of silver bromide held in suspension in the film emulsion?"[146] Snyder, in his essay, considered the index to be one more attempt, after those of modernist photography, to stipulate a photographic essence: "I have never believed that the rise or fall of the index could possibly affect anything very interesting or useful. The index is beside the point and pointless."[147] Snyder also believed that insisting on limiting a photograph's reading, in indexical or any other causal relationship ways, does not allow space for enjoying another characteristic of it, which is its plasticity.

Tom Cunning, too, tackled the problem of the 'truth claim' of traditional photography, known as indexicality. Cunning had serious objections to whether the indexical explanation fully accounts for the fascination with the photographic image. He investigated both the nature of the truth claim as well as the adequacy of Peirce's notion of indexicality to account for it. Firstly, he untangled the idea of visual accuracy from simple indexicality. Secondly, he considered the 'truth claim' of photography that relies on both indexicality and visual accuracy, suggesting that it includes more (and perhaps less) than either of them.[148]

On the same wavelength of doubt, Andy Stafford wondered whether an account considering the indexical aspect of photographs has anything at all to offer in the 21st century, basing his viewpoint

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[146] Joel Snyder, 'Pointless' in *Photography Theory*, p.373.

[147] Joel Snyder, 'Pointless', p.385.

[148] Professor of Art History at Chicago University, Tom Gunning, elaborated his thoughts as follows: "Our evaluation of a photograph as accurate (i.e. visually reflecting its subject) depends not simply on its indexical basis (the chemical process), but on our recognition of it as looking like its subject. A host of psychological and perceptual processes intervene here which cannot be reduced to the indexical process. The recognition of a photograph by a viewer as an image of its subject would not simply result from indexicality. Indeed, one could produce an indexical image of something or someone that remained unrecognizable."(p.3). Moreover, "The semiotic category of the index assimilates photography to the realm of the sign, and although a photograph like most anything (everything?) can be used as a sign, I think this approach prematurely cuts off the claims made by theorists like Barthes, Bazin (and I think Deleuze) that the photograph exceeds the functions of a sign and that this indeed is part of the fascination it offers. The description of a photograph as putting us into the presence of something (and for Barthes especially the presenting of a past time) needs to be explored outside the concept of the index"(p.10). Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or Faking Photographs' in Karen Beckman & Jean Ma (eds) *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, 2008, retrieved from www.nordicom.gu.se/common/publ_pdf/157_039-050.pdf, accessed on 17/03/2012.

on Andre Rouille's claims.[149] Rouille, questioning the indexical fundamentalism attributed to photography theory, found the search for the ontology of a photographic image a pointless and fruitless task. He argued that the indexical theory of photography, apart from helping us distinguish the semiotics of photography from the semiotics of non-automated images, and apart from showing that the relationship between depicted objects and their representation is as much one of contiguity as of resemblance, it has created an insistence on the passive nature of photography. The latter, in turn, Rouille claimed, has produced much abstract and uninterested theorisation on medium specificity, resulting in poor ontology. He instead emphasized the notion of human control over the medium. Rouille's account prioritises photography as expression over photography as document.

At the end of this slightly long review of the most frequently cited synecdoches of the photograph, I would like to add that there are some other ones too, such as 'spatially agnostic informants', 'picture pointers' and 'gauges' which will be discussed later on in the context of the theories attached to them.

3.1.2 Window, transparency, seeing-in, seeing-as

The idea that the photograph provides a window to the world is often articulated, even though sometimes improperly.

Patrick Maynard was among the first theorists to support the view that we literally see things through photographs - though indirectly, by seeing visual manifestations of these things.[150] For him, photographs are artificial devices through which we actually see things. Maynard distinguished between two functions for photographs: photographic detection, determined by what a photograph is of (manifestation by visual effect), that is, a qua photochemical trace, and depiction, determined by what it pictures (visual description). He suggested that in photographs, what makes description – irrespective of the level of distortion - seem authoritative is that a viewer gets 'description by manifestation'. Maynard offered an improved account of Bazin's view, namely, from 'mechanism, therefore non-interpretation, therefore authenticity' to 'mechanism, thereby manifestation, thereby

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[149] See Andy Stafford, 'Bazin and Photography in the 21st century: Poverty of Ontology?' in *Paragraph,* Vol.36, issue 1, March 2013, pp.50-67; Andre Rouille, *La photographie. Entre document et art contemporain*, 2005.

[150] Patrick Maynard, 'The secular Icon: Photography and the Functions of Images' in *Journal of aesthetics and art criticism*, 1983, vol.42, pp.155-170. It has been argued (by Diarmuid Costello & Dawn Philips, Automatism causality and realism: foundational problems in the Philosophy of Photography' in *Philosophy Compass*, Vol.4, issue 1, 2009, pp.1-21) that Maynard is the first to directly address photographs' epistemological and their aesthetic aspect. Maynard is a Professor Emeritus in the University of West Ontario and his articles have been collected in the book *The engine of Visualisati*on: *Thinking about Photography,* 1997.

authenticity', commenting that the act of interpretation is an inherent structural element of depiction.

Kendall Walton, who had mainly influenced Maynard on building his 'manifestation thesis', argued that the essence of photographic realism, which differs from realism in painting, is the transparency of photography, an idea that later became established as the 'transparency thesis'.[151] According to the transparency thesis, the causal chain from object to photograph allows us literally to see through photographs to their objects and that is why they hold a special epistemic value: "With the assistance of the camera, we can see not only around corners and what is distant or small; we can also see into the past. We see long distanced ancestors when we look at dusty snapshots of them."[152] He acknowledged significant similarities between the way that photographs offer visual experiences and the way that ordinary vision does it.

It should be noted here that Van Lier's framework justifies this claim, offering a different terminology for each of the aforementioned cases; the apprehension scheme illustrates this by splitting in two the kind of information which reaches the eyes of the viewer of a scene; on the one hand, are the photons – indices - emanating from the scene itself, and on the other hand, the contingent indexes emanating from the camera/operator involvement.

In Walton's 'transparency thesis', photographs are counterfactually dependent on the scenes they represent, and this dependence is not mediated by the intentional states of any intermediary agents. The apprehension scheme does not follow this claim except partially. The apprehension scheme accepts the dependence on the scenery, but involves the mediation of agents, that is, those of the camera (A) and operator (O). Walton himself reconstructed his early thesis some years later, aligning it with the OASPV model, after there had been strong criticism of his 'transparency thesis'. In the reconstruction, he implied that theorists had misconstrued his early view, and he clarified that photographs induce imaging seeing and are representations, that is, depictions or pictures, in addition to being transparent.[153] Criticism of Walton has suggested that there are relevant

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[151] The idea that photography is an aid to vision had influenced Maynard, as he was already aware of Walton's transparency theory before its first publication. Maynard differentiated himself mainly in terms of not involving the issue of interpretation.

[152] Kendall Walton, 'Transparent pictures: On the nature of Photographic Realism' in *Critical Inquiry*, 1984, vol. 11, p.251. Walton is currently a Professor of Art and Design at Michigan University. For his transparency thesis, see the aforementioned publication, pp.246-277.

[153] Kendall Walton, 'On pictures and photographs: objections answered' in Richard Allen & Murray Smith (eds) *Film theory and philosophy*, 1997, p.68. Furthermore, on p.60, he clarified that a non-specific account of seeing has been settled on; the term 'seeing' should be used broadly/loosely.

differences between ordinary senses of seeing and what Walton thinks of as seeing through photographs.[154] Those theorists considered photographs to be representational, that is, that we do not literally see through them, as Walton initially suggested. In his aforementioned response though, Walton clarified that a non-specific account of seeing had been settled on and that the term 'seeing' should be used broadly/loosely.

Some critical theorists of the field have dealt since the 1990s with the debate of 'whether photographs present or represent and what'. Gregory Currie examined the plausibility of the so-called 'presentation thesis', according to which photographs do not merely represent the things they are of, but rather present those things to us.[155] He suggested that photographs are 'natural representations', that is, that there is a natural dependence of photographs on the scenes that they depict; it is natural because the process by which they function shows natural dependence, namely, they display counterfactual dependence of a kind that need not be mediated by human intention, and a representation because it is used as such by us. In contrast to Walton, who had argued that photographs allow us to see through them to the things they are of, Currie argued instead that photographs offer us perceptual access only to representations of the things that photographs are of. He acknowledged, though, that they are representations of a special kind because of the distinctive causal processes involved, and that this distinctiveness is part of what explains our different – in relation to other imagery - response to them.

Most advocates of the thesis of photographic transparency admit that it involves something similar to what Richard Wollheim called the 'twofoldness' of our experience: we are simultaneously aware of both the depicted object and the depiction itself.[156] Currie adopted this view only partially, stating

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[154] Such criticism has been expressed by theorists such as Martin in 1986, Warburton in 1988, Currie in 1991, Caroll in 1996, Cohen & Meskin in 2004, Taylor in 2011, Nanay in 2010.

[155] Gregory Currie, 'Photography, painting and perception' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol.49, 1991, pp.23-29. Professor Gregory Currie is Director of Research at the University of Nottingham. In his latest writings, he has also argued that photographs have a special epistemic value because of them being traces of photographed objects. See also Gregory Currie, 'Visible Traces: Documentary and the Contents of Photographs' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, No.*57, 1999, pp. 285–297; Gregory Currie, *Image and mind*, 1995.

[156] Richard Wollheim, 'Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation' in *Art and its object*, 2nd edition, 1980, pp. 205-226. Walton's account of twofoldness slightly differs from Wollheim's. There are many theorists –such as M. Pettersson- in the field that have found this notion problematic; for more on this notion, see Bence Nanay 'Is Twofoldness Necessary for Representational Seeing?' in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 45, 2005, pp.263-272; Bence Nanay, 'Taking Twofoldness Seriously: Walton on Imagination and Depiction' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 62, 2004, pp.285-289.

that the act of 'seeing-in' requires some awareness of the surface; otherwise, the depicted object would be conceived of as being present. However, he argued that twofoldness is not a necessary condition for seeing something in a picture and is not always a requirement for aesthetically sensitive picture viewing.[157]

As regards disqualifying the idea of photographs being transparent, a debate around what 'seeing-in' stands for in the case of photographs was raised after Walton published his theory. Currie sparked off the objections, and then a weaker condition for seeing was proposed by Jonathan Cohen and Aaron Meskin, while a much weaker one was provided by Bruce Nanay. I will briefly illustrate these claims, along with some other relevant ones, in order to explain why the apprehension scheme suggested in this thesis considers both presentation and representation as the potential functions of the photograph.

In particular, Currie, argued that a necessary condition for seeing the object is the ability to localize the perceived object in one's egocentric space (a viewpoint referred to in the bibliography as the 'ESI' -egocentric spatial information- condition). He suggested that photographs can serve as an inference of egocentric information: If one knows where and when the photograph was taken and where s/he is now, s/he may infer that the object depicted stands in a certain spatiotemporal relation to his/her current time slice. Among the exponents of this claim is Noel Carroll, who suggested that there is an important difference between what one sees when looking at a photograph and what one sees when looking through a camera; in the latter case, there is a continuity between the space of what one sees and the space one inhabits, while in the former case, this is not true, as these two spaces are actually experienced as 'detached displays'.[158]

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[157] Currie's view coincides with Professor Rob Hopkins' belief that "there is no pure content [...] where there is representation, there will be both content and a medium through which it is represented" ('The real challenge to Photography', paper presented at the Philosophy of Photography workshop in Ovronnaz, 27/06/2013. Work in progress, draft on 30/06/2013, p.15.)

[158] See Gregory Currie, Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science, 1995; Gregory Currie, 'Preserving the traces: An answer to Noël Carroll' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 58, issue 3, 2000, pp.306-308. Noel Carroll, professor in the Humanities in Temple University, has dealt with medium specificity issues since the 80s, adopting an anti-essentialist stance according to which art forms generally have more than one medium; see Noel Carroll, 'Medium specificity arguments and self consciously invented arts: Video, film and photography' in *Millenium Film journal*, Vol.14-15, 1984-85, pp.127-153; Noël Carroll, 'Defining the moving image' in *Theorizing the Moving Image*, 1996, pp.49-74; Noël Carroll, 'Towards an Ontology of the Moving Image' in A. Cynthia, Freeland & Thomas E. Wartenberg (eds.) *Philosophy and Film*, 1995; Noël Carroll, 'Photographic traces and documentary films: Comments for Gregory Currie' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 58, issue 3, 2000, pp.303-306.

A different way of using egocentric localization for opposing the transparency thesis and for distinguishing between genuine and non genuine cases of prosthetic seeing came from Meskin and Cohen. They argued that the necessary condition Currie and Carroll set for seeing was too strong, because the latter considered egocentric localization as an attitude based on beliefs and knowledge. Meskin and Cohen proposed instead 'egocentric spatial beliefs' as a necessary condition for seeing.[159] This is a weaker necessary condition, according to which our visual experiences are the result of a process which carries egocentric spatial information about the perceived object. For Cohen and Meskin, photographs do not carry egocentric spatial information: they are 'spatially agnostic informants', that is, non-egocentric ones, unlike mirrors, telescopes and the like; hence, photographs are not transparent, and what one literally sees is photographed objects, not the objects themselves.

Another claim that Cohen and Meskin articulated is that photographs are epistemically special due to the nature of the causal relation that photographs bear to their subjects, in particular, because (1) token photographs are spatially agnostic sources of information, and (2) viewers hold background beliefs, regarding the medium and the genres of photographs, that influence their attitudes towards the epistemic status of viewed token photographs.

For Dan Cavedon Taylor, this claim appeared to be internally unstable, because photographs' special epistemic value cannot be based on some viewer-independent feature they possess, as (1) suggests, and simultaneously be based on some viewer-dependent feature on the other, as is implied by (2).[160] From the OASPV model's perspective, Cohen and Meskin's logic displays ineptitude, as despite the fact that they take into consideration the (V) factor, that is, the viewers' beliefs and knowledge, they omit the (O) factor, that is, the operator's contribution to shaping the photograph, attributing the epistemic value of photographs only to the 'non-egocentric manner by which a photograph is

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[159] Cohen & Meskin, 'On the epistemic value of photographs" in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.62, 2004, pp.197-210; see also Meskin & Cohen 'Photographs as Evidence' in Scott Walden (ed.) *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, 2008, pp. 70-90. Dr Meskin, director of the Centre of Aesthetics, lectures at Leeds University. Dr J. Cohen is a professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Science at the University of California.

[160] Dan Cavedon Taylor, 'The Epistemic Value of Photographs and Paintings' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.67, issue2, Spring 2009, pp.230-235. Dr Taylor is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. Cohen & Meskin, however, replied to Taylor, clarifying that they did contend that the relevant form of epistemic value possessed by photographs arises from a combination of the viewer dependent and viewer independent. For more, see Meskin & Cohen, 'Photography and its Epistemic values' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.67, issue 2, Spring 2009, pp.235-237.

achieved', that is, to the (A) factor exclusively. Such a claim clearly implies primacy of automatism, ignoring the potential contribution of agency.

Bruce Navay also found Meskin and Cohen's account problematic, while acknowledging that it is more viable than the view offered by Carroll or Currie. Navay, examining the 'experience' of photographs rather than their ontology or epistemology, suggested that in order to consider whether photographs are or are not transparent, one should define the meaning of the word 'seeing'. Navay considered photographs to be pictures and consequently to follow a general account of depiction – or in other words, the experience one is supposed to undergo when looking at them: that of 'seeing-in'. It is important here to remember that this term refers to seeing the depicted object in the picture in a certain way. In the case of pictures that are photographs, the proponents of photographs' transparency define this certain way as a literal kind of seeing, while Navay argued against this claim. He introduced a necessary condition of seeing – that there is at least one way for the viewer to move such that if the viewer were to move this way, her/his view of the perceived object would change continuously as s/he moves – which is not met in the case of photographs as he argued, and thus they are not transparent.[161]

There are theorists though who, in turn, criticised Walton's polemics. For example, Ines De Asis refuted Meskin and Cohen's claims regarding the proposed disqualification of photographs to act as a genuine prosthetic vision due to them not meeting the egocentric spatial information - the necessary condition for seeing proposed by Currie.[162] In addition, Dominic Lopes, who mainly agreed with Walton that we literally see through photographs, distanced himself from this idea by Walton by arguing that transparency is the key for explaining the pictorial experience of all kinds of pictures.

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[161] Bence Navay, professor of Philosophy at the University of Antwerp, claimed that what makes genuine visual perception special, different from any hallucination, is that if one moves, in a certain specific way, one's view of the perceived object will change continuously. For Navay, perception is an active process. In order to see, one has to be able to be in a perceptual state which is characterised by the ability to have appropriate sensorimotor contingencies; namely, the way one moves around the perceived object must influence the way the perceived object appears to one. See Bruce Navay, 'Transparency and sensorimotor contingencies. Do we see through photographs?' in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.91, issue 4, Dec. 2010, pp.463-480. Also see Dan Cavedon Taylor, 'Perceptual content and sensorimotor expectations' in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.61, 2011, pp.383-391.

[162] Ines De Asis viewed Cohen and Meskin's arguments as inefficient in a principled disqualification of photographs. See Ines De Asis, 'The return of the photographs as genuine prostheses' in *Postgraduate journal of aesthetics*, Vol.5, No.1, April 2008.

In particular, he suggested that seeing things in photographs might differ from seeing things face-to-face, though it is one way of seeing things, noting that this difference shapes the account of the aesthetic interests photographs offer.[163]

The ongoing query in defining what is special in photographs is also met in the 'factive pictorial experience theory' proposed by Robert Hopkins. According to this theory, photographs have both a special epistemic and a special affective value because they elicit pictorial experiences which are factive (the presupposition that a sentence occurring in that context is true); this is due to photographs being dependent on prior states of the world itself, rather than on anyone's thoughts about those states.

Hopkins contended that pictorial experience, or seeing-in, is the experience which helps us to grasp what a picture depicts; all representational pictures sustain this experience. He considered factivity as a feature of some mental states which necessarily reflect facts; factive states capture how things are or were. Extensively defending the ability of photographs to support a factive pictorial experience, he suggested that the photographic pictorial experience is factive insofar as it is "of necessity, true to how things were when the photograph was taken"; thus, if S sees in $P*$ that p, then p. For Hopkins, this means that the viewer of a photograph gets the experience of the fact that corresponds to the visual appearances shown in the photograph without seeing the objects themselves.[164]

Hopkins agreed with Walton in that for a viewer to undergo a pictorial experience in front of a photograph is to see a photograph, namely, if S sees in $P*$, S sees $P*$. Hopkins disagreed with Walton in that to undergo a pictorial experience in front of a photograph is to see the object pictorially

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[163] Dominic McIver Lopes, 'The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency', *Mind*, Vol.112, 2003, pp.335-48.

[164] Hopkins explained these mental states by giving the following example: "Perceptual states such as hearing and seeing are factive; if I perceive that the bus is full, then the bus is full. I can make a mistake of course. It might look to me as if the bus is full when in fact it is half empty (perhaps all the passengers are sitting on the side nearest me). But that just shows that I didn't really perceive that the bus is full—what I took to be a perception of that wasn't really one." (Robert Hopkins, 'Factive Pictorial Experience: What's Really Special about Photographs?' in *Nous*, Vol.46, issue 4, 2012, p.710). Hopkins argued that some pictorial experiences too, are factive. Taylor, discussing Hopkins' theory, agreed with him and added that the photographic pictorial experience is factive insofar as it 'accurately reflects the facts' and that it accurately reflects the facts because it is dependent on those facts themselves rather than on the photographer's beliefs about those facts. Moreover, Taylor when referring to a photograph of Churchill appearing as fat, stated that the most important element of Hopkins' theory is that "one cannot see in the photograph that Churchill is fat, unless Churchill is indeed fat and (presumably) one possesses the concept 'Churchill' and 'Fat'." (Dan Cavedon Taylor, *Representations of the Real: an inquiry into the epistemology of the photographic image,* p.170.)

experienced, namely, if *S* sees *o* in *P**, *S* sees *o.* So, while Walton placed seeing at the heart of his account and considered seeing-in to be directed at objects, Hopkins placed at the heart of his account a factive form of pictorial experience and considered seeing-in to be directed at putative facts instead. In his theory, Hopkins considered that the facts to which we refer when we talk about photographs are putative, that we see ways things might be. He highlighted that one should see in photographs only putative facts, which are nonetheless consistent with perfect general knowledge of how the world actually is.

Finally, seen from a slightly more presential viewpoint, Dan Cavedon Taylor's research suggested that facts on a photograph are seen displacedly, that is, through gauges. Taylor argued that photographs are sources of perceptual knowledge, in contrast to handmade pictures, which are sources of testimonial knowledge. Photographs, for Taylor, "furnish non-inferential beliefs which do not bear the hallmark of testimonially-based belief [...] Photographs are of a kind with gauges insofar as seeing one's fuel-gauge is a way to see that the fuel-tank in one's car is empty, say, rather than a way of seeing the fuel-tank itself."[165] Taylor offered a 'displacement theory, in opposition to Walton's transparency theory, as he believed that seeing an object in a photograph amounts to having a displaced perception of that object. Taylor explained how is it possible for photographs to facilitate displaced perception by considering photographs as object-tracking pictures. For him, displaced perception requires the existence of a counterfactual-supporting connection between the object primarily seen and the 'target' object. The object-tracking account of photographs, which Taylor developed and defended in his thesis, supplies that connection. His claim though that the content of a photograph is independent of its creator's actions, embodied in his writing as "photographs may be triggered by photographers, but structured by the objects photographed", rather diminishes the roles of the factors (O) and (A) of the OASPV model, rendering his account rather syllogistically limited.[166] Taylor, in order to construct his account around the notion of the gauge, was clearly influenced by Maynard's manifestation thesis, which suggested that photographs are put in indirect causal contact with the subject depicted in them; Maynard's thesis too, though, lacks any consideration of the agency aspect in creating a photograph.

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[165] Dan Cavedon Taylor, *Representations of the Real: an inquiry into the epistemology of the photographic image,* PhD thesis, 2011, Birkbeck, University of London. The excerpt is taken from the abstract of the thesis. It should be noted that Taylor, when introducing the notion of the gauges as a displaced seeing, was already aware of Robert Hopkin's 'factive pictorial experience theory' that will be presented later on in this thesis.

[166] Dan Cavedon Taylor, *Representations of the Real: an inquiry into the epistemology of the photographic image,* p.51.

3.1.3. (Re) Presentation

One of the most debatable issues in the field has been that of the relation between photography and (re)presentation. More specifically, the problem is whether photography presents or represents, with Laruelle, for example, claiming it represents invariants drawn from the world but presents or manifests identity; what it represents, such as its source, its looks, etc; and how it represents it, for example, by use or by origin (Currie), by casting (Alward), by photographic means (Linares), by reproducing appearance (Scrutton), by showing the looks (Pettersson), by reproducing the photographer's gesture (Laruelle) and so on. In the next section, these views, along with depiction theories, will be discussed.

The apprehension scheme accepts both claims, namely, that a photograph can present and that it can also represent; depending on its mode of production and its usage, the photograph can do both.[167] The OASPV model does not restrict the space for considering photographs but takes into consideration all the representational viewpoints to be examined in this section.

Pettersson, discussing a number of ontological aspects of the medium, wondered how to understand the relation '*x* is a photograph of *y*', and, related to this, what the possible contents of photographs are. 'Looks' seems to furnish an answer to the question of the appropriate causal relation for him: "Photographs display the looks of things, and in doing so they reveal how things are."[168] Pettersson noted the argument that what an image is a *photograph of*, and what it is a *pictorial representation of*, or depicts, are not always the same thing. Pettersson suggested that in order for an image to be a photograph of something – to be appropriately related to that something – the dependence between image and scene should hold with respect to both the factual content, that is, how things are, and the perspectival content, that is, how things look from the vantage point of the perceiver. This is the logic by which he claims that photography is a mechanism that captures the appearances – looks - of things.

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[167] Several theorists have agreed on that. Dawn Wilson, reviewing analytic philosophers' writings on this subject justified this claim by saying, "The issues of depiction and perception are not exclusive – a photograph might be both transparent and able to support pictorial representation. Furthermore, a photograph may also function as a sign." (Dawn Wilson, 'Exposure time: Photographs and temporal representation', presented at *The Philosophy of Photography* workshop in Ovronnaz, 27.06.2013; work in progress, extract from a draft, 31.7.2013)

[168] Mikael Pettersson, 'Shot in the dark: Notes on Photography, Causality, Content' in *The Philosophical Quarterly* , Vol. 62, No. 249, October 2012, p.15)

Roger Scruton, in his highly influential essay in the early 80s, suggested that photographs are not representations because they just record the appearance of the objects which were in front of the camera during the shot. Scruton favoured Barthes' view and explained in a more descriptive way what Barthes had introduced, using a rather novelistic, alluring style of writing. Scruton argued that the word 'representation' can be applied to photography; however, he said, "[ideal] photography is not a representational art, unless our interest is not centred on the subject depicted but on the aesthetic interest of the photograph itself." He highlighted the difference between being interested in a thing for its own sake and being interested in it as a representation of something else. When the photographer strives towards representational art, he inevitably seems to move away from the ideal of photography: "The history of the art of photography is the history of successive attempts to break the causal chain by which the photographer is imprisoned, to impose a human intention between subject and appearance."[169]

Scruton distinguished between an 'ideal' form of photography – one that represents the essential differences between photography and other pictorial media – from the 'actual' form of photography – one that is enriched by other pictorial media methods and aims. Scruton suggested that ideal photography stands in a causal relationship with its subject and 'represents' it by reproducing its appearance. In an ideal photograph, the photographer's intention does not need to enter as a serious factor in determining how the picture is seen because the subject 'represented' originates the process, which results in the production of an appearance. Scruton suggested that we must be aware of the following three features if we are to appreciate the characteristic effects of an ideal photograph: that the subject of the ideal photograph must exist, that it must appear roughly as it appears in the photograph, and that its appearance in the photograph is its appearance at a particular moment of its existence. Under these circumstances, he argued, "looking at a photograph is a substitute for looking at the thing itself."[170] An ideal photograph is a photograph *of* something and the relationship here is causal, rather than intentional.

Scruton admitted, however, that sometimes photographs, and this is the case for what he called 'actual' photographs, involve representation. Even in those cases though, representation should not

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[169] Roger Scruton, 'Photography and representation' in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.7, 1981. Reprinted in *The aesthetic understanding: essays in the philosophy of Art and Culture* (London: Methuen, 1998), p.138. Roger Scruton is an English philosopher, specialised in aesthetics, who has written extensively on representational issues.

[170] Scruton, 'Photography and representation', p.130. Walton's transparency theory may partially owe its account to Scruton's viewpoint.

be attributed to the photograph itself.[171] The process of fictional representation occurs for Scruton not in the photograph, but in all the peripheral elements involved: "The representational act, the act which embodies the representational thought, is completed before the photograph is ever taken."[172] By this, Scruton means that the photographer has designed the image before releasing the shutter, and the viewer has developed his understanding/recognition criteria before looking at a photograph. This is why the OASPV model takes into consideration four factors apart from that of the (P).

Peter Alward supported Scrutton's claim that photographs that photographs do record the appearance of photographed scenes. However, he argued that they also represent 'by-casting', that is, by selecting from among a collection of pre-existing objects.[173] Scruton stated that since ideal photographs offer an interpretation of reality, merely a presentation of it, one cannot have an aesthetic interest in their representational natures, but rather only in their subjects and formal properties. This is an argument which Alward opposed. The OASPV model contends that throughout the course of the photography act, there are many ways of impeding representational qualities; the OASPV model embraces a broader spectrum of interventions than the acts of framing and editing – what, in other words, Alward called 'casting'. These interventions, on behalf of the (O), can, in

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[171] Scruton gave an example: "When I see someone in a mirror I see *him,* not his representation. This remains so even if the mirror is a distorting mirror and even if the mirror is placed where it is intentionally. The intention might even be similar to the intention in photography....The art of mirrors, like the art of photography, sometimes involves representation... But representation will not be a property of the mirror" (p.139). Moreover, Scruton explored how an ideal image can turn into an actual one: "Let us assume, however, that the photographer could intentionally exert over his image just the kind of control that is exercised in the other representational arts. The question is how far can this control be extended? Certainly there will be an infinite number of things that lie outside his control. Dust on a sleeve, freckles on a face, wrinkles on a hand: such minutiae will always depend initially upon the prior situation of the subject. When the photographer sees the photographic plate, he may still wish to assert his control, choosing just this colour here, just that number of wrinkles or that texture of skin. He can proceed to paint things out or in, to touch up, alter or *pasticher* as he pleases. But of course he has now become a painter, precisely through taking representation seriously" (p.137). What Scruton's analysis lacks is the realisation that the photographer does not choose to 'take representation seriously'; s/he is rather forced to deal with representation, as s/he, as well as the viewer, later on, necessarily designs/encounters something that is also a picture, apart from receiving a visual trait of whatever was in front of the camera at the moment of shooting. It is, rather, in the handling of this dynamic that the whole effect of photography lies. Nevertheless, I agree with Scruton's statement that, because photography distorts, it "remains inescapably wedded to the creation of illusions, to the creation of lifelike semblances of things in the world" (p.147).

[172] Scruton, 'Photography and representation', p.131.

[173] Peter Alward, 'Transparent Representation: Photography and the Art of Casting' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.70 (The Media of Photography), issue 1, Winter 2012. Dr Peter Alward is an Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at the University of Saskatchewan.

creative cases, surpass the operational level of selecting from pre-existing forms, reaching the creational level of inventing new ones, afresh. Jonathan Friday, in his detailed account of how photography represents, gave serious consideration to this factor.

Friday explored the valuable distinctiveness of the medium, through reflecting the photographer's exploitation of the means that represent vision, resulting in an acknowledgement of the medium's twofold identity, namely, trace and picture. Friday tried to locate those distinct characteristics of the medium that are relevant to the capture and engagement of aesthetic attention. What he discovered are two factors that contribute in a significant way: the transparent representation – of the world onto the image, and the expressive visual perspective – of the photographer onto the image. Friday analysed the differences between intentional and causal modes of depiction.[174] He considered the medium of photography to have included them both in its history and highlighted the importance of not considering only one side or the other.

To the question 'In which way do photographs represent the world – iconically (by virtue of picturing it) or indexically (by virtue of pointing back to what caused them to appear as they do)? – Friday replied that photographs cannot be ordinary icons, since they always imply the existence of the thing depicted in them; they, rather, constitute a very special kind of a sign, straddling the categories of icon and index: "Photographs point *by* picturing – they are 'iconically indexical' or 'picture pointers'. As we will see, iconic indexicality is an interesting and quite distinctive mode of representation [...] I will often refer to this coincidence of the iconic and the indexical modes of signification as 'transparent' representation"[175] Friday, in order to explain the notion of transparent representation, that is, that we literally see the thing itself, suggested an account of aspect perception, a perception that implies we 'respond to what we see as if it were the thing itself'. This

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[174] Friday, wishing to give an exact definition of the photochemical process occurring in photography, aiming to distinguish this process from other mediums' similar processes, arrived at the following conclusion: "It is a photochemical process that fixes into an image the values of each point of light reflected from objects in the real world according to a determinate and uniform system of projection" (p.41). Friday's view firstly appeared as an article – Jonathan Friday, 'Photography and the representation of vision' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 2001– and later took the form of a book: Jonathan Friday, *Aesthetics and Photography*, 2002. Dr Friday is the Head of the School of Arts at Kent University.

[175] Jonathan Friday, *Aesthetics and Photography*, p.49. Apart from the term 'picture pointer', five years later, Friday came up with another term, of a synonymic quality to the former: "encoding reflected light... – a system by which light is translated into tones on paper" noting that even this will not work with a lot of photographs. See Jonathan Friday, extracts from the discussion 'Art Seminar', published in James Elkins (ed.), *Photography Theory*, 2007, pp.153-154.

notion of 'regarding-as' is somewhat representational as it provides a more satisfactory account of the transparency theory suggested by Walton.

Friday claimed that the account of the transparency of photographic representation holds the key to understanding where the medium's aesthetic significance lies. Starting with the need to distinguish between representational properties and expressive properties/qualities, Friday examined the debate regarding whether photography should be considered as an expressive art or as a representational art. For the former, photography is not aesthetically significant for its representational properties, but for the expressive qualities which render photographs unique expressive perspectives on how the objects depicted look. For the latter, photography is a representational art because it possesses expressive qualities which trigger aesthetic attention and extend it to the representational properties over which they are spread. Friday claimed that the viewers' interest in expressive qualities cannot be separated from an interest in the representational properties; in particular, viewers arrive at an aesthetic interest in the representational properties of a photograph through an interest in the expressive qualities which are attached to them. Friday considered photography as a tool to create expressive visual perspectives upon the world.

Gregory Currie argued that photographs are devices for producing representations by registering the presence of whatever –the source– is in front of the camera throughout the time that the aperture stays open. Representation is achieved by 'photographic means', as he named it. Currie suggested that photography is a form of 'representation-by-origin' because of the physicochemical process of its production, which involves a trace on a surface by exposure to light emitted or reflected from a source. Currie contended that the source is what the photograph represents and not whatever else might be grasped from the viewer. He gave the example of Julia Margaret Cameron's photograph *The May Queen,* stating that a photograph cannot represent-by-origin the May Queen; it can do so only by-use. Currie found it hard to view this photograph as a representation (by-use) of the May Queen; he rather found his attention vividly inclined to its being a representation (by-origin) of Emily Peacock, because the source (Emily Peacock) has a high degree of attention-grabbing capacity to dominate. What a viewer feels in such cases, Currie argued, is a sense of 'representational dissonance'.[176]

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[176] Gregory Currie noted in his article 'Pictures of King Arthur: Photography and the power of narrative', in Scott Walden(ed.) *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, 2008, pp.265-283, that those still photographs which are created for the purpose of illustrating a narrative create a sense of representational dissonance, while those cinematic images which are created to present a narrative generally will not: "We sense in the former but not in the latter case a failure on the maker's part to achieve the

Beyond what Currie and Caroll have suggested, namely, that a photograph can represent by origin or by use, Paloma Atencia Linares agreed that photographs can represent by 'photographic means', defining it, though, as a process which is actually closer to Currie's notion of the representation by origin. In particular, Linares, adopting Wilson Philip's model of the 'photographic event', considered photographic means as "any action or technique performed or taking place during the production of an image, including the stages of transduction and storing, that consists solely in the exploitation, manipulation, or control of the incidence of light onto, and its interaction with, a photosensitive material."[177]

The event, transduction and storing of a photograph, from an OASPV model perspective, refers to the (A) and (P) elements only of the 'photography act'. Therefore, Linares' claim, which considers the existence of a photograph to be fully grasped after these three processes are completed, refers only to Curry's 'representation-by-origin' and thus, is rather an insufficient argument for apprehending a photograph's representation. The photograph is not completed in its transcription on a surface; the (V) parameter plays a significant role, too. This is, in other words, why Currie suggested that photographs can also represent by use, apart from representing by origin.

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intended degree of salience for that which is represented by use alone" (pp.277-278). He further explained that when photographic images are associated with a narrative, "there will be unity, or disunity, or some degree of unity or disunity between the photograph and the narrative [...] Imaginative projects with a high degree of unity tend to be appealing and, when we engage in them, absorbing. Those with a low degree of unity tend to be less appealing and more difficult to take on in an absorbing way. In the case of Cameron's photographs, the degree of unity is very low, and our level of active engagement with the photographs is correspondingly low; we barely participate in the use which makes them representations of characters from the story. So the tendency to attend most to what is represented-by-origin (the source) is likely to prevail." (p.277). This claim regarding the primacy of the source is in line with David Hume's theory of belief that between the three relations –perceived resemblance, contact, causation- the latter has the strongest effect.

[177] Paloma Atencia Linares, 'Fiction, Nonfiction, and Deceptive Photographic Representation' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.70 (The Media of Photography), issue 1, Winter 2012, p.22. Philips' account of the 'photographic event' refers to the stage that the pattern of light is registered. Linares suggested that the photosensitive material has to go through further processes to (1) turn the recorded information into an image—which she called 'transduction'—and (2) fix or preserve the pattern created by the impression of light—which she called 'storing'.

3.1.3.1 Depiction (pictorial representation) theories [178]

Leung Solly, examining theories of depiction in contemporary philosophical debates, suggested that we need concepts and background knowledge to interpret what we perceive visually, as our beliefs or cognition contribute to our understanding of pictorial representation. The latter, as a distinctive kind of representation is usually presented in the philosophical tradition as 'depiction'. According to Solly, the entities that a picture depicts are its subjects. The picture's creator arranges the design properties that pictorially represent the picture's subjects. The spectator sees the surface of a picture and the subjects depicted. Theories which discuss the nature of depiction are briefly presented and examined later in this chapter.

The 'objective resemblance theory' holds that a picture pictorially represents its subject only if the picture possesses an actual resemblance to its subjects. Its origin can be traced back to Plato, according to whom mimetic art represents by imitating the appearance of its subjects. Many objections have been raised though, on the grounds that resemblance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for depiction.

To avoid the difficulties that the objective resemblance theory faces, theorists, such as Christopher Peacocke (1987), Robert Hopkins and John Hyman (2006), defended the 'experienced resemblance theory', which refers to the resemblance of the experience the viewer has while looking at the picture to the experience s/he has while looking at its subject face to face. The term describing the theory is a generic categorisation; each theorist examined different aspects of the experience that establish such resemblance. Hopkins, for instance, referred to the resemblance of outline shape between objects as they are depicted and these objects as they are perceived in reality.

In a 'semiotic theory' of depiction, introduced by Goodman, pictures have semantic properties. This theory proposes that a picture represents by virtue of conventional symbol systems, in which rules and conventions are predefined and acknowledged by the users of the systems, so they can understand what a given expression is about. Some of the challenges to this theory have been that pictorial styles do not have to be fully conventional, that perceptual experience is ignored, and that human beings possess some capacities pertaining to depiction that the semiotic theory cannot account for.

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[178] The categorisation followed in this section owes its structure to the study of Leung Chi Kei Solly, *Explaining depiction: Recent debates in the philosophy of pictorial representation,* MPhil thesis, Lingnan University, 2009. For an overview of theories of depiction, see also John Dilworth, 'Depictive seeing and double content' in Catharine Abell & Katerina Bantinaki (eds.), *Philosophical approaches to depiction*, 2010.

Also originating from Plato's discussion, 'illusionism' is a depiction theory initially proposed by Descartes and which found advocates such as Gombrich (1960), who suggested that a picture depicts its object only if the picture elicits an illusion in such a way that one's experience of viewing the picture appears to be indistinguishable from an actual viewing of the object. Some of the problems mentioned in connection with this theory are that not all pictures elicit such an illusion and that it omits the contribution of the design features to the content.

Richard Wollheim's 'seeing-in' theory is one of the most influential approaches to depiction[179]. It contends that seeing-in is different from seeing-as. Seeing-in has two characteristics. The first is the free association between marks and patterns we see and objects that we imagine while the second is the notion of twofoldness: while viewing a picture, we simultaneously see both the designs on the surface and the object represented. The theory has been criticised for vagueness, as it does not enable the viewer to realise differences amongst pictures of particular objects; it is suggested that some of this theory's flaws can be remedied by distinguishing between perception and attention.

Based on the aforementioned theories of depiction, Kendall Walton suggested the 'make-believe theory'. According to Walton, pictures are props in visual games of make-believe; these games are governed by rules, or what Walton called 'principles of generation', which are internalized in our perceptual capacity.

The 'recognition theory' of depiction, introduced by Flint Schier, holds the belief that human beings possess a universal recognitional capacity and employ it when asked to recognize either an object in a picture or in actual life. A picture represents an object if the picture triggers the visual interpretation of the object in the viewer. Dominic Lopes adopted the recognition theory and developed it into the 'aspect recognition theory'.

Lopes' syllogism is explained in these two paragraphs. Information states are belief-independent and non-conceptual, that is, the contents of information states are not affected by beliefs and desires. A photograph, like all pictures in general, carries perceptual information of its subject, and the object depicted in it is the source of this information. In order for the viewer to trace the source of information, s/he has to adopt an appropriate 'mode of identification'. A picture depicts its subject only if the viewer identifies the subject by employing a particular mode of identification. What makes pictures distinct forms of representation is their pictorial aspects. A subject is represented in different aspects when its properties are committally, explicitly non-committally, and inexplicitly

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[179] Richard Wollheim, 'Seeing- as, seeing-in, and pictorial representation' in *Art and Its Objects*, 1980.

non-committally represented. Lopes contended that the commitments and non-commitments of a picture are what he called the 'aspect' of the subjects represented.[180] Therefore, the diversity of pictorial systems can be explained by different kinds of spatial aspects resulting from combinations of different commitments.

Apart from highlighting that pictures are aspectually structured, Lopes' theory of depiction also focuses on the notion of recognition. He argued that viewers possess an ability, a 'pictorial competence', such that once they understand a picture of a certain pictorial system, they tend to understand other instances in that system. Lopes claimed that because they depend on the viewer's capacity for identification, pictures can be considered as 'visual prostheses' which "extend information systems by gathering, storing, and transmitting visual information about their subjects" (p.144).

After accepting that pictorial recognition differs from ordinary vision recognition and explaining how a picture depicts in terms of recognitional identification, Lopes argued that the resemblance experienced between the picture and the object can be explained by 'content recognition' (recognizing the features that shape an aspect of the subject) and 'subject recognition' (recognizing the pictorial content as its subject in a certain aspect). The resemblance that occurs from a representation is claimed to be a recognition-dependent resemblance, that is, the experienced resemblance between the properties the object is depicted as having and the properties of the object, depends on the viewer's interpretation during the recognitional processes. Recognition-dependent resemblance is also aspect dependent, as pictures are aspectually structured. In summary, Lopes contended that pictures represent by embodying information that allows perceivers to recognize the object in a certain aspect. He suggested that pictures are a visual prosthesis as they represent the visual world by visual properties in different aspects that could not been seen under ordinary vision.

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[180] The depicted object may not be provided in an accurate representation, since accuracy depends on the reliability of the system, such as the mechanism of the camera. The pictorial aspects are defined by 'structural selectivity'. Pictures are selective because their creators have to select what spatial features they want to represent. There are two kinds of selectivities. The first kind of selection is derived from the 'impracticability of determinacy', which refers to choices made by the picture's creator, determining what properties the object is represented as having, where the rest remains non-committal, that is, indeterminate. The second kind emanates from 'structural features' of depiction. A picture can be created from points of view that preclude it from representing its subjects as having certain properties. For more, see Dominic Lopes, *Understanding pictures*, 1996.

Critics have raised doubts regarding Lopes' distinction between pictures and depictions, arguing that pictures are explicitly non-committal in some ways; for example, regarding the role of aspects, the theory is inefficient in explaining fictive and misrepresentational pictures, as well as the pushing of the recognition of things into consciousness. Finally, Lopes' claim that all pictures are transparent has been highly controversial, and he has specifically been accused of saying nothing concrete about the differences between the processes of recognizing objects directly and recognizing them in visual representations.

Robert Hopkins set forth his 'experienced resemblance theory in outlined shape' in his book *Pictures, Image and Experiences*. Hopkins started by adopting some prerequisites regarding the features of pictures: that there is a significant minimum pictorial content, that the depiction is necessarily perspectival, that whatever can be depicted can be seen, that pictorial misinterpretation is possible but has its limits, that general competence with both the depiction and knowledge of the appearance of an object is both sufficient and necessary for the ability to interpret the depiction of this object. Hopkins argued that resemblance can be experienced as resemblance between sorts, rather than resemblance only between particulars. He also claimed that any object has a 3-D shape and thus has an outline shape which is, in turn, a necessary property ascribed to the object when depicted.

It should be noted that similarity in outline shape is not sufficient for depiction, which for Hopkins, is an artefact that involves human endeavour and includes an intention shaped by the picture's creator. Apart from the viewers' competence at seeing resemblances in outline shapes, depiction is also related to their knowledge of what sort of objects the world contains, of how things are generally depicted and of the various means of pictorial depiction.

Criticism of this theory includes objections to the requirement of possessing knowledge of the world and the artistic conventions as well as regarding the theory's inconsistence because the outline space is not purely geometrical and consequently the notion of outline shape can hardly be recognized as a characteristic of visual experience. Moreover, there are objections to excluding photographs from depiction, to the ambiguous notion of 'experienced resemblance in outline shape' and to problems in distinguishing misrepresentation from indeterminacy in outline shape.

3.1.3.2 Depiction and apprehending

Dominic Lopes, in his essay 'Pictures and the Representational Mind' set three main questions one can ask about a picture: (1) What is a picture? (2) How do pictures come to represent objects and scenes? and (3) What is the nature of the experiences we have of objects and scenes in pictures? He

claimed that an answer to (1) is a theory of pictures, an answer to (2) is a theory of pictorial representation, and an answer to (3) is a theory of pictorial experience. From his viewpoint, experiential approaches seek a theory of pictorial representation in a theory of pictorial experience while non-experiential approaches take a theory of pictorial representation to be prior to and part of a theory of pictorial experience. Lopes argued that experiential approaches cannot work. I consider the apprehension scheme suggested in this study to be a model that can integrate a variety of representational theories aiming to describe in depth the experience, be it presencial or consciential or both but not seen as pictorial only, of a photograph's viewer.

Hopkins, since 2003, has formulated in a similar way four main questions concerning pictures: (1) What is a picture? (2) What is pictorial representation? (3) What is the experience pictures characteristically generate? (4) What is it to understand a picture? Solly wondered what Hopkins means by understanding; the OASPV model aims to clarify Hopkins' fourth question. This study brings the notion of 'apprehending' into play, to analyse in depth what occurs in the perception and conception of a photograph.

Lopes suggested that pictorial experience is the product of depiction, while Hopkins located this experience in the core of the theory of depiction; in particular Hopkins implied that photography does not depict and that it represents by other means. While the different theories of depiction aim to provide the experiential or the recognitional account of depiction, the apprehension scheme puts these accounts into practical application in the case of a specific type of picture: the photograph.

3.1.4 Time

The riddle of photographic representation has also been approached from the viewpoint of time.

Siegfried Kracauer was among the first to comprehensively discuss the notion of time in his writings, implying that, presented as nature, it rather controls the photographer. He argued that time creates images for itself out of photographs,, that photography presents a spatial continuum and, specifically, that in photography, the spatial appearance of an object is its meaning. Kracauer explained that photographs depict a spatial configuration of a moment, and illustrated this with an example: "When the grandmother stood in front of the lens, she was present for one second in the spatial continuum that presented itself to the lens. But it was this aspect and not the grandmother that was eternalised. A shudder runs through the viewer of old photographs. For they make visible not the knowledge of the original but the spatial configuration of a moment; what appears in the

photograph is not the person but the sum of what can be subtracted from him or her."[181] The last phrase finds its indexical articulation in the form of the Van Lierian indices.

Influenced mainly by Sartre, Andre Bazin was also among the first ones to consider time in photography, while examining painting and sculpture as being similar to a practice of embalming the dead: "...the defense against the passage of time. Death is but the victory of time."[182] Bazin pointed at the primordial function of statuary, namely, the preservation of life by a representation of life. He asserted that image creation also aims, amongst other goals, at "the creation of an ideal universe in the likeness of the real, endowed with an autonomous temporal destiny".[183] That is how Bazin reached the point of considering that photography embalms time.

Dawn Wilson has suggested that photographs, apart from executing the acts of depicting, signifying or offering perceptual access, which have been for her the three philosophical approaches regarding time capturing and photography so far, also provide a unique kind of temporal representation. Wilson examined whether it can be claimed that photographs are representations of time as well as that every photograph captures a moment in time. She claimed that it is right to believe that they bear a specific relation to some particular moment in time, though wrong to think that every photograph represents a moment in time. This positioning is similar to an earlier claim by Wilson, namely, that a photograph is not necessarily a representation, even though it is possible for a photograph to be a representation.

In particular, Wilson dropped the term 'perception', suggesting instead that photographs make what is photographed 'detectable' and that this dimension of capturing a moment in time involves

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[181] Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" (first published in 1927, in the daily newspaper *Die Frankfurter Zeitung*) in Thomas Y. Levin (ed.), *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, 1995, pp.56-57.

[182] "La defense contre le temps. La morte n'est que le victoire du temps". Andre Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photogaphique' in *Qu'est-ce que le cinema?* , *Vol I: Ontologie et Language*, 1958, p.11. Professor of Film Hugh Gray, the translator of Bazin's *Qu'est-ce que le cinema?,* noted, in pp.6-7 of his introductory essay of the book that Andre Bazin, *What is cinema*, Vol II, 1971, claimed that the director and film critic Roger Lendhardt has suggested likeness in ideas between Bazin's essay 'Ontology of the Photographic image" and Malraux's 'Sketch for a Psychology of the motion picture'. Moreover, Professor of Comparative Literature Dudley Andrew, in his foreword essay to the 2005 edition of *What is Cinema*, suggested that Bazin has been influenced by Sartre's *Psychology of the Imagination* regarding its phenomenology of painting and photography. Andrew also suggested that both Susan Sontag's *On Photography* and Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* are indebted to Bazin's essay, virtually reproducing key phrases, though neither cites it.

[183] "la creation d'un univers ideal a l'image du reel et doue d'un destin temporal autonome". Andre Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photogaphique', p.12.

detecting and showing objects or facts at that moment in time. Wilson, confirming other theorists' views, supported the idea that every photograph functions as an indexical sign, denoting not only the object depicted in the photograph but also a particular moment in time, the moment lasting for the capturing of the image. This claim is in keeping with Barthes' claim in 'Camera Lucida', where the referent of photography is related with time. Wilson just refers to it in a slightly different way in that she considers the photograph to be a form of temporal representation. Wilson objected to the well-established preconception that photographs represent things as they were in front of the camera and at that moment in time, suggesting that there is a possibility of pulling apart the notions of "what a photograph is of and what it is a picture of" and arguing that a photograph need not necessarily represent the moment of its creation. Wilson, nevertheless, rejected the view that every photograph is necessarily, by its nature, an indexical sign. Following Donald Evans' claim that the process of creating a photograph guarantees a total absence of signification, she suggested instead that it would be useful to admit some cases where a photograph does function as a natural indexical sign.

In addition, Wilson, clarifying the time periods related to what we account for photographs, distinguished the 'photographic event' (time during which light transforms the sensitive recording surface) from the 'creation of the photo-object' (time passing throughout producing the final form of the photograph). The record from a photographic event can become, or can be used to create, a new image, and a photograph then exists. Seen from this perspective, Wilson's suggestion is that the time interval for the creation of a photographic image is as open-ended as the time interval for the creation of a hand-drawn picture. In summary, Wilson claimed that a particular moment in time – the photographic event – is significant in the causal history of a photograph and ultimately responsible for its features, but it does not mean that the photograph necessarily represents the photographic event or the time interval of the photographic event (recording time while aperture is open).

I tend to agree completely with Wilson, as some of the features embedded in the photo-object might carry traits of the technology (printing specification details, equipment used, nature of presentation surface, embedded software such as Instagram, etc.) that had shaped the photo-object in a time after the photographic event. However, excluding experimental practice, it is usually the case that the way the content of a photograph finally looks is mainly affinal, closely related, to the inscription process – of which the recording mechanism produces verisimilitude with the referent - during the photographic event. Therefore, it could be wise to think that a photograph does not necessarily represent accurately the time of the photographic event, though to some significant

degree, even in a broad sense of considering time, it rather does (re)present it; simply because it is arguably the most indicative 2-D tool one has towards making sense of time in a phenomenological way.[184]

Wilson's account was influenced by Donald Evans' perspective on time, according to which photographs freeze their subject in space and time and isolate it from surroundings, constituting in this way the cutting of a temporal slice of reality: "A photograph is an abstraction in space and time. It must consist of the isolation of given incidents and objects from the spatio-temporal continuum in which they belong." [185]

Flusser was among the first to highlight this viewpoint, when discussing the medium's nature, without positioning himself as to whether this is an unachievable aim, weakness, or strength: "Photography is a method that seeks to fix subjects that exist in four-dimensional time and space onto a two-dimensional surface".[186]

Peter Osborne suggested a similar view, arguing that it is illusionary to think that time can be rendered visible as space: "This supposedly fixed temporal singularity is phantasmatic, since the

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[184] Dawn Wilson, 'Exposure time: Photographs and temporal representation', a paper presented at *The Philosophy of Photography* workshop in Ovronnaz, on 27.06.2013; work in progress, extract from a draft, 31.7.2013. Wilson also stated that the photograph does not match the visual appearance of the photographic event because the photographic event has no visual appearance. Allow me to claim here, from a relativistic point of view, that the photographic event does have a visual appearance, even if this is rather unknown; the fact that it is usually unseen does not imply that it cannot be observed. Certainly, it can be imagined and thus it can have a representation, even as a mental schema.

[185] Donald Evans, 'Photographs and Primitive Signs', in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 1978-79, p. 221. Evans dealt in this essay with the semiotic nature of photography, examining whether photographs can have a more primitive role in meaning, compared at least to that of drawing and painting. He claimed that there is some truth in that assertion, though only marginal. Having borrowed the term 'primitive sign' from Wittgenstein, who used it to describe what kind of sign a name is, Evans attempted an analogy between the role of names and propositions in language and the meaning of photographs. In order to justify the primitiveness of the photograph, he examined the conventions of representation. Evans distinguished between representation - alternative methods of projection employed, correctness - depending on whether any false information is provided by the picture in the particular system used, and realism - depending on whether the system of projection employed is standard. Evans' account is based on Goodman's perspective on realism, according to which realism is the relationship between the system of representation employed in a picture and the standard system: "What one can see in a photograph is determined by the life one lives generally, by one's activities and interests" (p.221).

[186] Vilem Flusser, 'The gesture of Photographing' in *Gesten*, 1991. Reprinted, introduced and translated by Nancy Ann Roth in *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol.10, No.3, Dec.2011, p.282. Vilem Fluser started writing his essay in 1982.

temporality of the photographic image is always that of a relation between a (constantly shifting) 'now' and the photograph's 'then' [...] A photograph is an objective illusion of temporal objectification."[187] This ontological status attributed to photographs by Osborne had been offered seven decades earlier by Salvador Dali under the viewpoint of surrealism, "the most agile process by which to perceive the most delicate osmosis that takes place between reality and surreality".[188] Susan Sontag, too, discerned the problem of understanding something which is removed from its original spectrum. She claimed that photographs, because they deal only with static appearances and do not change over time, cannot provide understanding of the world: "Strictly one never understands anything from a photograph [...] Understanding is based on how it functions. And functioning takes place in time, and must be explained in time. Only that which narrates can make us understand."[189] Finally, for Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's vaunted capture of a moment in time is the seizure and freezing of presence. It is the image of simultaneity, of the way that everything within a given space at a given moment is present to everything else; it is a declaration of the seamless integrity of the real. The photograph carries on one continuous surface the trace or imprint of all that vision captures in one glance."[190]

Barthes in 'Camera Lucida', while trying to define photography's referent, oscillates between a material quality – the object depicted - and a chronical quality – the time captured. Theorists tend to discuss issues that relate to a conception of time by mixing materiality and time, because the spatiotemporal continuum in which occurrences take place – and are recorded sometimes in photographs - and in which viewers exist forms those two elements into an indissoluble bond, governing our apprehending of what and how something exists.

3.2 Modes of picture and trace

What can be discerned from the claims which are going to be discussed below is that theorists and practitioners, in their attempt to apprehend photographs, have acknowledged a character which consists of both the modes of trace and picture lying simultaneously on the same structure.

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[187] Peter Osborne, 'Photography in an Expanding Field: Distributive Unity and Dominant Form' in David Green (ed.), *Where is the photograph*, 2003, p.70.

[188] Salvador Dali, 'Photographic testimony', in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the Modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, pp.34-36. Originally published as 'Le temoignage photographique' in *La Gaceta literaria*, no.6, February 1929, pp.40-42.

[189] Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, pp.23-24.

[190]Rosalind Krauss, 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism' in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 1985, p.107.

Ever since the medium's inception, the photograph's twofold identity has occupied the debates of practitioners and theorists. In the 19th century, it took the form of a covert battle between realism and pictorialism. The first book of photographs, Fox Talbot's *Pencil of Nature,* implied, through its title, the ontological belief of the author, or maybe his own wonder regarding classifying the effect of producing a photograph. In the preface of his book, he refers to the daguerreotype as "an event occurred in the scientific world" while he refers to his images as 'new art' or 'photographic art'. It seems that the title finally chosen reflects both the technologically determined and humanly mediated aspect –the pencil – as well as the unmediated one – nature.[191] In the early 20th century, the same content fed the debate between 'straight' photography and pictorialism. In early writers' texts, a need or passion for photography to meet, imitate or compete with art was pronounced. This review hosts views that do not display full partisanship for one side or the other; they do however allow a preference to be shown.

Marius De Zayas, attempting to settle whether photography is art or not, considered art to be the expression of the conception of an idea and photography to be "the plastic verification of a fact".[192] The inclusion and coexistence of the terms 'plastic' and 'fact' in the definition portrays the oppositional forces involved in a photograph for De Zayas.

In the case of what De Zayas calls 'artistic photography', implying that which tries to belong to the art domain, he referred to photographs in which the indices gradually fade out in favour of the craftsmanship, expressing a belief in manipulation and coding. He placed emphasis on the ability of the photographer to produce 'indexed' indicial imprints, as Van Lier would suggest about seventy years later, without, at the same time, ignoring the importance of the indices, what De Zayas called the 'reality of form', or later on, the 'material truth of form' and 'objectivity of form': "In order fully and correctly to appreciate the reality of Form, it is necessary to get into a state of perfect

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[191] William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1844) is the first photographically illustrated book to be commercially published. The book can be seen online at http://www.thepencilofnature.com/ , retrieved on 20/06/2012. For a study into the contribution of its scientific and philosophical parameters, see Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with desire: the conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997). Batchen suggested that by examining early photographs, and specifically the intentions of those photographers, we can see that photography has been understood as both performative and documentary, nature and culture. Batchen suggested that the medium's status was conceived as an unstable one, oscillating between representation and phenomenological reality.

[192] Marius de Zayas, 'Photography' (first printed in *Camera Work,* No.41, 1913) in Peninah Petruck (ed.), *The Camera Viewed*, 1979, p.53. Marius De Zayas, an art writer, collector and dealer, was a versatile member of the Alfred Stieglitz circle.

consciousness [...] The photographer – the true photographer – is he who has become able, through a state of perfect consciousness, to possess such a clear view of things as to enable him to understand and feel the beauty of the reality of Form."[193]

On the other hand, in the case of De Zaya's non-artistic photography, namely, the one which does not try to imitate or belong to the art domain, the importance lies completely in the role of the indice. De Zayas attempts to show what photography can offer that art cannot, by accusing the latter of having made people believe that the realisation of the psychology of form could not be expressed in any way other than through the intervention of the imaginative faculties, that is, that form could not express its spirit without the artist's help. De Zayas proposed that (non-artistic) photography supplies the material truth of form, while suggesting that this is what photography's mission should be – and not just a means of expression: "Art presents to us what we may call the emotional or intellectual truth; photography, the material truth. Art has taught us to feel emotions in the presence of a work that represents the emotions experienced by the artist. Photography teaches us to realize and feel our own emotions."[194]

Photography was not art for De Zayas. However, he acknowledged that photographs can be made to be art. The exact distinction between the two modes of creation are explained below: "The difference between Photography and Artistic Photography is that in the former, man tries to get at that objectivity of Form which generates the different conceptions that man has of Form; while the second uses the objectivity of Form to express a preconceived idea in order to convey an emotion. The first is the fixing of an actual state of Form; the other is the representation of the objectivity of Form, subordinated to a system of representation. The first is a process of indigitation, the second a means of expression. In the first man tries to represent something that is outside of himself; in the second he tries to represent something that is in himself. The first is free and impersonal research; the second is a systematic and personal representation."[195]

Other theorists too, such as Pierre Mac Orlan and Franz Roh, gave equal weight to the presential and consciential aspects. Mac Orlan, while surveying the photographic practice of his era, noted that there is 'plastic' and 'documentary' photography. He discerned that the latter carries elements of

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[193] Marius de Zayas, 'Photography' (first printed in *Camera Work,* No.41, 1913) in Peninah Petruck (ed.), *The Camera Viewed,* 1979, p.56.

[194] Marius de Zayas, 'Photography', p.57.

[195] 'Photography', p.58.

the former, necessarily and, most of the time, unconsciously, with regard to its creator's intention.[196] Mac Orlan, despite recognising plasticity in the creation of photographs, spotted, as the medium's inherent characteristic, the ability to reveal, and considered its practice to be mainly intuitive, without the need "to submit to laws of composition and rhythm".[197] Franz Roh argued for an approach that embraces both poles of photographic practice in the modern era, namely, realism and experimental creation. He discerned "the delight in realistic content, in the most exact recognition of a piece of reality; and on the other, the enjoyment of seeing that same familiar world become strange, alien, remote."[198]

Even Bazin, despite his prominent support for the presential aspect of the photograph, indicated that there are two ambitions which can be observed in the plastic arts: one is primarily aesthetic, namely, the expression of spiritual realities wherein the model is transcended through the symbolism of forms, and the other is a psychological desire to duplicate the exterior world. Bazin noted that the success lies in the appropriate handling of those consciential and presential aspects: "The great artists, of course, have always been able to synthesize these two tendencies."[199]

Finally, there were other early theorists too, like Paul Renner, who positioned themselves clearly on the side of the consciential aspect. Renner understood photography to be a medium not solely linked to its automation but, rather, a platform where human spirit and imagination could be instilled as well: "Truth in photography is by no means the automatic result of the mechanical

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[196] Pierre Mac Orlan, a novelist and essayist in France in the late 1920s, proposed that documentary photographs are closer to the realm of literary art than visual art. Pierre Mac Orlan, 'The literary art of imagination and photography' in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, pp.27-30. Originally published as "L'art litteraire d' imagination et la photographie' in *Les Nouvelles Litteraires*, Paris, September 22, 1928.

[197] Pierre Mac Orlan, 'Elements of a social fantastic' in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, pp.31-33, originally published as 'Elements de fantastique social' in *Le Crapouillet*, Paris, March 1929.

[198] Franz Roh was a German art historian. 'The value of Photography' in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, pp.31-33, originally published as 'Der Wert der Photographie' in *Hand und Maschine*, 1, February 1930.

[199] "Les grandes artistes ont toujours realise la synthese de ces deux tendances". Andre Bazin, '*Ontologie de l'image photogaphique*', p.13.

technique, but is fundamentally an artistic truth. It is an intellectual achievement, the result of a spiritual attitude."[200]

Despite the fact that all the aforementioned theorists have brought into discussion the dynamic between the trace and the picture, it is Patrick Maynard who seems to more aptly illustrate both the epistemological and aesthetical aspects of the photograph.[201] He explained in his writing how the two independent aspects of image authenticity - one related to causality and another to information or content - are entangled in our feelings about photographic realism. It should be noted here that Maynard, however, prioritised the former aspect, namely, authenticity, which mainly emanates from causality, that is, that while reading a photograph, one tends to identify the causal factors in the making of the picture as the cause of the relevant characteristics of the image before one. Such an account has its origins in David Hume's claim that between the three relations, namely, perceived resemblance, contact, and causation, the latter has the strongest effect when it comes to a viewer's present impression.

For Maynard, photographs have both image as well as causal characteristics to relate them to their originals. He considered photographs to be pictures or 'visual descriptions' of their subject as well as to bear visual effects or manifestations of what they depict: "A picture which is both a visual description and a manifestation of the same thing".[202]

The above claim was also mentioned by Jacques Derrida who, in order to highlight that he thought of the photo-graph as light-writing - apart from light-inscribing - used the term 'invention', unhinging a binary opposition between invention as finding, as a revelation of what is already there, and invention as a technical intervention of production that constitutes its subject, a kind of 'poiesis'. The interlocutor of this discussion, Michael Wetzel, introduced at some point the idea that photography not only allows what exists to be seen but is also a form of invention, which at the same time transforms and also substitutes for the so-called 'real', and it was at that point that

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[200] Paul Renner was a German theorist in graphic arts. 'The Photograph', in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, 1989, p.168, originally published as 'Das Lichtbild' in *Die Form*, Berlin, 5, No.14, July 15, 1930, pp.377-378.

[201] Diarmuid Costello & Dawn Philips in their essay 'Automatism, causality and realism: foundational problems in the philosophy of Photography' (*Philosophy Compass*, Vol.4, Issue 1, 2009, pp.1-21) acknowledged that Maynard is arguably the first to address both the aesthetic and epistemological desiderata of a comprehensive theory of photography head on.

[202] Patrick Maynard, 'The secular Icon: Photography and the Functions of Images', p.156.

Derrida clearly stated "the two senses of invention constantly parasite off one another" throughout the act of photography.[203]

The underlying dynamic between the picture and the trace is arguably a definitive factor I suggest, in apprehending photographs that resist deciphering due to belonging into, seemingly, more than one genres. Best illustrated by the Valerian notion of 'contingently indexed indicial imprint', it formulates the scaffolding upon which the OASPV model is based, and holds the key issue while applying this model to photographs. The following chapter shows this application in practice.

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[203] Gerhard Richter (ed.), *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography*, p.44. 'Poiesis' is an attempt by Derrida to attribute to the word 'poetry' its complementary meaning, that of 'ποίησις' -'creation/making', as formed in Greek language. Gerhard Richter (ed.), *Copy, archive, signature: a conversation on Photography*, pp.xxxvii, 43.

4. Application of the OASPV model

4.0 Chapter's summary

This chapter provides a demonstration of how the OASPV model can be applied to specific imagery. Placing the information gathered about a particular photograph into its five separate zones illustrates how a verbal articulation of apprehending a photograph can take place to avoid bad or poor readings.

4.1 Selection info and guidelines

Regarding the photograph chosen to be analysed in this chapter with the help of the OASPV model, I have used data from a case study on Kokkinias' work that I have conducted in the past - published in 2010 - gathering in this way a plurality of information regarding the O factor, and consequently showing in this instance the OASPV model applied to its full extent.

The chosen photograph fulfils some criteria, the aim being to address a type of imagery which is challenging and demanding in terms of apprehension. Specifically, *Gas Station* has been selected as a photograph that has attracted a broad, multifaceted interest and has been established as valid by art channels of distribution.

In order for an effective apprehension of a particular photograph to take place, the viewer has to scrutinise each of the factors involved in the OASPV model. Regarding the S (scenery) depicted in the photograph as it usually appears, the viewer needs to have knowledge of this place or collect topographical information about it. Regarding the S as it appeared at the moment of the shooting, the viewer has to gather information from someone who was present at the time – perhaps interview the photographer – and also meticulously observe what is seen in the photograph to find any elements that might have escaped the photographer's attention. As far as the A (apparatus) is concerned, the viewer should become aware of all details regarding the equipment used in the shooting, as well as of the production process and ensure s/he can infer these effects from the look of the photograph. Concerning the O (operator) factor, s/he should collect as much data as possible about the photographer, both of a personal and a professional nature. The circumstances, especially the aesthetical choices and directorial methods, should be adequately grasped; these elements are to be traced between all three zones, that is, S, O, and A. As regards the P (photograph) factor, apart from having as broad a knowledge as possible of life experience and the ability to process

information - as photography is a domain of recognition/perception as much as it is of medium related conception – the viewer should also be aware of medium specificity issues. Finally, regarding the (V) factor, all the aforementioned prerequisites are valid in this case too, plus the ability of the viewer to distance him/herself, as much as it is possible, from his/her own subjective vision.

4.2 Gas Station

Panos Kokkinias, *Gas Station*, 2003

O

Panos Kokkinias was born in 1965 in Athens, Greece, where he now lives and works. He dreamt of a career in filmmaking and initially decided to start with the related discipline of photography, but chose to continue with photography, having enjoyed the medium's capacity for storytelling. He has travelled widely in furthering his photographic studies, starting in Athens, continuing in New York and then later in Derby, England. He has received accolades for his work, has exhibited internationally, and has had his work purchased by various institutions.[204] In addition, he has worked

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[204] His studies include the Department of Photography in the TEI of Athens, the Φωτοχόρος in Athens, a Bachelor's degree from the School of Visual Arts in New York, a Master's degree in Fine Arts from Yale University, a PhD thesis on the subject of Paradox in Photography, at the University of Derby, UK. A strong influence is the American photographic scene of the 1990s, where he was studying under Tom Papageorge's direction. Photographers such as Gary Winogrand, Joel Sternfeld, Philip Lorca DiCorcia and Gregory Crewdson were amongst those who shaped his vision. He has exhibited in Paris, New York, Munich, Milan, Madrid, Berlin,

in the field of editorial photography, and has lectured widely. Having being driven in his early career by the spontaneity and serendipity that street photography facilitates, Kokkinias turned later to directorial photography, believing that reality is fluid and is susceptible to the concept of manipulation. As he has stated, 'Reality is the stuff with which you start. The thing is what are you going to do with it'.[205] Being aware that the so-called 'documentary' shots contain a degree of *mise-en-scene*, Kokkinias finds no significant difference between the terms 'staged' and 'documentary', and is unconcerned about attributing his work to a specific genre. Believing that staging is not an issue, but is done in order to produce some kind of truth, he clarifies that it is not his intention to discuss the directorial issue through his practice; on the other hand, he is not specifically trying to hide it. What he is trying is to keep it forgotten, to not let it become the main issue. Although, according to Kokkinias' words, he invites the viewer to enter into the photograph in full awareness that what he will encounter is a construction, and by going further from this convention to see what is within, his subtle and theatrically restrained working method seems to focus on the plausibility of the events depicted. Carefully arranged but concealed interventions made during the construction of his images result in a 'seemingly unmediated document'. The art theorist and curator, Alexandra Moschovi, has noted Kokkinias' skilful ability to make his images look like ordinary 'snaps', even if they are contrived, and describes his directorial approach as being 'this very delicate balance between reality and artifice, event and non-event, chance and performance, index and digital forgery, that make up the idiosyncratic verisimilitude that is the gist of Kokkinias' work'.[206]

Kokkinias follows cinematographic procedures in creating his images. According to the explanation of the working method he adopts, the location or the idea is the initial step. He usually takes visual notes with his digital camera when he finds himself somewhere intriguing. By viewing them later on his computer screen, he pre-establishes how they can be developed. On other occasions, the idea emanates from other stimuli, yet it is never a specific person. The people will be chosen later, to

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Torino, Athens, Rome, Toulouse, Thessaloniki, Montreal and Bologna. He won the Ward Cheney Award from Yale University and received three academic scholarships. His work forms part of the collections of the Musée de la Roche-sur-Yon, of the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, of the ADAC collection in Munich, and others.

[205] Note translated by me, taken from an interview given to Παναγιώτης Καλδής, «Πάνος Κοκκινιάς: Εννοιακά Τοπία» in *Φωτογράφος*, issue 167, November 2007, p.44.

[206] Alexandra Moschovi, 'The Burden of self-consciousness' in *a.*, issue 13, May-June 2007. The term 'seemingly unmediated document' is first used by Moschovi, senior lecturer in Photography at Sunderland University, in here. A similar term, that of the 'seemingly straightforward documentary mode' was used by Alison Green, in her essay, 'Photography' in *Art Monthly*, issue 246, May 2001, p.1.

serve the idea. Having this preconceived scenario in mind, Kokkinias then searches for the appropriate space to host it, be it either a landscape or an urban situation. He then casts the potential protagonists, based either on their affinity with the role or their ability to perform. He decides exactly what they will do, what they will wear in order to fit in the personality he has imagined for them, and sundry other details, except in the case of professional actors who might bring their own useful experiences with them. When arriving at the location, he has a specific plan in mind, and it is imperative that the plot is well-prepared in advance in order to minimize worry. If the plan turns out to be good, then further experimentation may occur, such as an attempt to shape different aspects of the scenario in order to be able to choose the most appropriate frame at a later stage. He does not hesitate to shoot the model even when not consciously posing, as he appreciates that being natural has potential.

Kokkinias welcomes the unforeseen as a creative challenge. He prefers images in which reality intervenes and takes control of his expectations. As he readily admits, 'The more control you have the more gets dead at the end. The pictures that are exactly as I had imagined them, are not my favourites'.[207] Viewing the making of photographs as not entirely a mental process, he often follows his intuition in order to understand what interests him, that which is 'a gut feeling'.[208] As he confesses 'It frequently happens, that although I have something particular on my mind, something might change at the time of the shooting. This new element might cancel the image or might enrich it. What I am trying to do at the particular time of encountering it, is to be flexible and adapt to it, otherwise I might lose something better than the one initially imagined'.[209] Kokkinias believes that the inclusion of the unpredictable makes his images 'in a way more real'.[210]

Kokkinias admits that he has the tendency to imbue his pictures not only with an idea, but "the content must travel through a specific beauty… It is my need for a form that can hold a meaning that makes me to do the picture as such, and not just to make it beautiful".[211]

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[207] Notes taken from my interview with Kokkinias, on 05/06/07. For the full interview, see Vasileios Kantas, *Photo-ambiguity*, 2010, pp.216-223.

[208] An expression mentioned in an interview given to Katerina Tselou, *Art Time*, Vol.1, Sep. 2004.

[209] Note translated by me, taken from the interview given to Παναγιώτης Καλδής, «Πάνος Κοκκινιάς: Εννοιακά Τοπία» in *Φωτογράφος*, issue 167, November 2007, p.42.

[210] Note taken from my interview with Kokkinias, on 05/06/07.

[211] Ibid.

The human presence plays the most important role in Kokkinias' images. When he started including people in his constructed scenarios, he conceived of them as small in size, and present for a specific purpose, namely, "to see how things look like from a distance, aiming to symbolically understand our size in relation to the cities we do inhabit and the nature we do not."[212] In his later work, he has maintained this physical distance, keeping the human element of a significantly small size within the image, aiming to portray 'trivial' human dramas. Such a representation, the aim of which is to imbue the image with meaning, is directly linked to his concerns as an artist: the paradox of the human condition and our continual distancing from nature. These existential concerns are summarized, as he states, in the age-old archetypal query: "What are we doing here?"[213]

Even in cases where the human figure is not present in an image, its influence is apparent. Wherever human existence is not evident, it is somehow projected onto the surroundings. This is why Kokkinias' locations are so meticulously researched. Both natural and artificial environments function as places which host either the action or the psychic mood of the person included in them. These locations are chosen as potentially autonomous images, which may have a beauty in themselves, but which have to support the idea and at the same time be able to coexist in harmony with the protagonist. This is because to find an interesting location and to photograph it in an attractive way is not enough. What Kokkinias aspires to achieve in his choice of location is to make it speak for the plot, to impose itself upon the situation of the person inhabiting it and represent their psychic or mental situation. As he explains, "Its lighting, its architecture, its scale, should declare something about the one who is in there [...] What I want from a location is an organic relation with the person within it".[214] He avoids spaces with 'optical noise', such as crowded streets, looking instead for order and cleanliness. In this way, the ideas he wants to express can be more easily understood when projected onto these clean spaces, which Kokkinias calls 'reception spaces'.

Kokkinias invents stories from both fantasy and lived experience, in order to comment on the absurdity of existence, and imbues his images with qualities of intimacy, mystery and silence. The

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[212] Note translated by the author, taken from the interview given to Christos Callitsis, *Vlepw*, Sep. 2006.

[213] Note translated by the author, taken from the interview given to Φοιβος Σάκαλης, «Πάνος Κοκκινιάς: Καθορίζοντας τα όρια του παραλόγου και του λογικού» in *Go Culture,* August 2007, http://www.goculture.eu/News/fstory?lang=gr&doc_id=1070, accessed on 28/08/07.

[214] Note translated by the author, taken from the interview given to Παναγιώτης Καλδής, «Πάνος Κοκκινιάς: Εννοιακά Τοπία» in *Φωτογράφος*, issue 167, November 2007, p.39. Some paragraphs later, he adds: "A compelling space is not enough for me, if I cannot manage to attribute to it an ability to interact, to discuss with the person being in it".

characters involved in his stories seem to be introverted, alienated from what surrounds them and communing with their inner thoughts. Most of the critics who have looked at his work discern in his subjects this 'daydreaming' mood. Sometimes, this feature has been compared to protagonists in the work of the American artist, Edward Hopper, which have been described as exhibiting a 'desperate melancholy' or 'disquieting strangeness' that serves a 'frosty aesthetic'.[215] Elsewhere, it has been correlated to a Beckettian view of narration, combining 'the physical and the spiritual, the burlesque and the serious, the logical and the irrational, the everyday and the strange, all framed with some kind of relentless stasis, as if it were a mode of being'.[216] In other places, it is linked to Kafkaesque senses of entrapment, disenchantment, solitude and futility, which 'seem to point to an underlying contemporary ennui or dissatisfaction with the world at large'.[217]

If the viewer sees his images as visual allegories, s/he is then not in a position to conceive a fixed narrative. Kokkinias' intention is not to unravel the enigma, but just to immerse the viewer in psychological tension. His images appear as emotionally charged, concentrated moments consisting of unfathomable motives, open to interpretation. This sense of mystery is enhanced by the 'bizarre, uncanny, absurd or inexplicable actions Kokkinias' figures engage in'.[218] Their gestures and postures look different from real-life ones when examined over time, as the medium's power to isolate the moment separates it from the 'continuum of history' and removes any initial meaning.[219] As Moschovi explains, Kokkinias 'immobilizes the micro-gestures that are either unobserved, or largely concealed, performed in privacy, and which are subtly illustrative of the intricacies of social life, and this revelation of the unseen and the momentary as a prolonged instance provides the drama in the picture'.[220] It is possibly in this search for the 'prolonged instance' that the psychological and the formal are perfectly wedded. Jose Luis Brea referred to it by the term 'micro-time', implying a duration that cannot be perceived by the one who captures the image, and this is why, frequently,

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[215] Dominique Baque, "Melancolies" in *Art Press*, no.301, May 2004, p.90.

[216] Alexandra Moschovi, "The Burden of self-consciousness" in a., issue 13, May-June 2007.

[217] Katerina Gregos, in T.J. Demos (ed.), *Vitamin Ph: New Perspectives in Photography*, 2006, p.146.

[218] Ibid.

[219] Merry Foresta, "The photographic moment", in Joshua Smith (ed.), *The Photography of invention: American pictures of the 80's*, 1989, p.5.

[220] Alexandra Moschovi, "The Burden of self-consciousness", in a., issue 13, May-June 2007, slightly changing her initial passage, first written in "Photography, Photographies and the Photographic: Between images, media, context" in Theophilos Tramboulis (ed.), *The Athens effect: Photographic images in Contemporary Art*, 2006, p.18.

its formation is fortuitous. Brea explained that the '(quasi) instantaneous' nature of the act of capturing the image is extremely short. He suggested that 'we cannot cope with perceiving events in that way', arguing that this frozen instant of representation is not a copy of the mental concept, but a relatively accidental image.[221]

Kokkinias' ability to hint at, to mystify, and to propose an aspect of the unknown characterizes the entirety of his work. Ever since his early work, published under the title *Sinking*, he has achieved narrative ambiguity despite the fact that the genre of street photography which he was practising usually limits this possibility. It is no coincidence that two of his favourite photographers, Josef Koudelka and Garry Winogrand, have worked in a similar direction, though neither considers their work to be 'staged', a term that Kokkinias accepts, as the images he later produced were mainly constructed ones. The *Home* series is a metonymic self-portrait of the artist, rendered through his own possessions, as the result of being at home and feeling gloomy. The *Interiors* and *Landscapes* series comprise autonomous images that resemble film stills, usually containing a sense of the illogical, though depicted in such a way as to seem possible. What he is trying to do is broaden our limits of perception. In order to achieve this, Kokkinias challenges the medium's constraints. He searches for boundary points of truth 'until the point someone transcends the realistic level, in order that the spectator does not consider it to be trick but believes in it'.[222] To this end, he did not hesitate to manipulate photographs digitally from his most recent series entitled *Visitors*, where the sense of the illogical is lessened in favour of the longing for something that will never happen.

A

Kokkinias uses a studio 5x4 camera and film, which he later makes into a digital archive for processing with the help of a digital image technician. Minor changes to the scene may take place either during the shoot or later, during the editing process, using Photoshop software. He usually needs assistants for the shooting process, especially when artificial lighting needs to be brought in

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[221] Jose Luis Brea, 'Auto da-fe', in *Philip LOrca DiCorcia: Streetwork*, 1998, p.7. Brea is a tenured lecturer in aesthetics and the theory of contemporary art at Carlos III University, Madrid, and editor of the magazine, *Estudios Visuales*. For more on the issue of instantaneousness see Clive Scott, *Street Photography*, 2007 and Norton Batkin, *Photography and Philosophy*, 1991.

[222] Note translated by the author, taken from the interview given to Φοιβος Σάκαλης, 'Πάνος Κοκκινιάς: Καθορίζοντας τα όρια του παραλόγου και του λογικού' in *Go Culture,* August 2007, http://www.goculture.eu/News/fstory?lang=gr&doc_id=1070, accessed on 28/08/07.

and moved about on location. The whole production cannot be described as the romantic view of the artist working in total isolation behind his camera. It is rather the collaborative effort of a small crew working towards the goal of an aesthetic form. In the case of *Gas Station,* too, the above production details took place.

S

From a phenomenological perspective, *Gas Station* is perceived as a seemingly ordinary scene of a petrol station at night. In compositional terms, the action of the image and the underlying story emerge from the centre, both by the lighting and by the placing of figures in the middle of the frame. Despite the lack of any exaggerated body stances, props or any other elements that could provoke suspicion about the staging of this incident, the whole image gives the impression of precise order and arrangement; somehow, everything seems to be in the right place. The petrol station is illuminated in geometrical balance with the darkness surrounding it. The car is parked exactly where it needs to be in order to be clearly shown, its front left wheel placed precisely in the space between the column and the petrol pump. Within a predominately green-hued frame, some spots of other plain colours create a contrast. Functioning in the same way, as a means to highlight the story's main elements within the frame, are the yellow of the car, the red of the woman's dress and shoes, and the blue of the man's t-shirt. The man is positioned in the middle of the booth, with his face well-placed for being observed. The way in which the female figure stands while filling the tank of the car is not improbable, but it flirts with theatricality more than with naturalness. Everything seems to support a formal balance, a quietness which provokes the reader to find a drama to upset it.

Scrutinizing the elements of the scene that manage to appear in this photograph, some surprising information is revealed. An extremely watchful spectator could discern some small details hidden in the frame which might not affect the image narrative as set by the photographers' staging; however, they do enhance the scene's truthfulness with a dose of an unmediated reality. Apart from the two well-illuminated protagonists at the centre of the image, there are also three people, an open car boot, and two dogs in the darker areas surrounding the petrol station. To the left, in the parking area, there is a person standing next to the half-raised car boot, probably caught at the time of its opening or closing. To the right, there is a person standing inside the shop and another sitting at a table outside the shop's forecourt. Finally, there is a dog lying at the entrance to the shop, and one more dog lying in front of another empty table. Because of the gloomy lighting of these areas, their characteristics cannot be easily read, so it is difficult to say whether they are playing a part or are

simply there by chance. The body stances of the secondary characters and the activities in which they are engaged suggest that they do not have any interest in intervening in the plot, even if they are aware that the shoot is taking place. The most likely explanation is that their presence was either not specially directed or totally accidental.

Kokkinias combines the element of chance with the minimization of optical noise. In the case of *Gas Station,* their coexistence results in indecisiveness for the onlooker trying to determine Kokkinias' shooting method. It seems that the preference for either artifice or snapshot could remain undecided for a long viewing period.

P

Gas Station leaves its onlooker with a sense that the *reperage*, the composition and the figures' performances are there for aesthetic reasons, which seem to relate to reality but are not randomly conveying anything about the recorded story. Intimation seems to be more important than a superficial description of a night scene. The strategies used here might aim to disclose the reading of what is narrated on the surface, providing an opportunity for metaphorical contemplation. The specific location chosen here, that of a petrol station that is seemingly in the middle of nowhere, greatly helps the photographer in setting up his scenes, as it is easier to unravel a narrative in a place which is quiet, well-lit and has plenty of empty space around it. The main elements of the scene arouse the suspicion that they have been carefully arranged to fill the space that hosts the depicted incident, with colours that, apart from the fact that they form a contrast with the dominant green frame, are not totally irrelevant to the surrounding objects of the petrol station. The red fire extinguishers match the woman's red outfit, and the yellow car matches the painted yellow base plate beneath the fuel pumps. Thus, what one sees on a formal level is a palette of primary colours in harmony. It seems as though the artist has taken great care to minimize optical noise, providing the viewer with an innocuous reading of the image's potential narration. The main elements of distinctiveness mentioned above, in addition to the subtle performances and the formal calmness governing the frame, seem to be Kokkinias' main concerns in constructing this image. Such handling liberates the reader from the fact that he is encountering a photograph; the artist tries to draw on the film's surface, showing his denial of the idea that the presence of fortuitous photons in front of the lens is the only factor responsible for shaping the image.

Gas Station is the kind of photograph which manages to be considered as being able to both present and represent. The presential mode is justified through the insertion of the unpredictable elements

described in the S zone - Van Lier's notion of the indice appears, to the extent that it could actually be observed as such, in the form of the details that have escaped the photographer's attention - while the consciential mode is strongly manifested in the form of the geometry and the compositional arrangement of props, due to Kokkinias' directorial strategy of meticulously staging the image. Automatism and agency harmonically coexist in the same photograph.

The viewer is left free to conceive the photograph either as an analogon, a fingerprint, of a night occurrence in a gas station, due to the verisimilitude provided throughout the staging, or as a depictive trace, if not totally as a picture, due to the aestheticization involved in its making.

V

Acknowledging the fact that any verbal articulation of what is conceived from the image under scrutiny might fall into a speculative and thus subjective apprehension, I attempt to place myself in a natural, almost neutral position, processing the effect the viewer experiences while contemplating this image.

It is easy to discern ambiguity of subject matter, as the latter does not explicitly stand out. This claim can be made of this image due to the elements mentioned in the section referring to the S factor, from which it seems that this kind of ambiguity is intentional and connotative, causing a complicated interaction between the said and the unsaid. *Gas Station* creates the impression of serving a rhetorical purpose rather than representing an actual incident.

Thinking upon the image in a less figurative way, entering the realm of representation, the function of this image can serve as a metaphor for the human condition in the modern era. Assuming that the viewer is a frequent attendee of art events, and encountered Kokkinias' *Gas Station* where it was exhibited, namely, at the international art exhibition *Outlook*, held in Athens in 2003, s/he would give greater, if not exclusive, importance to its 'photo-graphic' mode rather than its 'photo-effectic' one: the exhibition venue, the variety of media involved, the type of other photographic works shown there, the catalogue that incorporates all of the artworks under a common perspective, all contribute towards the apprehension of this photograph mainly from the perspective of 'what the artist speaks about'.

As a result, *Gas Station* might be seen from the viewpoint that it carries with it the intention of the artist to communicate something. Even if this is not concrete, it will be justified as the intention to convey something that it is not a set opinion but might raise questions about a contemporary issue.

Thus, as an allegorical rendering of a particular line of human inquiry or the intentional brainstorming of an idea leading to an intellectual impasse, in discussion, this photograph will never be able to speak for itself regarding the appropriateness of 'what the artwork speaks about'. Quite simply, the specific artwork, due to its mechanical origin, will not have the ability to speak about anything. At least this is what Batkin claimed, as mentioned above, that is, that a photograph can only declare the existence of a world having once been in front of the camera, without being able to say anything about this world. Batkin stated that 'the ability of photographs to reveal the fact of a world, to reveal or to declare the fact that the world exists, is their inability to reveal the world, its life', and concluded by suggesting that it is the function of other media, such as film and paintings, to reveal things about the world.[223] Therefore, on this occasion, when *Gas Station* is encountered at *Outlook*, it inescapably falls into the trap, or implies that it will require similar apprehending expectations to those of the other artworks within the exhibition. I fully agree with Batkin and seize the opportunity here to claim that what looks to be photography's weakness and which has haunted its struggle to find a position in the arts ever since its inception, namely, the medium's affinity with reality, seen as its inability to transcend its subject matter, is, in fact, its strength. Its inability to speak about a thing but merely to point to its existence gives the photograph the privilege of being equivocal.

This inherent characteristic, described by Batkin as a 'shocking stillness', is precisely what enhances *Gas Station* with innumerable potential narrations.[224] This is especially true when this inherent vagueness is accompanied by content-related ambiguity, as is the case with *Gas Station*, which puts the viewer in the either pleasing or frustrating position of ongoing indeterminacy. The specific ambivalence, for example, between the options of a real or staged incident taking place in the middle of a petrol station troubles the onlookers from the outset. Their gaze is susceptible to wandering around until it nominates a protagonist, invents a specific plot, defines the subject matter, or indicates implied meanings; this can be achieved by searching for clues in the woman's crossed hands, the man's determined expression, the presence of the three other persons included discreetly within the frame, the half-raised car boot, or the car's front wheel position.

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[223] Norton Batkin, *Photography and Philosophy*, PhD thesis at Harvard University [1981], 1990, p.210.

[224]Batkin explained, in *Photography and Philosophy,* p. 93, that 'shocking stillness' is "what underlies the ambivalence we experience before any photograph... [This ambivalence] is a response or rather hesitation between opposed responses to the same feature".

Photographs such as *Gas Station* are met by the OASPV model in the way illustrated above. However, what happens in the case of photographs which are consciously constructed in a way that resists or stretches the model's ability to articulate an adequate explanation of their apprehending, is going to be shown in the next chapter, where I present my visual work produced specifically for this study, along with an analysis of the logic behind their construction as well as their contextualisation.

5.0 My practice

5.0. Chapter's summary

This chapter gives an overall explanation of the working strategy I applied throughout my creative practice, making clear the conceptual links between my theoretical research and its visual outcomes. Specifically, it gives an account of how the research informed my practice, discussing the images chosen for the portfolio accompanying this thesis, along with showing how issues discussed in the literature review are reflected in the whole of my practice. A contextualisation of my work, emphasising the way my practice has handled the notions of the ordinary, the undefinable, serendipity and the two modes of photography is provided; similarities to the work of other practitioners, such as Alex Brattell, Paris Petridis, William Eggleston, or movements, for example, Neorealism, in the field, who have shared a common logic in structuring their photographs, are discussed. Furthermore, through a mini case study on the work of New Topographers, the arbitrariness with which much of the discourse around photographic practice has been shaped, and consequently the need to apply a synthesized model like the OASPV, is shown.

5.1 About the working strategy of my visual practice

My practice consists of photographs that aspire to render visible the research question 'What is manifested in a photograph?' Being pensive, they simultaneously ask the viewer, in a visual way, 'What is in there?' and reply 'This is what photographs are about'. This means that, departing from reality and using it as an alibi, they end up revealing that they actually deal with medium specificity issues. Seemingly, their referent is mainly quotidian urban scenes. However, they just use daily routine occurrences as a background of no importance. Paraphrasing Ed Rusha's positioning of his work in relation to art, I declare that my photographs are not statements about the world through photography; they are statements about photography through the world.[225]

My photographs do not wish to communicate something specific about the subjects they seemingly depict. My photographs convey my challenge to render visible what the medium usually does as well as what it is potentially able to do. Scruton noted the difference between being interested in a thing for its own sake and being interested in it as a representation of something else. In this sense, my

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[225] Ed Ruscha has stated about his images that "they are not statements about the world through art, they are statements about art through the world". Bonnie Clearwater, 'An interview with Ed Ruscha' Art Press, no.137, June 1989, quoted in Center for Creative Photography, George Eastman House, Steidl, *New Topographics*, (Gottingen: Steidl, 2009), p.27. Ruscha has also declared that "My interest in facts is central to my work. Not that you will find factual information in my work". Ibid., p.26.

photographs are allegorical, as they speak for medium specificity issues while portraying banal occurrences.

The portfolio of 16 images submitted alongside this thesis is only a part of the visual practice I have executed throughout this study; these 16 images are chosen as more characteristic ones to display an effective link between the research process and its visual outcome. For example, images such as *Closed* and *Eyes wide open* challenge their viewers' apprehension.

Vasileios Kantas, *Closed,* 2008

Vasileios Kantas, *Eyes wide Open*, 2012

The former was produced intuitively and later on the realisation of its problematic nature energized the necessity of constructing an adequate model of apprehending photographs. The latter was intentionally produced as a stimulus towards making a photograph hard to be apprehended. Both of them are intriguing examples of testing the OASPV model's effectiveness to articulate an appropriate linguistic epexegesis.

The images I have executed throughout my practice have aimed to test out in a visual way whether the theoretical claims I have included in the literature review of this thesis and, most importantly, the apprehension scheme into which I synthesized them, can actually be applied to them effectively, for instance, whether notions of seeing-in and seeing-as can coexist in autonomous photographs, whether twofoldness can acquire a primary role in understanding a specific photograph, whether factive pictorial experience can be kept back due to vagueness imbued in the making of a photograph, whether my photographs manage to represent –though, through presenting- as they talk about something other than the objects depicted in their frame, and so on. I am going to discuss such findings in the next section of this chapter, where I refer to the 16 chosen images.

Apart from those 16, my practice consists of many other photographs that have been created towards the aforementioned goal; however they were not included in the final portfolio due to

achieving a less demanding, less challenging, apprehension level, despite their ability to offer alluring narrations. Examples of this are *Chessman* and *Dead bat*, both constructed by using realism at its boundary space between fact and fiction and both portraying occurrences that could be taken either as staged or as realistic, though absurd, due to their strong implication of an underlying plot at play;

Vasileios Kantas, *Chessman*, 2010

Vasileios Kantas, *Dead bat*, 2009

or, the case of the experimental diptych *Security*, where the ability of the picture on the left to flirt with the implication of animating a doll achieves conceptual diosmosis by simultaneously contradicting and being immersed in the ability of the picture on the right to render the human figure into a statuary marble, in which apprehension was rather guided to specific, univocal, route (allow me to note here that the image on the left finally entered the portfolio on its own, due to its equivocal nature).

Vasileios Kantas, *Security*, 2012

Michael Sheringham, analysing the act of paying attention to the everyday, has suggested that the everyday as lived reality only exists modally through the slant or impetus one imparts to particular repeated actions, and in order to grasp those daily actions' modal dimension, one has to pay attention to the everyday, deigning to notice it. Alex Brattell's work, for example, does actualise this act of 'noticing', being embedded in his work attitude; to use his own words, his series of photographs under the title *Tulpa,* one of them displayed below*,* are "formations generated by a powerful concentration of thought".[226]

Alex Brattell, *Ashmolean Oxford*, March 2010

Vasileios Kantas, *Empire,* 2011

My photographs, also the result of an intense concentration, do pay attention to the everyday, not for showing though the commonality of experience; my visual work does not aspire to hint at or establish an underlying concept, as is usually the case in western contemporary art practice, even though it could be in a position to formulate one. My photographs, such as *Empire* above, might appear to be a versatile exploration of the wide-range dimension of the everyday; however, they actually refer to what photography is able to finally, really, depict, or to be more precise, reflect: the

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[226] Michael Sheringham, Professor of French in the University of Oxford, has presented this view at the *Ordinary/Everyday/Quotidian* conference in York University, 26-27/09/2013, highlighting the process and act of attention as a factor to understand the quotidian and the everyday. In that conference, I have put my practice as well as Alex Brattell's work into discussion, towards examining whether they do portray the everyday or just use it as an alibi. Brattell's statement is taken from his website, www.zetetic.co.uk , accessed on 15/09/2013. One of Brattell's images, *London Road*, is discussed later on in this chapter.

medium's properties themselves. By being a certain distance from the subject matter and concept, the reflection upon the medium becomes easier.

While I agree with John Berger when he argues that the aim of the artist/photographer is to create and preserve the mystery – "mystery is not something to be solved but to be carried"[227] – I believe that the role of the practice-led visual researcher should be one that reverses it; s/he should solve it, either after having created it, by contemplating it in order to realise what it is made of and how, or while creating it. In this study, I have followed this route, frequently encountered in the literature as the reflective practitioner method, thus aligning myself once again with Alex Brattell's working strategy: "I photograph as an exploration and so am very happy when pictures yield answers later, taking it as a sign that I am working beyond my conscious understanding. This is not a self-conscious attempt to be weird or original, but rather an acknowledgement that significance often lies underneath the mechanisms of conscious mind and can be uncovered by instinctive and unjudgemental camera work (necessarily accompanied by an appropriate editing process".[228] In fact, Jan Baetens and Heidi Peeters have suggested that the practice of a medium is what feeds theoretical models, leading to new territories for development: "Specific uses of a medium have to be found by practice, and although this practice has certainly an interest in being supported by a theory, no theoretical stance can predict exactly the outcome of a creative process."[229]

My photographs illustrate especially those theoretical claims found in this thesis with which I am aligned, for example, Batkin's claim that the photograph just shows that a world exists, without telling us anything about this world. By making/taking images that look like they have no subject matter, protagonist, concept, purpose or meaning, I simply enhance Batkin's claim regarding the ineffability of the photograph.[230] The medium's inadequacies are reflected, for example, in the

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[227] John Berger, *Bento's Sketchbook*, 2011, p. 86.

[228] This quotation is taken from a reply to an open-ended questionnaire given to Alexander Brattell, in the context of this research study, concerning the reasons why a photograph 'works'.

[229] Jan Baetens & Heidi Peeters, 'Hybridity: The Reverse of Photographic Medium Specificity' in *History of Photography*, Vol.31, No.1, Spring 2007, p.9.

[230] In Camera Lucida, p.34, there is a passage describing which photographs are interesting for Barthes: "The photograph becomes 'surprising' when we do not know why it has been taken; what motive and what interest is there in photographing...In an initial period, Photography, in order to surprise, photographs the notable; but soon, by a familiar reversal, it decrees notable whatever it photographs. The 'anything whatever' then becomes the sophisticated acme of value."

following way: My practice has produced photographs that deal with the 'nothing in particular' (through vague subject matter) while simultaneously and inescapably portraying, in Barthesian terms, the 'absolute Particular' (through clearly depicted objects). It should be noted though, that my photographs aspire to avoid the indifferent, the accidental, the pointless, even if they seemingly portray the trivial; they achieve a level of interest, I contend, due to formal arrangements between the elements depicted in them. The Barthesian 'anything whatever' seemingly governs; however, intense concentration of thought aims to construct the 'whatever, though something of interest', acknowledging, of course, the subjective nature of nominating something as interesting, as worth shown. The image *Black Cat,* below, is an example which illustrates this logic.

Vasileios Kantas, *Black Cat*, 2012

This logic is encountered in Brattell's practice too and could be considered as the 'barking of a dog in the dark'. I have used this expression while writing an accompanying statement for the catalogue of a photographic exhibition hosting images from his series *Lines of Desire*, commenting on his work: "Brattell's photographs speak *for* a world, without showing *that* world... sometimes a photograph can function as an unerring instinct and it appears as a bark. Brattell's photographs are similar to what a dog's bark in the dark stands for; they draw our attention to what might be there."[231]

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[231] Vasileios Kantas, 'Hastingas Photographicus', essay in the exhibition catalogue of the show *They are not laughing now: Nine Hastings Photographers,* Fish Gallery*,* Brighton Photo Fringe 2010.

Alex Brattell, from the series *Lines of desire*, 2003

Such examples of practice reveal another important aspect of the medium in my approach: the belief in the notions of 'intuition' and 'noticing'. Kokkinias, Brattell and I, during our shooting, have all been freely exposed to notice, to intuitively respond, to go with our gut feeling. It seems like a kind of sensitive antenna, able to receive signals, followed by an intense conceptual mode of processing the visual stimuli into a potential imagery type of specific sense, is activated during a photographer's 'acute' shooting. Marcus Hester, having distinguished forms of intuition from categories of the understanding, following a Kantian perspective, argued against the relativity of vision and realism, claiming that not all realistic paintings/photographs are interpretative. Hester, when using the notion of interpretation referred to the author's acts while creating the picture as regards interpreting the subject of depiction, rather than referring to viewers. As he claimed, "We do not all see the same things [...] certainly the skilled hunter sees things we do not see. And the artist sees phenomena of light and color that we do not see. But in the case of the artist or the trained observer, we say they *notice* things we do not see. Noticing is seeing something there to be seen. In no sense is noticing interpreting."[232]

Finally, the surface of my images becomes a canvas upon which I project many of the theories mentioned earlier in my thesis. Flusser's claim on the photographic gesture, Laruelle's suggestion of photographs reflecting their author's posture, or Kaggelaris' claim about every photograph being a self-portrait, are amongst the theoretical notions that I reflect in my practice (see, for example, later on the photograph *My Life in London)*. Some of them are reflected unconsciously and are recognised

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[232] Marcus Hester, 'Are paintings and photographs inherently interpretative?' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.31, No.2, Winter 1972, pp.245-246.

as such after the shooting while others are designed in advance or during the act of taking/making the photograph.

Regarding the titles given to my photographs, they serve the purpose of not assisting -by not providing any clues directly related to the images' content- the deciphering of the meaning imbued by the author. In this way, the photographs allow an apprehension that is less influenced, more vague. Nevertheless, the choice of the titles' content is not arbitrary; they indicate locations –'Black cat' is a restaurant opposite the scene photographed in the photograph last discussed- situations or thoughts relevant to the shooting time, mood and place. My photographs were created in a way to resist apprehension and the title-giving act simply enhanced this aim.

Apart from producing images that reflect the key theoretical viewpoints discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, through my practice I have also dealt with the issue of how to create photographs that refer to the dynamic relationship of trace and picture without addressing/overstressing either the one or the other.[233] An illustration of this will be given in the next section.

5.2 About the 16 photographs presented in the portfolio

As mentioned in the Introduction, the inspiration for pursuing this study, which activated the need to research the field of photography apprehension, was the realisation that I was not in a position to clearly understand and thus to verbally articulate what was the reason for the appeal of a particular photograph, *Closed*; it had been standing out of the rest of my visual practice, consistently, every time I returned to look at it, remaining as a riddle to my conception.

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[233] It is like producing a Martini and Cola drink with such a balance of the two ingredients that its drinker recognises neither the Cola or the Martini but, rather, the interesting mix of them that produces a new type of drink; the new taste refers to the mix's ability to dismiss the unique taste of its ingredients - it reminds no-one of the ingredients' taste in themselves.
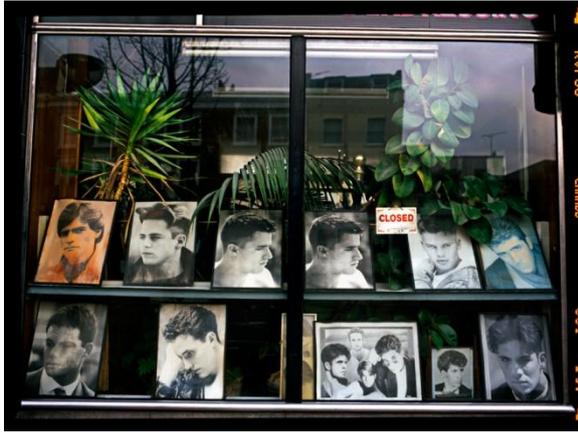
Vasileios Kantas, *Closed*, 2008

The strategy used for its taking was an intuitive response to a visual stimulus that happened to appear in front of me while strolling with my camera, on a day that I had no plan to photograph something specific, in a period in which I had neither defined a concept to serve nor had a series in progress. Such a spontaneous approach resulted in leaving the location with the impression that I had taken a random picture of something I was quite unsure what was it about, though feeling certain about its depiction worth. What I did grasp at the moment of starting to work consciously on producing photographs for this study was the conviction that I should further research the field, by both by creating imagery that may lead to similar effects –hoping to better understand the mechanics of undecipherable photographs - and by tracing the theoretical background related to the medium's apprehension. My research, which consisted of visiting the literature as well as of trying out different directorial approaches throughout shooting, had a circular route, feeding information back into both modes. The theoretical claims I was using to shape a model of apprehending photographs - the OASPV - started manifesting itself in my practice and vice versa: my ongoing visual exploration of how to construct photographs that challenge or escape linguistic articulation was testing out the model's effectiveness itself.

I kept as a scaffold the working method I had used while producing the *Closed* – creating photographs that were seemingly subject-less, concept-less, intuition-led, and autonomous - aiming to achieve qualities of ambiguity, equivocality, and vagueness, by following the logic that such elements would make the apprehension a hard task.

Nevertheless, my practice was now more conscious and more influenced by the theoretical concepts I was including in my apprehension scheme, which was becoming more conscious and fluent, if you wish, in reflecting medium specificity issues. Photographs do necessarily manifest traits of their

medium properties; however, my practice aimed to make them as apparent as possible. This can be seen in one of the first photographs I made, the *157 bus* - shaped with the same working attitude I had during *Closed* - which was mainly driven by intuition, in comparison to the last photograph I made, *Eyes wide open*, which was completely 'searched out' to be adequate, 'acted out' as a space upon which I could project all the theoretical claims I am aligned with in this thesis.


Vasileios Kantas, *157 bus*, 2009   Vasileios Kantas, *Eyes wide open*, 2012

I acknowledge, however, that even *157 bus* might carry the same amount of information. It is just that I consider *157 bus* to be closer to the presential mode of shooting – one that prioritises the importance of the trace carried out from the scene - while *Eyes wide open* is imbued with an extra amount of the consciential mode – forcing the scene to abate the power of the trace for the sake of its author's concepts to get the primacy, as much as such an attempt could ever possibly succeed, due to the referent's stubbornness.

Actually, there is a subtle point here that I want to highlight. My practice did not aim to produce either purely photo-graphic (consciential) or purely photo-effective (presential) imagery. Its aim has not been a straightforward illustration of the medium specificity claims suggested in this thesis. That would result in naive representations of ideas, very close to the role of advertisement when it is of poor quality and follows a logic that the message has the primacy. Its aim has rather been to locate the medium properties in a more subtle way, as a connotation, by visually producing a platform upon which the presential and the consciential modes coexist in equality and balance, where the one is hidden among the other; because it is then – among other potential tactics - that a photograph becomes interesting enough to resist or escape apprehension, I claim. My practice aimed to challenge the apprehension scheme it initially produced and which it gradually fed, too.

Throughout my practice I slightly differentiated my approach, keeping of course, the aforementioned attitude as a scaffold. My photographs wanted to look, or be felt as, esoteric, introvert, pensive, visual riddles. Thus, I sometimes have been rearranging objects and props found in locations that I initially spotted as a potential source for creating an image – such as in the case of *Three ladies*, where I moved some statues found in the same house, partially composing in this way the image and 'forcing' the content to be led towards a direction that my intellect was shaping at the moment of shooting; in other words, trying to patronize meaning, trying to tame reality. What this photograph actually is, and the same applies to a certain extent to all photographs in my practice, is a test of the boundaries of handling the consciential aspect in relation to the presential without destroying, or towards creating, interest – either aesthetic or of some kind of truth - in the image. In other cases, such as in the *Decorateur*, there was no actual intervention on the part of the photographer; however, such an action had been performed some seconds before the shooting by a member of the shop's staff who set up the window/scene, unintentionally providing in this way a consciential attempt of a third part. I included this photograph in my portfolio as a comment on the multilayering of the consciential mode, while also reflecting upon the notion of 'depictive trace'.

Vasileios Kantas, *Three ladies*, 2010

Vasileios Kantas, *Decorateur,* 2011

The human figure has always had a prominent position in my practice, even though for the sake of this study, it has been used charily. The reason is that wherever an animate figure is included in a photograph, a narration is easily deployed and a subject tends to stand out. However, images such as *After Gustav* and *Wandering, wondering*, included in my portfolio, due to their composition and choice of instant to be depicted, manage to minimize information regarding the act which the people are involved in and thus the subject-less, concept-less prerequisite is still at stake. These

photographs aim to speak about the claims of the ineffable, such as Batkin's, that photographs speak for a world, without showing that world. The manifestation thesis, for example, finds its visual rendering in photographs that are not purely formalistic, such as is already done in Minor White's practice.


Vasileios Kantas, *After Gustav*, 2010   Vasileios Kantas, *Wandering, wondering*, 2010

Another approach in my practice has been towards testing out the extent to which a connotation of the notion of 'factive pictorial experience' that photographs are able to evoke can be rendered. The viewer of such photographs undergoes, I think at least to some degree, the factive belief that nothing really happens in the locations depicted in scenes such as *Mondays & Tuesdays*, or *Slide*. A closer look though, asked by those photographs' emptiness, calmness, and dumbness, might create some interest, initially on the level of form – strong lines that imply meaning related to formal relations - and later on the level of content – realisation that a corner is not so indifferent after all, or that the four birds could be part of a choreography, adopting different body postures, while being in danger of sliding and crashing the one on top of the other. Such photographs challenge theories dealing with issues of transparency, especially that of seeing-in and seeing-as, suggesting that a photograph could potentially provide both of these modes, should its structure be appropriately made to serve such a function.

Vasileios Kantas, *Mondays & Tuesdays,* 2011   Vasileios Kantas, *Slide*, 2010

In a similar way, Taylor's displacement theory, that is, that the photograph functions as a gauge, mixed with Pettersson's claim that photographs provide the looks of things, are connoted in photographs such as *Elvis* and *Basen.* Looking like random domestic fragments, pointing at no particular issues, these photographs act democratically, acknowledging reality's primacy over the photographer – who, however, still stages, in a subtle way - allowing the viewers to pick up a possible punctum or allow their gaze to wander endlessly, consuming studium(s).
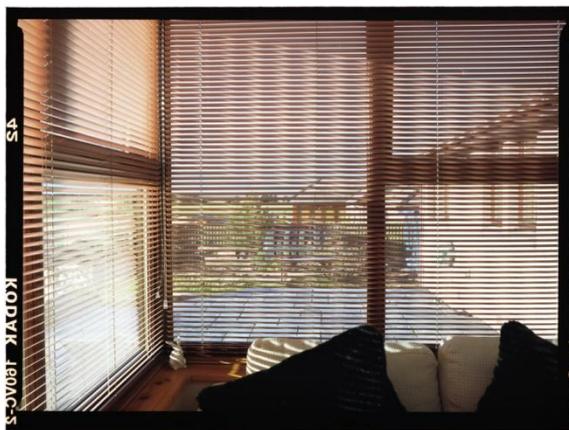
Vasileios Kantas, *Elvis*, 2010   Vasileios Kantas, *Basen*, 2010

What is also at stake in the above photographs -something underlying the majority of my practice's photographs too- and is more prevalent in the case of *Learning to drive* and *Donna's dream,* is an interplay between form and content, examining in a visual way the extent to which the intentions of the photographer can define the image as a presentation or a representation.

Robert Hopkins has reflected on what it means for a picture to be an imprint, an act which implies that he considers the photograph to be both an imprint and a picture, in agreement with this thesis' claim. He contends that some of a photograph's depictive content can be explained only by reference to the actions and intentions of its maker and that some, but not all, photographic practice is true to the idea of imprinting. In contrasting painting and photography, Hopkins argues that despite the fact that both communicate a thought and achieve it through representation, painting's usage of representation is of artistic value, in various ways and to a degree, while photography's usage of representation is not. He also argues that the photograph mainly interests us as a way of gaining access to properties of the thing represented and not in the representation of that thing. Hopkins suggests that authentic photography's capacity to exploit interplay (how medium and content relate) to communicate thought is limited and that this limitation suffices to prevent photography from being a representational art in the fullest sense –and at the same time it is what challenges the medium's users.[234]
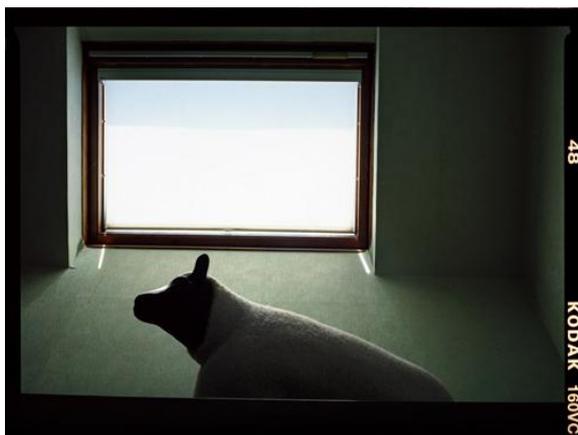
Vasileios Kantas, *Learning to drive*, 2011   Vasileios Kantas, *Donna's dream*, 2009

What Hopkins claims about the dichotomy of photographs into imprints and pictures had also been recognised, amongst several other theorists and practitioners in the field, by Edward Weston. He spotted two basic factors in the photographic process that set it apart from the other mediums. The

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[234] "It cannot drop imprinting without ceasing to be authentic, and could not change its methods sufficiently to give control over interplay without abandoning its current form. Thus, while it retains that form, it will not be able to develop fully as a representational art." Robert Hopkins, 'The real Challenge to Photography', paper presented at *The Philosophy of Photography* workshop in Ovronnaz, 27.06.2013. Work in progress; extract from a draft written on 30.06.2013.

first is the 'nature of the recording process', which is instantaneous, and no stopping or changing or reconsidering is possible; however, it is not applicable nowadays; and the second is the 'nature of the image' that is, the amazing precision of definition and the unbroken sequence of infinitely subtle gradations from black to white. As he wrote: "Each medium of expression imposes its own limitations on the artist —limitations inherent in the tools, materials, or processes he employs."[235] The apprehension scheme does not consider anything involved in the process as a limitation. The accidental, for example, something encountered in many of my photographs, is rather taken as a happy encounter that enriches the whole act. *NAOK* and *Photo-me* attest to this, where my strategy interacts with the occurrence at play in the scenery.

Vasileios Kantas, *NAOK*, 2012   Vasileios Kantas, *Photo-me*, 2009

Katrina Mitcheson has shown how the artist's intentions and the realism of photography interact aesthetically. She claims that a unique aesthetics of photography can be found in the tension between the intentional, culturally coded message of a photograph and the emanation of a reality which escapes the intention/control of the operator. She wrote: "What is essential to the photograph is that it contains this dual character. It can be artfully constructed, manipulated and controlled such that it can render beautiful, communicate thoughts, and create fictional presences and narratives in a world of its own. At the same time it contains the pull back to the reality of the objects present at the moment the shutter clicked."[236]

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[235] Edward Weston, 'Seeing Photographically', *The Complete Photographer*, Vol. 9, No. 49, pp. 3200-3206, 1943.

[236] Katrina Mitcheson, 'Allowing the Accidental: The Interplay Between Intentionality and Realism in Photographic Art' in *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 1 luly 2010 , retrieved from www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=588 , assessed on 29/01/2012.

Irrespective of the connotations I intended to produce, I have also exposed my practice to open criticism, through peer reviewing it, to see what else is conceived in it. Having shown my photographs to ten curators in the context of a portfolio review in *Photofusion,* to peers practising professional photography, as well as to my students in London South Bank University, I received some valuable feedback that helped me realise some aspects of my work that were unknown to me until that point. For example, Chryssa Panoussiadou noticed an apparent relationship between elements of my idiosyncrasy and their manifestation in my photographs. That was evidence that my attempt to reflect, through my practice, Flusser's/Laruelle's/Kaggelaris' claim of self-projection in one's photographs actually occurred, as traits of myself were communicated to the viewers of my work. As Panoussiadou stated about my photographs, "All pictures are so well balanced as in an almost unnatural way and it seems like the photographer tries to explore balance and order... As audience looking at these pictures, I don't feel for the subject... I only observe how things are..."[237] The issues of balance and order are indeed amongst my primary concerns as an individual and I was pleasantly surprised when such a remark was made about my work, as when I photograph I do not, consciously at least, try to render these elements visible through the formal qualities of my images. The photograph *My life in London* is characteristic of this effect and is thus included in the portfolio.

Vasileios Kantas, *My life in London*, 2009

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[237] Note from email correspondence, on 14/04/2012. Chryssa Panoussiadou is the director of the *Women with the Movie Camera,* film producer and freelance editorial photographer and knows me quite well.

5.3 Contextualisizing my work

5.3.1 Handling the trace and picture modes

The curious and experimental practitioner Raoul Hausmann approached the field of picture construction by taking into account the research findings from experiments in the field of physiology of perception in the early 1930s. Hausmann had been concerned with the problem that appears to trouble many conscious practitioners and is one of the key underlying issues in the construction of the images included in the portfolio: the dynamic, mutual interplay between the presential and consciential modes that a camera's operator encounters while taking/making a photograph, that is, the challenge of how to handle the coexistence of these two elements. For him, mastery of form was more important for a photographer than literary ideas; however, the photographer should also pay attention to what appears in front of him and escapes the control. Specifically, on the one hand, he talked about the importance of having good spatial perception in order to compose a photograph -as he stated: "One rarely meets photographers who have a good sense of spatial values".[238] These values refer to the direction of the viewer's gaze through the use of lines, choice of focal point, shaping of depth of field, unambiguous perspectival arrangement of the main elements of the picture, and the careful setting of the fundamental forms of bodies – cylinder, cone, sphere, etc. – and directional planes – square, triangle, etc. On the other hand, he acknowledged that "the important thing is the ability to see the real essence of a face, a landscape, a flower, an animal – and when we experience this essence it reveals itself at all times and in all circumstances without any need for artifice".[239] In other words, he admitted that despite the effort of the camera operator to control the image, this agony is rendered rather useless when the subject manages to imprint a strong trace of the way it 'looks', in a Petterssonian perspective. Such a case, where my practice has confronted the delicate handling between the picture –by arranging the frame like a theatrical scene- and the trace –by allowing the action unfold and capturing a decisive moment- is the image below, *Paul*.

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[238] Raoul Hausmann & Werner Graff, 'How does the photographer see?', in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the Modern era: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940*, p.200. Originally published as 'Wie sieht der Fotograf?' in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1933, pp.11-18.

[239] Hausmann & Graff, p.203.

Vasileios Kantas, *Paul*, 2009

The primacy of the presential aspect has been held in high esteem amongst practitioners of movements in the modern era, such as the straight photography, the new subjectivity, and the f64 movements; nevertheless, there have been some photographers, such as Ansel Adams, who, even while belonging to these movements, considered that the pictorial control of the image is what defines the outcome to a great extent: "Reality is just one element in the process of taking a photograph".[240] The indicial aspect appeared through different notions throughout the practice of 20th century movements. While it started in the aforementioned cases as the 'essence of the thing itself', it moved towards notions of truthfulness, documentary value, passivity, neutrality, accidentality, randomness and serendipity.

In the case of August Sander's portraiture work, for example, the indicial contribution became a conscious pursuit, eliminating theatricality and posing as much possible, even if he had the lucidity to acknowledge the impact of photography on the two different modes of its structure, namely, picture and trace: "..[Photography] can render things with magnificent beauty but also with terrifying truthfulness".[241] While for Sander, the imprint of unmediated reality might bring 'terror', in the case of the New Topographers, it was used to bring indifference, the banal, the neutral.

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[240] Ansel Adams, 'I am a photographer' (first printed in *Image*, March 1959) in *The Camera Viewed*, Vol 2, 1979, p.36.

[241] August Sander, 'Remarks on my exhibition at the Cologne Art Union' in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the Modern area: European documents and critical writings, 1913-1940,* 1989, p.107.

5.3.2 New Topographics: handling the ordinary, in an unmediated way

Some of the images in my practice seemingly share elements with the work of the photographers of the New Topographics. In both cases, the subject of the ordinariness of daily life seems to take centre stage, mainly using the 'documentary' as a representational style. My practice aspires to go a step beyond the New Topographics' attitude. While the latter's images create a tension of push-pull between interest and tedium, my images intend – and to some extent I believe they achieve – to not need to enter the realm of tedium. The field of tension remains solely that of the interest, an interest due to their impenetrable nature, in terms of the reason of their appeal. If there is a push-pull tension, this occurs between the viewer's fishing rod and the image's resisting meaning; in the same way that the fish remains unrevealed –despite being caught–the viewer feels, via the fishing line's resistance, that there is something to come up soon. To be more precise, s/he wishes for this revelation, though has no guarantee that this will finally happen. All the fisherman/viewer can claim is the belief that *there is something there, though I have no idea what is it*. Such an example of a seemingly distanced approach, imbued with a crescendo of action that aims to dissolve the tedium, is given in the image *Panormos*.

Vasileios Kantas, *Panormos*, 2009

In 1975, at George Eastman House, the exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* was shown by the newly founded Center for Creative Photography. The work of the participant artists – Lewis Baltz, Robert Adams, Henry Wessel, Jr., Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joe Deal, Frank Gohlke, Nicholas Nixon, John Scott and Stephen Shore – was considered as a visual enigma. As

a spectator to this exhibition commented: "At first they're really stark nothing, but then you really look at it and it's about the way things are."[242] The feeling left with the spectators can be summarised by a feeling of perplexity around the subject of the photograph and the intention of the photographer: "Why? What is he trying to show?" another interviewed spectator wonders. The conversation between the two aforementioned viewers went as follows:

"– I don't like them, they're dull and flat. There's no people, no involvement, nothing. Why do you like them?
– Because I've been there. This is what people have done. 'This is it, kid, take it for its beauty and its ugliness.'"

John Scott, from the series *Route 66 Motels*, 1973

New Topographics has adopted a neutral, unemphatic, detached stance which fosters ambiguity around the subject matter as well as the intentions of the photographer. A first, quick reading would nominate as subject matter the mundane depictions of commonplace scenery. The main strategy seems to be the creation of a photograph that looks like an image that is easy-to-take, a self-made – acheiropoiiti – image, for which the photographer's role is diminished, aiming for a depersonalisation of style, and the author is nature itself, unmediated by human intervention.

The key to its appeal seems to be that of an effect where the photograph reveals neither its motivation nor its subject and, even more importantly, it does not impose any meaning on the viewer. It seduces by hiding, hinting, confusing the viewer. New Topographics achieved a level of

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[242] Reply to an interview/conversation which was tape recorded at the exhibition place. For a part of it, see p.9 in Britt Salvesen (ed.) *New Topographics*, 2009.

abstraction of meaning, on top of those levels implemented by the medium itself, such as the hallucination that time can be captured and depicted in a 2D space. Some decades later, a reconceptualisation of this body of work considered the New Topographics either as a style of depicting ordinariness or as a cohesion of artistic and social concerns, or its automatism was even perceived as being artful in effect, echoing the Barthesian idea of a 'styleless' style.

For John Rohrbach, photography curator and co-editor of the treatise *Reframing the New Topographics,* the show visually rendered the shift of the American culture from an urban, industrial one to a service-orientated economy defined by the way neighbourhoods were laid out and, consequently, by how they shaped the landscape. Rohrbach argues that the style of neutral distancing or emotional removal that those photographs convey is the appropriate tool – and a response maybe – to express and mirror the "atmosphere of vacant alienation" in which the Americans were living.[243]   Rohrbach suggests that the photographers who participated in that exhibition were strongly influenced by the political, social and cultural currents of the late 1960s and early 1970s in America.

For Toby Jurovics, the subject of the New Topographics was 'society' and, specifically, the blandness of the contemporary built environment; the spectators were asked to engage with the occurrences on the land rather than just visually consume the landscapes as a source of aesthetic pleasure. Nevertheless, the New Topographers, according to Jurovics, additionally gave serious consideration to the form too, having, as a result, an image that reconsiders the criteria of the validity of a photograph by offering 'a language of possibility'.[244]

Having dealt with the New Topographics exhibition as a mini case study of critical analysis of a body of photography work, I am offering the reader of this thesis an example of what I consider to be an inadequate, poor reading of a photograph/body of work. It is so, I claim, because Jurovics' claims, for instance, consider only one factor of the apprehension model I suggested earlier – that of the Operator. Moreover, he does it in a rather speculative way, because there were nine photographers who participated in the exhibition, and they produced work that was not commissioned or arranged to have a similar perspective on a specific subject matter; therefore, it is rather difficult for someone to align their intentions into a single, composite one, namely, society, and maybe that is why the critic's suggested subject had such a vague notion of encompassing them all into something relevant

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[243]Greg Foster-Rice & John Rohrbach (eds.), *Reframing the New Topographics,* 2010, p. xiv.

[244] Toby Jurovics, 'Same as it ever was: re-reading new topographics' in *Reframing the New Topographics*, p.12.

to their era. From my point of view, the argument that the subject was 'society' is rather ineffective; no matter what the photographers intended, the viewer apprehends the image according to his/her own repertoire too. As far as I understand the work of the New Topographers, the underlying thread concerns the 'democratisation' of the image, that is, setting the image free from the author's intentions to be apprehended as *anything whatever*. It seems to me as an acceptance, on behalf of the photographers, of having no control over the photographs' meaning whatsoever. Such reasoning is deductive and arises if one has enough data to feed all five zones of the OASPV model and, consequently, consider the New Topographics through as wide a perspective as possible. For example, one can be led to the conclusion of the image's democratisation if fed with information concerning the Operator factor. Such information can be research into the photographers' beliefs and intentions at the time they were producing their work, such as the fact that John Schott used the view camera as a tool able to produce images which, according, to him could be characterised as 'anti-expressive' and 'about looking' and which would create a sense of passivity while providing clarity of details.[245]

I continue below with some viewpoints on the exhibition, in order to make clear my perspective that, in most of the cases, critics adopt unilateral standpoints to review photographs and that is why serious treatises on practitioners are published as collections of reviews edited by different scholars.

For Finis Danaway, what the New Topographics photographers contributed to the perception of the landscape was the choice, as well as the handling, of the scenery depicted, by differentiating their images from the "grandiose visions of their predecessors", while simultaneously allowing the viewer to become an interpreter of what s/he could see, to draw his own conclusion.[246] Greg Foster-Rice discerns the systemic study of style as the main characteristic of their work. Adopting the remarks of Mel Bochner on 'serial attitude' – which I refer to as 'seriality' – according to whom seriality is a concern with how order of a specific type is manifest, Foster-Rice argues that the human-altered landscape became the system and the photographs dealt with its organising principles.[247] For Foster-Rice, the achievement of their work lies in the fact that their working methodology draws attention

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[245] Britt Salvesen (ed.) *New Topographics*, 2009, p.31.

[246] Finis Danaway, 'Beyond wilderness: Robert Adams, New Topographics and the aesthetics of ecological citizenship' in *Reframing the New Topographics*, p. xxiii.

[247] Greg Foster-Rice, 'Systems everywhere' in *Reframing the New Topographics*, p.68. For more on 'seriality' see Mel Bochner, 'The Serial attitude' in Alex Alberro & Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: a critical anthology*, 1999.

to the "interconnected relationships between aesthetics and lived social experience".[248] This last phrase hints at the concern of those photographers about handling the dynamic between the consciential and the presential aspect of photographs in an appropriate way. There is one more remark which indicates that the practice of the New Topographers can be understood as the coexistence of the two modes examined in my study. William Jenkins, the curator of the show, was very careful in attributing a specific style to the work exhibited. Jenkins, through his choice of work to be displayed, seems to extol the camera's mechanical character. What is quite characteristic of his stance is his statement that "the actual photographs are far richer in meaning and scope than the simple making of an aesthetic point".[249] In the original catalogue, Jenkins attempted to give the essence of those images by describing them as an intention of the photographers to make documents that include both "actual, physical subject matter and conceptual or referential subject matter"[250]. This phrase points directly to my presential/consciential argument.

However, what is broadly agreed among photography historians is that their practice established a turning point in the history of the medium because, through attributing a fashion to the mundane and emotionless, their images seem to ridicule the previous definitions of what made photographs artful. The above statement shows us that because what we articulate about those photographs, or to be more precise, what we make out of those photographs as effect, is two notions, namely, 'mundane' and 'emotionless', of which none can be verbally justified by referencing the medium's inherent characteristics. These two notions do not refer either to the zone of P (Which forms or signs in the photograph can attest the mundane?) or to S (Which part of the scenery can attest the emotionless?) or A (Which use of equipment is responsible for shaping the mundane?) but, instead, I suppose here, emanate mainly from zone V (where subjectivity and taste culture determine what belongs to the mundane) and partially, if so wished, from zone O, where the American photographer communicates the experience of his surroundings through form. One of the things that this study displays is the arbitrariness with which much of the discourse around photographic practice has been shaped.

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[248] Greg Foster-Rice, 'Systems everywhere' in *Reframing the New Topographics*, p.69.

[249] Britt Salvesen (ed.) *New Topographics*, 2009, p.52.

[250] Britt Salvesen (ed.) *New Topographics*, 2009, p.12.

5.3.3 William Eggleston, Paris Petridis, Alex Brattell: handling the undefinable

William Eggleston's work is one of those indicative cases where arbitrary, speculative conceptualisation has formed the dominant discourse around his practice. The onomatopoeia of the title 'father of colour photography' hides the inability of the critics to define why his photographs actually appeal. The list of similar cases of idiosyncratic, undecipherable work in the field of photography could include many practitioners; I only refer here to three of them: Eggleston, Paris Petridis and Alexander Brattell. What can be indicated as a common denominator, which could also be the reason for the appeal of their work, I argue, is the appropriate handling on behalf of the photographers of the consciential and presential aspects, which enhances the photograph's already paroxystic nature with an extra level of mystification.

Eggleston's work, as well as my practice, deals with, amongst others, the issue of examining the medium's objectivity by seemingly portraying nothingness. A visual rendering of this logic is given in the photographs below.
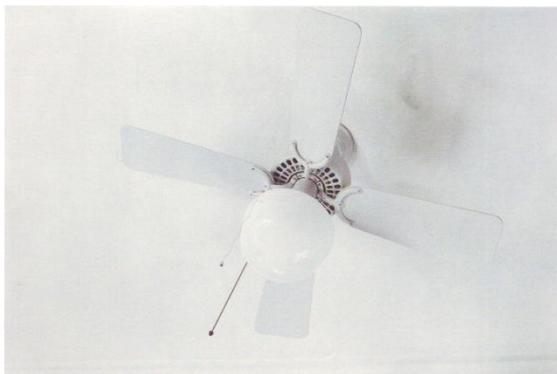
William Eggleston, *Washington D.C.*, 1990   Vasileios Kantas, *Mermaid,* 2011

Scott Walden has approached the issue of objectivity in photography, trying to find wherein the epistemic advantage of the medium lies. Taking for granted that when a viewer encounters a photograph, they form the belief that this picture is objectively formed, suggests that objectivity is a quality belonging neither to the picture itself nor to the thoughts that this picture engenders; it rather belongs to the process that begins with the original scene and ends in the formation of the picture. From this perspective, the OASPV model's factors (S), (A), (P) can provide objective elements regarding a photograph under scrutiny, irrespective of whether the factors (O) and (V) impregnate

subjectivity in its apprehension. This is because the term 'objective' is frequently used to denote standards or processes that somehow exclude mental states.[251]

Dominic Lopes has introduced his 'true appreciation principle', as a solution to the problem of objectivity, based on the notion of false belief. He argues that if we accept that we falsely believe that photographs deserve confidence in their veracity, then our appreciations are inadequate insofar as they rest on this false belief. Nevertheless, he continues, we need not appreciate photographs as photographs, but we could profit if we appreciate them as fauxtographs, while knowing that they are not fauxtographs. As he aptly writes, "When we appreciate photographs as we do –taking ourselves to appreciate them as photographs – in fact we appreciate them as fauxtographs."[252] Finally, for Flusser, photography has shown that ideas function in ways that attest to both ways of thinking by offering, through the prism of technology, a discussion of the difference between 'objective' and 'ideological' thinking. He suggests that the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity is rendered more than problematic, due to the existence of objective phases in the act of clearly representational mediums such as painting and of subjective phases in the act of photographing.[253]

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[251] For a discussion upon modes of mental state involvement in the process leading to an image's formation, see Scott Walden, 'Objectivity in Photography' in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.45, issue 3, July 2005; also see Scott Walden, 'Truth in Photography' in *Photography and Philosophy*, 2008 and 'Photography and Knowledge' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Special Issue: The Media of Photography, Vol. 70, issue 1, Winter 2012. Dr Walden is a visiting scholar at the department of Philosophy in New York University.

[252] Dominic Lopes, 'True appreciation' in Scott Walden (ed), *Photography and Philosophy*, 2008, p.224. Lopes illustrates his claim by giving the following example: "Some paintings we regularly appreciate as little pieces of theatre, and others we appreciate as photographs. Some photographs we appreciate as paintings. In each of these cases, we appreciate what we believe to be a K* as a K. In some of these cases, part of full appreciation of the K* as a K*involves appreciating it as a K." Ibid, p.228.

[253] As Flusser writes, "If we recognize that photographs are caused by phenomena, whereas paintings point phenomena out, we can analyse the difference between causal and semiotic explanation. So, photographs are explained when we know the electromagnetic, chemical and other processes through which they were produced, and paintings are explained if we are able to see in them the intentionality that is being expressed (Flusser, 'The gesture of Photographing' in *Journal of Visual Culture*, p.283). Respecting the validity of Flusser's claims, this thesis, through using the element of practice, enters the problematic realm of this coexistence. It does so in order to provide a model of thinking upon the inextricable nature of the two tangled modes while perceiving a photograph, by also rendering visible the problematic aspects of this 'synoeciosis' – the harmonious coupling of two oppositional elements under the same roof; my own practice offers a conscious illustration of a balanced handling of the two directorial parameters/modes.

The subjective perspective in the act of photographing governs, apart from my practice, the work of Petridis too. The image *Peloponnese 2* has been chosen here due to its susceptibility to also be understood and evaluated for reasons which lie beyond the concept given to it in its publication, exactly as my images often escape the conceptualisation given to them by viewers. In particular, Petridis' photograph is conceived – by his book editors as well as his practice-led PhD thesis - in the context of 'a visual note from a traveller', while for me this is not the only, and certainly not the main, reason of this photograph's appeal; in the same way, the image *After church* did not intend to hint any 'sustainability or ecological consciousness' concept, as was initially attributed to it, when shown at a portfolio review in Photofusion gallery in London.

Paris Petridis, *Peloponnese 2,* 2000   Vasileios Kantas, *After church*, 2011

Paris Petridis replied to my request to verbally articulate the reason for this photograph's appeal by sending a long text, extracted from his practice-led PhD thesis, referring to his practice. I include below an excerpt from it that refers to the photograph *Peloponnese 2*, aiming to show that, apart from the last four lines that analyse the Apparatus factor, the rest of his reading belongs to the zone of the Viewer factor, informed, however, by elements of the Operator factor too, as he is the man behind the camera. Whether it is an efficient reading or not, is disputable. What I can say though, is that it did not contribute to my understanding of the photograph, despite the impressively rich connotative nature of his positioning.

"In Peloponnese 2, what looks like a quiet pastoral scene at first glance is disturbed by a set of spatial, temporal and conceptual tensions. The upper half of the picture is 'on the move' as a receding mountain meets a travelling heavy sky in infinity; the sky itself appears to float on a different plane as if it were a collage. In contrast, the lower half, 'loaded' by the recumbent grazing cows and construction materials, is rooted. While the space behind the cattle is unfettered, the

foreground is blocked. On the semiotic level: abundance and fertility (the cows) 'fight' emptiness and bareness (the land); colour temperatures alternate as we progress from bottom to top (cold-warm-cold). Set in the above context, the picture is an attempt to undermine the romantic/pastoral landscape tradition by depicting an updated report of the vicissitudes from the man-nature front; at the same time though, it is not quite either. For, what this encounter (the real referent) essentially refers to is neither art history nor ecology: it is a living condition. Resting upon construction materials (i.e., culture, progress) in the greatest abandon under a broken sun, these cows seem self-contained. Their apparent stoicism and apathy mocks the futility of human expediencies (photography included). Made with a small format camera, Peloponnese 2 lacks proper definition when enlarged, say, beyond 30x40cm. It is true, spacious subject matter usually asks for a large print. Otherwise, how else could we scrutinize the land, reveal the light, express presences, accommodate distance, in short, enhance the verisimilitude of the representation?"

According to Petridis' statements collected out in email correspondence, photographs remain fragmentary, mute and disable. He tends to like banal subjects, though not necessarily banal photographs. When asked to elaborate on the topic of the banal and the everyday in his practice, he stated:

"The problem is, whether the commonplace, the threadbare –name it is as you want- can be depicted through a photograph which is extraordinary or through a banal one. I have always been in favour of the former, almost obviously, but not any longer. It has been some time lately that, for me, Ed Ruscha's gesture has acquired another meaning.....I tried it at the series 'Spaces of Violence'. This body of work was not liked, especially by photographers ('nothing happens in these photographs' was their response, as if that was the subject, or as though 'they lack of aesthetic interest', really?)"

Borrowing from Althusser the notion that the photograph registers the presence of an absence, failing to fully represent the past, Petridis has also stated that

 "a photograph does not exist without the visible and therefore the only way for it to tell the truth in this attempt, is to register, with no beautification and artistry, this absence itself."

This notion of the photograph bearing the ineffable and portraying the undefinable is also met, apart from in my own practice, in Alexander Brattell's work, too. Specifically, while explaining the rhetoric behind his series *Qualia* (2010-2012) on his website, he stated that it is about "the nature of subjective experience". It should be noted that amongst Brattell's influences are the photographer Minor White, who introduced the 'manifestation/revelation theory' which inspired Maynard's

'manifestation thesis', and that is why Brattell photographs "things for what else they are". The same logic underlies my own practice, targeting to reveal medium specificity issues.

Brattell is another practitioner that I approached for the purposes of this thesis, asking him to verbally describe the reason why he thinks that some specific images appeal, framing my query as an open-ended question that welcomes conceptual reasoning through either his directorial strategies or theoretical issues that had been influential for him.

Alex Brattel, *London road*, Sep 2009

Brattell sent me back *London Road*, as a case of a photograph that 'works' for the photographer but not necessarily for other viewers too. He structured his reply around the working process he follows and the concerns he inhabits. It is quite remarkable to discern that, despite the fact that he has been asked to speak about a particular photograph, he felt the need to articulate his thoughts by referring instead to all of his practice. I consider it as a sign that the meaning of a photograph, or what it communicates, is a sum of issues not to be found on its surface – on the handmade print in this case – but rather to be traced along a bigger entity of interdependent elements, namely the *act* of photography, as this thesis suggests and of which the elements are provided by the OASPV model. Providing the argument that the reason for his *London road* photograph's appeal is 'its mystery', he turns to all those things that he is able to verbally describe and, of course, he is aware of, but of which the viewer is not aware. This means that, in the case of a photograph whose apprehension

appears problematic – please note here that this occurs for one's most wondering piece of work – he is forced to leave the direct confrontation with the material aspect of it, namely, the print itself, what is seen on the surface, and search for its substance in all the peripheral processes, both personal and cultural, that are related to its production. He usually finds it in the 'raison-d'etre' for the photograph itself, such as:

"I document the sensation of seeing, fixing moments of heightened awareness in a search for resonance beyond subject matter. My photography is a personal animism preoccupied with shapes of thought and the revelatory nature of peripheral vision. It is the recognition of an alphabet of sensation that lies beneath the threshold of language. A spirit of place often emerges from the work, but at its core is the impulse to articulate the nature of experience and maintain contact with the miraculous within the mundane."

Brattell's reply to my query is shown below:

"It is hard for me to verbally articulate why this picture works as, like a lot of my work, it is about mystery, not necessarily about its subject matter. For me, my images only work if I can articulate, at least to myself, why they are successful. I frequently have trouble articulating them satisfactorily to other people. I could try articulating why this photograph works by listing some of the requirements I have for my prints that are fulfilled in this picture:

Good structure. Strong tonal composition (the photograph must attract the eye in order to let the mind linger within it); there must be interesting texture; it should appear differently in different light and from different moods – the image is not fixed; it works at different levels.

Additionally, I am strongly attracted to pictures which: Contain a portal (a point of transcendence or transformation); play with perception in terms of perspective or scale; work against the cognitive dissonance of everyday life (believing what we see rather than seeing what we believe); contain textual elements that introduce further possible readings.

I do not design these elements into my work but embrace them when they appear. The creativity that interests me is a conduit of something greater than myself rather than a projection of my existing mentality. The picture is hard to articulate as it is a mystery.

The above points do little to inform the picture and all these requirements could also be realised in a picture that did not 'work'. Besides, descriptive writing about images is often tedious and unhelpful unless it explains symbolism, technique or historical context.

Providing information about the picture is also of limited interest. In this case, I would write: This photograph was made on a compact Ricoh GR1V 35mm camera on Ilford FP4 film whilst collecting my son from school in St Leonards On Sea, East Sussex UK, approximately 8 minutes walk from our house. It was printed nearly two years after it was made for an exhibition on fibre based 11"x14" paper. This information is merely incidental and also fails to articulate the picture's appeal.

Another approach might be to write about my working process: I have always wanted to make photographs that people would want to live with, pictures that have the quality and depth to remain in people's lives. I always carry a camera and rarely go out especially to photograph for myself. I work in series rather than projects. Photography is a process that accompanies my daily life outside of my other professional dealings with photography (as a commercial photographer and a teacher of photography). Sometimes looking becomes intense and that act of seeing demands to be recorded.

When I photograph for myself I am without intention and preoccupied with the process of interacting with the external world. The moment of finding a resonant assembly of elements and framing them in a viewfinder remains as exciting and joyful to me now as when I started photographing 30 years ago. At this moment I have no wish to deal with my experience in terms of a picture, for example by checking a histogram; the moment is only about perception in that moment.

My first communication with the photograph at each stage – exposure, negative, contact sheet and print – is non-verbal and comes in the form of quick little tunes or beats in my head. This sounds crazy to speak of, for years I kept it to myself until I read Eugene Smith saying exactly the same thing. He said there were different types of tunes and rhythms for shooting.

The first interaction with the image is the first impression of seeing a newly processed negative that stands out from the others on the roll. This is instinctive and can prove false because a good structural and tonal composition is frequently compromised by poor subject matter. This becomes apparent at the contact printing stage. Images to print are selected from contact sheets in a variety of ways depending on mood or purpose. Often it is the images that become eidetic and lodge in my memory that announce themselves as negatives I must print.

In my pictures (to quote John Berger), mystery is not something to be solved but to be carried. My principle interest in making photographs is the evolution of perception and spiritual development. It is a tool for personal development accompanied by a need to communicate. It also satisfies a mysterious & inexplicable need to create (revealed, very simply, by unhappiness when I don't create).

I photograph as an exploration and so am very happy when pictures yield answers later, taking it as a sign that I am working beyond my conscious understanding. This is not a self-conscious attempt to be weird or original, but rather an acknowledgement that significance often lies underneath the mechanisms of conscious mind and can be uncovered by instinctive and unjudgemental camera work. Many of the pictures I have made that have helped me develop as a photographer I did not immediately recognise as significant, or even particularly good.

The above is a long winded way of still not directly explaining why the image works. It must, I'm afraid, explain itself, which is of little use to gallerists, publishers and others who could be of importance to me in my career."

5.3.4 Neorealism in film: handling serendipity

The next creative imagery domain that my practice has shared elements with is that of embracing serendipity; Neorealism in film has been amongst the movements that have adopted this strategy.

Despite the fact that the medium is different, I believe that there has been a mutual osmosis between the performing arts, and the act of photography hosts performativity de facto. Through the writings of Bazin, one can spot points of interest that could support my claim regarding the synoeciosis of the twofold mode of photography. Bazin thought that realism, apart from style and rhetoric, is the essence of cinema. He wrote of the neorealist cinematic approach: "Its true meaning lies in not betraying the essence of things, in allowing them first to exist for their own sakes, freely; it is to love them in their single individual reality."[254] He pinpoints the director Da Sica's achievement in "discovering the cinematographic dialectic capable of transcending the contradiction between the action of a 'spectacle' and of an event."[255]

Referring to *Ladri di Biciclette* as the ultimate expression of neorealism, Bazin wrote that "though this mise-en-scene aims at negating itself, as being transparent to the reality it reveals, it would be naive to conclude that it does not exist [...] it is precisely from the dialectical synthesis of contrary values, namely artistic order and the amorphous disorder of reality, that it derives its originality".[256] Defining this film as one of the first examples of what he called 'pure' cinema, he did not hesitate to

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[254] Andre Bazin, *What is cinema*, 1971, Vol II, p.14.

[255] *What is cinema*, Vol II, p.60.

[256] *What is cinema*, Vol II, p.68

express a truism: "No more actors, no more story, no more sets, which is to say that in the perfect aesthetic illusion of reality there is no more cinema."[257]

What Bazin defined as an 'aesthetic illusion of reality', Kracauer referred to as 'unfathomable realism'. Kracauer conceded that many films combine realist tendencies with formalist ones, but the films that allow us to experience aspects of physical reality are, from an aesthetic viewpoint, the most valid ones. What Kracauer emphasised was "the importance of being true to the combined accidentality and deliberateness of perspective in response to the randomness in experience. If the camera records more than the photographer controls, if there are more or different things to be seen than the photographer thought or knew, this is a challenge to shape objectivity so that it accommodates both control and submission".[258] An example of my practice reflecting the welcoming of serendipity can be seen in the photograph *Centrecourt,* where a child suddenly adopts an active position, though undecipherable in intention, or in the photograph *Photo me,* where a couple enters the booth at the last second and thus enter the scene which was already framed to host just the lonely girl with the desperate look.

Vasileios Kantas, *Photo-me*, 2009   Vasileios Kantas, *Centrecourt*, 2009

The closest photography genre to Neorealism is 'Street' photography, in which the hunt for chance encounters has been a key target of its exponents. For some practitioners who, susceptible to adventure, moved on to construct their images within the scope of 'Staged' photography, the reality effect found its expression in the face of serendipity. Artists using the medium of photography, such as Jeff Wall, Hannah Starkey, Panos Kokkinias, Philip Lorca diCorcia and Roger Ballen, have all

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[257] *What is cinema*, Vol II, p.60

[258] Dagmar Barnouw, *Critical Realism: History, Photography and the work of Siegfried Kracauer*, 1994, p.18.

declared in interviews that they construct their scene in a way that they not only welcome but they rather lie in ambush for unexpected incidents to imbue their images. This manufacturing and directing of the element of chance could be explained as an attempt to counterbalance the pictorial aspect of their images – which is on a high level, due to the staging effect, in relation to the indicial aspect – towards achieving equal proportions of them. Having meticulously observed in my scholarly past the genre of staged photography, I claim that producing photographs that aim to have a balanced dosage between the two modes may lead to what the field recognises as interesting photographs. In this thesis, I attempt to articulate, not verbally but visually, through the images that my practice offers, what exactly I mean by saying 'balanced dosage'.

A final, yet remarkable, way of formulating Van Lier's comparison diptychs is the link with the notions of the 'event' and the 'possible', drawn from the ancient times of the Pharaohs and the Romans, indicating a distinction between the certain, the foreseen, the expected situation, and the uncertain, the fortuitous, the surprise. What Van Lier described here is exactly Jeff Wall's conscious strategy of producing images, which aspire to encompass the modes of both chance and control, towards the appearance of what he calls 'occurrence'. Wall's strategy, to distance his images from the notion of the event, is a clever device for allowing the image to enter the realm of representation without being examined for its factuality. Similar concerns are encountered in Philip Lorca DiCorcia's practice, where he implies that there is no other reality than the reality of representation, declaring that he sees his work as 'non-happenings' and 'non-events',[259] because the problem with the notion of the event and, consequently, of reality, is that it is conceived slightly differently by everyone and thus comes closer to the notion of the 'truth'. The truth, not as a universal distinct value, but rather as a personal one, is described by the media critic, Ine Gevers, as "something that can be communicated, not just a matter of opinions; something you encounter, in the form of an event; it seizes you through being faithful to the process that follows. It is something that happens to you".[260]

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[259] DiCorcia has experimented in-depth with these notions in his work, *Streetwork*. The terms mentioned here are from Jose Luis Brea's accompanying text to the publication, *Philip Lorca DiCorcia: Streetwork*, 1995.

[260] Ine Gevers, 'Images that demand consummation: post-documentary photography, art and ethics' in *Documentary Now*, 1995, p.95.

6. Epilogue

The integrative literature review along with the contemplation of the photographs created for the scope of this study have contributed to shaping a model for apprehending photographs. The latter indicated that a photograph should be considered as just a part of a chain –of a system of thought and practice called the photography act – and not as an isolated object that has an inherent meaning. Therefore, I have argued that a photograph's apprehension should adopt an expanded, broad account of the processes underlying the stages of its construction, perception and conception.

If one wants to verbally describe what a specific photograph is about, what effect it produces, or what is able to show, one should not refer to what is seen on that photograph's surface, but rather should exhaust as much as possible the scrutiny of the elements constituting the photography act that hosts it, of which a photograph alone is just a 'disabled' part.

In the case of photographs that resist apprehension, like *Yellow brick house*, the rather prevalent detail of a single leg in blue jeans walking on a pavement –at the edge of the window lines - is not the only theme that could be nominated as the subject matter.

Vasileios Kantas, *Yellow brick house,* 2011

A case study on this specific photograph, which could then be fed into the OASPV model, could certainly provide more truthful options of any possible noeme; however, the list of potential nominations, connotations and free associations seems to be as inexhaustible as the viewers'/photographers' cerebral ability to shape meaning, either inside or outside the linguistic realm. This is simply because photographs actually obfuscate what they seemingly depict, even

when they seem to offer clarification by providing rich details of subjects. This is at least the case with photography practitioners who use realism in order to speak about its opposite: the photograph's quality to portray the ineffable, the undefinable. My practice, in the same way as photographs such as Petridis' *Roumeli*, visually justifies this claim.

Paris Petridis, *Roumeli*, 2001

The review of relevant theories upon medium specificity issues, in addition to the examination of my own practice and other practitioners' beliefs and work, provided sufficient evidence upon which to build a model of apprehending photographs. Despite the possibility of collecting a vast amount of data around a photograph, the apprehending attempted in such a way cannot yet be fully realised, fully investigated, fully deployed, either in words or perceptions.

There is indeed a synoeciosis point at which the dynamic between the trace and the picture acquires a subtle, wise level of equilibrium. However, this cannot be quantified; that point cannot be illustrated on a map or diagram as a *topos*, or geometrical space. My aspiration is that my practice illustrates this in the only way it can be rendered. How close, how efficiently or how transparently I render it, is a matter that could be discussed; future research could illuminate this. Maybe the best way to achieve it is through practice itself. Garry Winogrand never stopped practising; he even left thousands of photographs undeveloped after his death. His work, though, might hold the answers to my query, and it seems that any important contribution to a field that is visual anyway could be achieved through the aspect of practice itself. I find his attitude towards photography very similar to mine, inasmuch as he asked: "What are you trying to say in that photograph? 'I don't have anything to say in any picture' Why did you print it if it has no meaning? 'with that particular picture- ah, I'm interested in the space and I maybe can learn something about photography'"; "my only interest in

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photographing is photography";"...for me anyway when a photograph is interesting, it's interesting because of the kind of photographic problem it states – which has to do with the contest between content and form". [261]

Gary Winogrand, *White sands national monument*, 1964

Apart though from this omnipresent battle between binary units in the photograph, I can also report what I discovered through peer reviewing my practice: Kaggelaris' suggestion, that the photographer is actually creating a self portrait irrespective of the subject seemingly depicted, is apt and I realise that I project elements of my idiosyncrasy into my photographs; maybe in the way I use composition/frame design, I allow issues I am concerned with to appear, such as 'order', harmony, contradiction and a tendency to categorise.

As mentioned previously, the main problem I realised throughout the application of the OASPV model is that it requires a vast amount of data, usually not accessible to a typical viewer of a photograph. Despite the fact that the logic underlying its design is very pragmatic, the use of this apprehension model turns out to be rather painful due to the demand for an impressive amount of data that needs to be fed into it. It is a very helpful tool for critics and conscious practitioners; however, it is rather a luxury tool for the daily viewers who encounter a random photograph and who simply base their apprehension on an instant recognition process. This renders the model's complete employment a rather hard, though not unrealistic, task. After all, it seems to be a

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[261] Garry Winogrand, excerpts taken from Dennis Longwell, 'Monkeys make the problem more difficult: a collective interview with Garry Winogrand' (first printed in *Image*, July 1972) in *The camera Viewed*, Vol.2, 1979, pp.119-121.

meticulously scrutinising tool that is able to discern elements in the photograph that not even the photographer had noticed. Or, to be more precise, it is able to refer to elements outside of the photograph that trigger stimuli which are external and irrelative to it.

The achievement of the OASPV, pragmatic in its nature and standing for the voice of reason, is that it actually provides hope; the hope is that there is depth in or around the photograph that can be accessed either through triggering the imagination or through meticulous exploration amongst the model's zones, or the photograph's layers, if preferred. From nihilistic and pessimistic dictums such as Laruelle's "The photograph communicates to man the effect and the experience of 'flat thought'" and "The photo lets chaos be as chaos, without claiming to grasp it again as sense, as becoming, as truth", this thesis manages to take the viewer into a more optimistic, even though unrealistic, realm, through the OASPV model.[262]

I choose to not surrender, adopting a viewpoint similar to that of Pavel Buchler: "Questioning as a critical end in itself, putting in doubt without a commitment to uncovering and exploring a sense of possibility, is merely an act of surrender to the way things happen to be".[263] I completely acknowledge the existence of death; however I continue leaving, by ignoring it: I disavow. I completely acknowledge what Laruelle suggests below, but I actually offer the OASPV model: I hope.

"*There is no transfer of reality of the perceived World to the image-photo, in the form of simulacra, effigies, traces, indirect causal effect, magical presence, etc. which would have been captured, transmitted or activated by photographic technology. That would be conservative realism. In reality, photography, far from analyzing the World (something it also does, but only as a secondary effect) to draw out an image from it...[it] replaces itself from the start in this hyper-perceptual and hyper-imaginary dimension that it effectuates or actualizes with the aid of the representational support – including its technological conditions of existence*."[264]

Yes, photographs are chaotic indeed, though this thesis offers a thread in order to help the viewers escape from the labyrinth that photography's unfathomability/ineffability has built and trapped them in. The OASPV model becomes Ariadne's thread in the Minotaur myth, where Theseus is the viewer that tries to find his way out of the labyrinth.

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[262] Laruelle, *The concept of Non Photography*, p.119 and p.99 accordingly.

[263] Pavel Buchler, 'The blind train-spotter: A Delirium of Doubt' in David Green (ed.), *Where is the photograph*, 2003, p.89

[264] Laruelle, *The concept of Non Photography*, p.119.

To paraphrase the famous Barthesian dilemma, *Mad or Tame?* what should the viewers choose? To stay calm and secure in a world that they control but where nothing exciting happens, or to escape to a world where exhilaration due to the unknown is promised? This thesis poses the question *Hyper perceptual, hyper imaginary dimension or OASPV?*

7. Appendix

7.1 List of photographs included in the portfolio accompanying this thesis:

1. Vasileios Kantas, *Closed*, 2008

2. Vasileios Kantas, *157 bus*, 2009

3. Vasileios Kantas, *Eyes wide open*, 2012

4. Vasileios Kantas, *Three ladies*, 2010

5. Vasileios Kantas, *Decorateur,* 2011

6. Vasileios Kantas, *After Gustav*, 2010

7. Vasileios Kantas, *Wandering, wondering*, 2010

8. Vasileios Kantas*, Mondays & Tuesdays*, 2011

9. Vasileios Kantas, *Slide*, 2010

10. Vasileios Kantas, *Elvis*, 2010

11. Vasileios Kantas, *Basen*, 2010

12. Vasileios Kantas, *Learning to drive*, 2011

13. Vasileios Kantas, *Donna's dream*, 2009

14. Vasileios Kantas, *NAOK*, 2012

15. Vasileios Kantas, *Photo-me*, 2009

16. Vasileios Kantas, *My life in London*, 2009

Record of these images' publication:

- Wimbledon College of Art / UAL's website – *Showtime ,* 2009 (images 1, 2, 16)

  http://showtime.arts.ac.uk/vasileioskantas

- London School of Liberal Arts' website, 2011 (images 10, 11)

  http://www.libartslondon.co.uk/3858/vasileios-kantas

- Photo Hub Group Hastings's website, 2013 (image 3)

  http://www.phghastings.co.uk/2013/01/photology-feb4th-2013-vasileios-kantas-phd

- Royal Photographic Society's website - *Urban Photo Fest's,* 2013 (images 1, 2, 15, 16)

  http://rps-upf.org/competition/photographer/6996/

- *Work in Progress (WIP)* online magazine (images 1,2)

  http://www.wip.gr/issues/Wip8.pdf

- Institute of Contemporary Art, London *-Bloomberg New Contemporaries,* Nov 2010 (image 15)

- A Foundation, Liverpool *-Bloomberg New Contemporaries,* Sep2010 (image 15)

- The Greenwich gallery, London - *RPS: Urban Photo Fest Competition finalists*, Oct 2013 (image 2)

- Santorini, *1st Santorini Biennale of Arts,* 'The past', Aug 2012 (images 1, 4, 13)

All images included in the portfolio were presented (power point presentation) in the following two events:

- Hastings, *Photology talks*, 'On images that maintain an appeal', 04/02/13

(http://www.phghastings.co.uk/2013/01/photology-feb4th-2013-vasileios-kantas-phd)

- 'Ordinary, Everyday, Quotidian', conference in University of York, York, 26-27/09/13

  "Targeting the (extra) ordinary through photographing quotidian urban scenes"

Finally, some photographs belonging to my practice executed for the purpose of this study, though not included in the 16 listed above, were shown in the exhibition *Worldwide@Young Portfolio*, Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts, Japan, Oct 2011.

7.2 List of the rest of the photographs included in the thesis:

17. Vasileios Kantas, *Chessman*, 2010

18. Vasileios Kantas, *Dead bat*, 2009

19. Vasileios Kantas, *Security*, 2012

20. Alex Brattell, *Ashmolean Oxford*, March 2010

21. Vasileios Kantas, *Empire,* 2011

22. Vasileios Kantas, *Black Cat*, 2012

23. Alex Brattell, image from the series *Lines of desire*, 2003

24. Vasileios Kantas, *Paul*, 2009

25. Vasileios Kantas, *Panormos*, 2009

26. John Scott, image from the series *Route 66 Motels*, 1973

27. William Eggleston, *Washington D.C.*, 1990

28. Vasileios Kantas, *Mermaid,* 2011

29. Paris Petridis, *Peloponnese 2,* 2000

30. Vasileios Kantas, *After church,* 2011

31. Alex Brattel, *London road*, Sep 2009

32. Vasileios Kantas, *Centrecourt*, 2009

33. Vasileios Kantas, *Yellow brick house,* 2011

34. Paris Petridis, *Roumeli*, 2001

35. Gary Winogrand, *White sands national monument*, 1964

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