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Introduction: Photography between Art History and Philosophy

Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen

The essays collected in this special issue of *Critical Inquiry* are devoted to reflection on the shifts in photographically based art practice, exhibition, and reception in recent years and to the changes brought about by these shifts in our understanding of photographic art. Although initiated in the 1960s, photography as a mainstream artistic practice has accelerated over the last two decades. No longer confined to specialist galleries, books, journals, and other distribution networks, contemporary art photographers are now regularly the subject of major retrospectives in mainstream fine-art museums on the same terms as any other artist. One could cite, for example, Thomas Struth at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (2003), Thomas Demand at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) (2005), or Jeff Wall at Tate Modern and MoMA (2006–7). Indeed, Wall's most recent museum show, at the time of writing, *The Crooked Path* at Bozar, Brussels (2011), situated his photography in relation to the work of a range of contemporary photographers, painters, sculptors, performance artists, and filmmakers with whose work Wall considers his own to be in dialogue,

irrespective of differences of media. All this goes to show that photographic art is no longer regarded as a subgenre apart. The situation in the United Kingdom is perhaps emblematic of both photography's increasing prominence and its increased centrality in the contemporary art world over recent years. Tate hosted its first ever photography survey, *Cruel and Tender*, as recently as 2003, and since then photography surveys have become a regular biannual staple of its exhibition programming, culminating in the appointment of Tate's first dedicated curator of photography in 2010. A major shift in the perception of photography as art is clearly well under way.

This increased presence of photography, both as a respectable fine art medium in its own right and as one medium among many that are available to contemporary artists, has been accompanied by a corresponding expansion of its criticism and theory. Whereas the most influential modernist art theory and criticism concerned painting (and, secondarily, sculpture), photography (and, to a lesser extent, the moving image) now makes a credible claim to being the privileged object of art theory and criticism. Much of this theory, particularly during the high-water years of postmodern antiaestheticism, brought together two quite distinct theoretical traditions: antipathy for the author function generated in response to the translation of influential poststructuralist texts by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault in the 1970s; and the rhetorical use of photography to take issue with aesthetic theory in general, and painting in particular, as vehicles of allegedly regressive forms of experience and art making, attendant upon

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the first translations, in the late 1960s, of Walter Benjamin's essays from the 1930s.[1] Many theorists associated with the journal *October*—including Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, Douglas Crimp, and Craig Owens— advanced versions of this antiauthorial and antiaesthetic argument and supported those artists associated with it.

In retrospect Douglas Crimp's show, *Pictures*, at New York's Artists Space in 1977 and the eponymous essay that he published in *October* in 1979 have come to be regarded as the highpoint of this moment.[2] Some thirty years later, Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* strives to reclaim the post-Bechers photographic tradition from a countervailing, aesthetic, and indeed authorial perspective.[3] Several points are worth drawing attention to here. Note, first, that it is often simply assumed in these debates that the authorial aligns with the aesthetic and vice versa; that is, neither a robustly antiauthorial aesthetic nor an antiaesthetic authorship is seriously considered as an option. It is worth asking why. Does anything rule them out *conceptually*, or is this just a tired habit of thought? Note also that art historians are not alone in this tendency; the same default assumption permeates recent debates in the philosophy of photography. Given this, that it should be *photography*, of all media, through which one of modernism's most renowned living critics has found his way back to contemporary art criticism indicates just how far the critical terrain around photography has shifted—modernism having been, in both its practice and its criticism, nothing if not a "tropism towards aesthetic value as such, and as an ultimate."[4]

There is some irony here. It is often forgotten today that Fried's rejection of theatre and the theatrical in "Art and Objecthood" was itself the critical target of Crimp's "Pictures." Crimp sought to trace a genealogy for what he saw as the theatrical dimension of pictures generation art, in the teeth of Fried's dismissal of theatre as the enemy of art, out of minimalism.[5]

1. On this recent moment in art theory's positioning of photography, see Diarmuid Costello, "Aura, Face, Photography: Re-reading Benjamin Today," in *Walter Benjamin and Art*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London, 2005), pp. 164–84, and Margaret Iversen, "What Is a Photograph?" in *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (University Park, Pa., 2007), pp. 113–29.

2. See Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," *October*, no. 8 (Spring 1979): 75–88. See also Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," *October,* no. 15 (Winter 1980): 91–101. For an overview of this moment, see Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984* (exhibition catalog, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 21 Apr.–2 Aug. 2009). For Iversen's critical review of it, see Iversen, "Pictures without Theory," *Art Journal* 69 (Fall 2010): 128–31.

3. See Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven, Conn., 2008).

4. Clement Greenberg, "Necessity of 'Formalism,'" *New Literary History* 3 (Autumn 1971): 171.

5. See Costello, "Pictures, Again," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 8, no. 1 (2007): 10–41.

One of the ironies of the current moment in photography theory is that, in at least one respect, Fried's recent work positions him as his critic's inheritor, despite himself. Though his views on art that solicits its viewers in an egregiously theatrical manner have not shifted in substance over the years—even if he now builds a more nuanced view of what he calls "to-be-seenness"[6] into his conception of artistic address—his views on "theatre" (or "what lies *between* the arts") clearly have shifted.[7] The significance of photography as a *medium*—or what makes photography a single, unified medium—if indeed it is one, receives scant attention in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*. This cannot fail to strike anyone familiar with the claims on which Fried staked his early critical reputation. Indeed, rather than *photography* per se, it turns out that Fried's preferred term, perhaps under the influence of Jean-François Chevrier and Wall, is the more generic term *picture*, a term that encompasses a range of pictorial arts (including, in principle, *moving* pictures) and thereby disavows in advance any strong (or narrow) conception of medium specificity. This is of course precisely why *pictures* was the term that Crimp himself appealed to in order to support various antiaesthetic, antiauthorial, photographic practices taken to be at odds with Fried's modernism.[8]

   This recent art-historical context is only one half of the rationale for this special issue, however. Its most original contribution is to bring this art theoretical and critical background into dialogue with cognate debates in the philosophy of photography, of which art theorists seldom demonstrate much awareness. It is worth remarking, in the context of a special issue of *Critical Inquiry*, that these debates were initiated, and are to a large extent still over-determined by, two papers published thirty-odd years ago in the pages of this journal: Roger Scruton's "Photography and Representation" and Kendall Walton's "Transparent Pictures."[9] The debate within analytic philosophy of photography engendered by these papers continues unabated to this day, with new papers appearing regularly in *The British*

   6.   Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before,* pp. 35, 50, 59, and 91.
   7.   Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago, 1998), p. 164. The distinction between Fried's argument from theatre and argument from the theatrical might be better marked than they are in the literature. On this distinction, see Costello, "On the Very Idea of a 'Specific Medium': Michael Fried and Stanley Cavell on Painting and Photography as Arts," *Critical Inquiry* 34 (Winter 2008): 274–312.
   8.   In this regard it is notable that Cindy Sherman, arguably the archetypal pictures generation artist, figures prominently, on an equal footing with Jeff Wall, in one of the "Three Beginnings" to which Fried traces the tradition of photography he defends in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*.
   9.   See Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Spring 1981): 577–603, and Kendall Walton, "Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (Winter 1984): 246–77.

Journal of Aesthetics and the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, in particular.[10] Yet it continues in a form to which no one other than other analytic philosophers of art pays much attention, judging by a cursory survey of the art-historical and critical literature. In a certain frame of mind, cognizant of disciplinary differences and their mutually exclusive reading lists in academia, it is easy *not* to be surprised by this fact. But it seems to us that, if true, this lack of surprise should itself be surprising. How did philosophy become—or perhaps make itself—so irrelevant to its first-order object of inquiry that almost no one in the domain it claims to analyze manifests any interest in finding out what philosophers have to say about it? Conversely, how did art historians become—or perhaps make themselves—so indifferent to advanced theoretical and conceptual analysis of their objects of inquiry as not feel it professionally incumbent upon them to inform themselves about debates as to what *counts as* a photograph, photography, or a photographic process? Philosophers and art historians alike may find this a harsh assessment; if so, we suggest that this only shows how little real appreciation each discipline has of how the other perpetuates itself. It shows how little, to be blunt, either really knows or understands what the other does. One of the underlying goals of this issue is to begin to change this situation by introducing philosophers and art historians to one another's concerns at the point where they both converge and conflict. Before it is possible to do this, however, we must first sketch the background to the present state of debate in philosophy.

Philosophy of photography is a relatively new subdomain of analytic aesthetics; it emerged, indirectly, from André Bazin, Rudolf Arnheim, and Stanley Cavell's ontologies of film some thirty years ago. In recent years it has been dominated by attempts to refute the conclusions of its two foundational papers—the Scruton and Walton articles mentioned above. The targets of such criticisms tend to be either Scruton's claim that photographs cannot be representational art or Walton's claim that photographs are transparent. Scruton's claim is that the "ideal photograph" (understood in a logical rather than a normative sense) cannot be representational art because it fails to represent its subject in the *aesthetically relevant* sense of completely expressing its maker's thought about it;[11] Walton's claim is that we literally, if indirectly, see through photographs to what they are photographs of because photographs do not depend on the mental states of the photographer but simply record how things stood in a

10. This is true, for example, of many of the papers collected in "The Media of Photography," a special issue edited by Costello and Dominic McIver Lopes of *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70 (Winter 2012).

11. Scruton, "Photography and Representation," p. 578.

given portion of the world at a given time. As Bazin put it, in an influential formulation that lives on in both these views: "for the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man."[12] This thought is arguably the leitmotif of subsequent theories of photography in the analytic tradition.

Recast as a zero-sum opposition between causality and intentionality, for example, it underwrites Scruton's doubts about whether photography can be representational art. According to Scruton, it is impossible to have an aesthetic interest in a photograph *as a photograph*—which on Scruton's account implies something made by strictly photographic means. Given Scruton's understanding of an aesthetic interest, such an interest must pivot on the thought expressed by the artist in their work, but since images made by strictly photographic means are solely causal traces of the objects responsible for them they cannot express thoughts in this sense. On the contrary, such images are at best surrogates for what they show because we can take no aesthetic interest in the subject of a photograph that we could not take in the subject by itself. Walton's claim that photographs are transparent is even more indebted to Bazin and has proved just as contentious. It entails, for example, that when you look at a photograph of a relative whose death preceded your birth, you literally—if indirectly—see something that you could not have seen in any other way: you see your dead relative him- or herself through his or her photograph. The content of one's perceptual experience is *naturally* rather than *intentionally* dependent on what is thereby seen. Had, contrary to fact, the person recorded by the camera been different, the person seen through the photograph would have differed accordingly—irrespective of whatever or whoever the photographer may have believed he was photographing.

Like Scruton, Walton relies on a distinction between mechanical and intentional production to parse between photographs and other kinds of still images, such as painting. Whatever the controversy concerning Walton's claim that photographs are transparent or Scruton's claim that photographs cannot be representational art, the assumption underlying both accounts—that photographic depiction is independent of the intentions of the photographer in the respect that counts, the generation of the image itself—has been largely accepted, at least by other analytic philosophers of art. The widespread consensus around this assumption by other philoso-

12. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *What Is Cinema?* 2 vols. (1967; Berkeley, 2005), 1:13.

phers of art, we suggest, may be put down at least in part to a blind spot concerning their choice of paradigm cases; analytic philosophers tend to take something like the snapshot (that is, an automatically recorded image) as paradigmatic of how photography *in general* works.[13] How the unself-conscious selection of paradigm cases may have surreptitiously shaped the philosophy of photography is something that itself merits philosophical scrutiny, especially if made to bear the weight of photography's ontology, aesthetics, art status, porosity to artistic intention, relationship to drawing and painting, epistemic privilege, and the like.

It also provokes a question as to how standard philosophical accounts of the medium might fare were they to begin with the degree of authorial control exercised by many photographic artists. Given that philosophers—*like* many art critics and historians—tend to start from various assumptions about the mechanical, causal, or "mind-independent" nature of the photographic process taken to distinguish photography from other modes of depiction, philosophers—*unlike* art critics and historians, for reasons we will come to—generally then have to make a special case for the genuine artistic status of art photography, given its evident porosity to artistic intention. By now, nearly all philosophers have rejected the claim that their underlying assumptions about photography preclude the possibility of fully fledged photographic art. Nonetheless, dominant conceptions of photography as an automatic recording mechanism within philosophy arguably still face difficulties doing full justice to artistic uses of the medium. Given that aestheticians in the analytic tradition typically take philosophical reflection to be constrained by informed critical practice in the relevant domain, this special issue seeks to enrich the existing literature by taking artistic uses of photography and its uptake by art critics and theorists seriously as first-order data for philosophizing about photography.

It seems to us, however, that neither task—that is, understanding the stakes of the transformation of critical discourses around photography in art theory and the significance of artistic practices for philosophical conceptions of the medium—can be successfully carried out in isolation. Philosophy stands to gain by finding out whether its theories withstand the test of actual (rather than hypothetical) artistic practices, with the aid of art history and criticism; art history and criticism stand to gain by getting clearer about its unreflective assumptions regarding its object of inquiry,

13. The most persistent critic of automatic or mechanical conceptions of photography over the years has been Joel Snyder. See, for example, Joel Snyder, "What Happens by Itself in Photography," in *Pursuits of Reason: Essays in Honor of Stanley Cavell*, ed. Ted Cohen, Paul Geyer, and Hilary Putnam (Lubbock, Tex., 1993), and Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen, "Photography, Vision, and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (Autumn 1975): 143–69.

with the support of philosophical analysis. For this reason we have tried to bring together essays that have the potential to bring art history and theory into dialogue with analytic philosophy of photography around the point of their hitherto unremarked intersection. For reading the two disciplines together reveals a notable fact: art history and philosophy foreground, albeit within their respective vocabularies and frames of reference, remarkably similar features of the photographic medium, process, and apparatus only to go on to draw almost diametrically opposed conclusions about the significance of those features for photography's status as art. This can be seen especially clearly in their contrasting treatments of questions of agency and automatism in the photographic process, making this the ideal point at which to bring the two disciplines into dialogue.[14]

To understand the treatment of these issues in art history, one needs some sense of the recent history of artists' interest in photography, in particular the prehistory of the present moment of pictorial photography in earlier conceptual and postconceptual practices, which valued photography insofar as it might be thought to *bracket*, rather than exert, artistic agency and authorial control. This is manifest in these earlier artists' preference for unpretentious snapshot effects, documentary value, and deadpan antiaesthetic qualities, as well as in their use of photography for appropriating and recycling existing imagery. The historical trajectory usually describes a protoconceptual moment in the sixties led by the work of Ed Ruscha and Bernd and Hilla Becher, followed by the seventies generation of fully fledged conceptual artists who made extensive use of photography—such as Douglas Huebler, Keith Arnatt, John Hilliard, and Victor Burgin—followed by the eighties pictures generation of artists such as Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, and Richard Prince.[15] What such artists have in common, for all their other differences, is an interest in the photograph as a kind of pictorial readymade that can be appropriated and repurposed in ways that limit authorial control. That is, they were inter-

14.   Given the centrality of these issues and the unremarked interplay of their art-historical and philosophical manifestations, we have tried to assemble essays addressing a range of conceptual antinomies underpinning such debates—not just agency and automatism but a range of cognate oppositions such as intention and causality, aesthetic and antiaesthetic, digital and analogue, decision and chance, picture and document, icon and index, and expressive versus deadpan style—that tend to devolve upon how questions of agency and automatism get resolved.

15.   Some of these figures are considered in depth in "Photography after Conceptual Art," a special issue edited by Costello and Iversen of *Art History* 32 (Dec. 2009); rpt. *Photography after Conceptual Art,* ed. Costello and Iversen (Malden, Mass., 2010).

ested in photography as a resource for art precisely insofar as it might be thought to *relieve* them of certain burdens of artistic control.[16]

This may initially seem a rather perverse claim, especially to philosophers, given their normative assumptions about artistic practice, but deliberate authorial abnegation has, as a matter of empirical fact, been an important feature of modernist and postmodernist art practices at least since Stéphane Mallarmé, when it was adopted as a strategy for evading the given, the preconceived, the formulaic. Mallarmé devised a way of using language that involved, as he said, "the disappearance of the poet speaking." The poet, he claimed, "yields the initiative to words, through the clash of their ordered inequalities; they light up each other through reciprocal reflections like a virtual swooping of fire across precious stones."[17] If Mallarmé seems a rather remote figure in this context, one should recall that the special issue of *Aspen* that first published Barthes's "The Death of the Author" in 1967 was dedicated to Mallarmé.[18] There is evidence to suggest that photography has, for just as long, been embraced as a similarly liberating way of seeing and representing the world. Consider, for instance, Paul Cézanne's famous remarks in conversation with Joachim Gasquet when he compared himself to a "recording machine" and a "sensitive plate."[19]

We believe that very similar notions of agency and automatism lie at the heart of recent debates in the philosophy of photography—with the crucial difference that, for most philosophers, whatever compromises artistic control is generally taken to compromise the resulting object's standing as art. From an art-historical point of view, this is ironic, given that photography, on at least one influential narrative (associated with authors as diverse as Wall and Buchloh),[20] first entered the mainstream fine-art

16. Snyder gives the most persuasive account of how photographic technology mimes the pictorial image invented in the Renaissance, making every photograph effectively a sort of painting that bears no privileged relation to what it represents. See Snyder, "Picturing Vision," *Critical Inquiry* 6 (Spring 1980): 499–52.

17. Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse," *Divagations*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), p. 208.

18. See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Aspen,* nos. 5–6 (Fall–Winter 1967): www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/index.html. The guest editor-designer of the issue was Brian O'Doherty, and it included records of a reading of Samuel Beckett's *Text for Nothing* and music by John Cage.

19. Joachim Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne: A Memoir with Conversations*, trans. Christopher Pemberton (London, 1991), p. 150. It is acknowledged that Cézanne occasionally used photographic images as the basis for paintings. See, for example, his *Melting Snow, Fountainbleau* (1879–80), Museum of Modern Art, New York.

20. See Jeff Wall, "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art," *Jeff Wall: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York, 2007), pp. 143–68, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Readymade, Photography, and Painting in the Painting of Gerhard Richter," *Neo-*

canon when artists turned to the medium to *exploit* those very features of its process that appear, from a philosophical point of view, to be in tension with its status as art. Such artists were interested in the *non*art nature of photography, whether professional or amateur, as a new resource or horizon of possibility for avant-garde artistic practice in a climate of increasing commercialization. That is, many artists valued photography in all the respects in which it seemed to evade, rather than mimic, art with a capital *A*—hence photography's standing as the pictorial equivalent of the readymade. In view of this, one way to understand the foregrounding of artistic intention in more recent large scale, often digital, pictorial art photography is as a rejection of this postconceptual settlement concerning the automaticity of photography. Whether such practices go beyond conceptual photography or attempt to return photography to the terrain of preconceptual pictorial art remains much debated.

We have proposed that, whereas philosophers' assumptions entail that any bracketing of intention *compromises* photography's claim to artistic standing, artists, critics, and art historians alike have often viewed this, by contrast, as a significant source of photography's *promise* as an art. The two disciplines' respective responses to the advent of digitalization support this characterization. Until recently, philosophers have tended to argue that the postproduction afforded by digitalization undermines photography's epistemic privilege relative to the other arts (that is, the claim that beliefs formed on the basis of looking at photographs have greater warrant than beliefs formed by looking at other forms of depiction, in virtue of what is distinctive about how photographic depictions come into being). Similarly, many art historians and theorists have claimed that postproduction undercuts the indexical relation previously taken to distinguish photography from other forms of picture making. This implies that debates about agency and automatism may align, in certain respects, with debates concerning the differences between analogue and digital photography. Consider the work of artists such as Gregory Crewdson and Andreas Gursky, whose exploitation of digital processes makes it evident that either a great deal of preproduction staging or postproduction digital manipulation or both have gone into the finished image. The way that the agency of the artist is foregrounded in this kind of photography is equally alien to both the deskilled, snapshot aesthetic of conceptual photography and skilled modernist photography alike. Indeed, such large-scale "cinematic" pro-

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Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975
(Cambridge, Mass., 2003), pp. 365–403.

ductions raise a question as to whether we may even be witnessing the birth of a new artistic medium growing out of a confluence of digital photography, figurative painting, and film, perhaps via the mediation of the film still.

A key figure in the story that we have just outlined of the changing character and status of photography is the eminent photographer and theorist Jeff Wall. In his contribution to this volume, "Conceptual, Postconceptual, Nonconceptual: Photography and the Depictive Arts," he returns to the theme of two earlier influential essays, "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art" and the more recent "Depiction, Object, Event."[21] The essay published here argues that photography, in virtue of its depictive nature, remained essentially untouched by conceptual art's attempt to reduce art to a statement's selfassertion as art. This is not to say that it had no impact, however; by calling into question traditional canons, materials, and techniques, conceptual art expanded the field of what could count as a work of art. Yet, for Wall, this expanded, postconceptual, field of art making operates to one side of the depictive arts and their existing frameworks of value and quality. As a result, he concludes, the depictive arts, including photography, have retained their fundamentally autonomous, nonconceptual, aesthetic character. On this account, the term *conceptual photography* is an oxymoron. In effect, Wall challenges us to reconsider conceptual artists' alignment of photography with a critique of the aesthetic; photography cannot truly participate in that critique since photography is irreducibly depictive by nature and depiction has an aesthetic component.

The line of argument in Carol Armstrong's essay, although quite different, travels in a similar direction. It is concerned to rehabilitate the intentionality and, so, aesthetic character of photographic art. Her essay, "Automatism and Agency Intertwined: The Spectrum of Photographic Intentionality," addresses the different ways in which photography since the 1960s has joined, rather than opposed, the processes of automatism and agency. Armstrong begins by addressing the manner in which photography works by way of happenstance more than other media and shows how this feature led to the historical convergence of post-sixties art practices and antiauthorial discourse. Using a wide range of pertinent examples—from Henri Cartier-Bresson through Diane Arbus to Craigie Horsfield—Armstrong shows how the photographic artist intervenes to

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21. See Wall, "Depiction, Object, Event," *Afterall* 16 (Autumn–Winter 2007): 5–17 and "'Marks of Indifference.'"

make use of the aleatory event in an interaction that defines photographic intentionality.

Diarmuid Costello's essay, "Automat, Automatic, Automatism: Stanley Cavell and Rosalind Krauss on Photography and the Photographically Dependent Arts," takes the work of James Coleman, Ed Ruscha, and William Kentridge as test cases for Krauss's appeal to Cavell's conception of automatism to underwrite her account of artists inventing or reinventing the medium. All three artists work in what Costello calls photographically dependent art forms: arts that are not themselves photography, and need not even be photographic, but that are internally reliant on photography for their possibility nonetheless. Costello argues that Krauss misconstrues the nature of Cavell's claim; contrary to Krauss's use of his work, Cavell's account suggests that artists *cannot* invent private media in the strong sense that Krauss intends—that is, media that *could* only be practiced by a single artist. At best they can create new automatisms within existing media. Moreover, Costello claims, Krauss's account is implausible independently of her appeal to Cavell because media invented ex nihilo would have no public norms or conventions against which to judge success or failure or indeed what counts or does not count as a move within them. He draws on an equivocation in Krauss's own account of Ruscha to bring this out.

Several essays in the issue converge on the role of chance in the photographic practice of particular artists. Robin Kelsey's contribution, "Random Generation: John Baldessari, Photography, and the Early 1970s," focuses on the American artist's photographic series *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line: Best of Thirty-Six Attempts* (1973). Kelsey offers two plausible readings of the work. The more conventional interpretation aligns the work with games of chance as a form of play that opens up a space for freedom. On this account, Baldessari's piece is aimed at evading the twin hazards of constricting labor and conventionalized leisure. Kelsey's alternative reading of the series is that it takes the form of a mocking mimesis of random generation that played an important role in the contemporaneous rise of simulation in various cultural domains, from the military-industrial complex to the game industry.

"As Photography: Mechanicity, Contingency and Other-Determination in Gerhard Richter's Overpainted Snapshots" by Susan Laxton concerns the German artist's intriguing series of photographic snapshots swiped in left-over paints. For Laxton, Richter's exploration of painting "as photography" repeatedly restages an engagement between photography, chance, and the suspension of control over the image, on the one hand, and painting, aesthetic attention, and the artist's will, on the other. This dual engagement becomes explicit in his overpainted snapshots. These works,

composed entirely of dejecta, ask us to consider the possibility that, beyond the most obvious attributes, these mediums share repressed irrationalities. With a backward glance to André Breton's conception of automatism, she argues that the snapshots demonstrate two forms of automatism, combining a gesture performed blindly with a mechanical, unpremeditated snapshot.

Margaret Iversen's essay, "Analogue: On Tacita Dean and Zoe Leonard," also draws on surrealist conceptions of automatism and chance. It engages with current debates concerning artistic agency and automatism that hinge on the difference between digital and analogue photographic processes. The debate is joined in this paper through the work of two artists who attach great value to the analogue medium. Both Leonard and Dean are resistant to the inexorable rise of digital photographic technologies and the corresponding near obsolescence of the analogue. In response, they are concerned to make salient the virtues or specific character of analogue film, such as its indexicality and openness to chance—characteristics the full significance of which may only have become apparent under pressure of digitalization. Drawing on Eric Santner's account of the concept of exposure, Iversen draws attention to a kind of photographic art practice that is marked by contingency and seared by reality.

In his essay, "Arts, Agents, Artifacts: Photography's Automatisms," Patrick Maynard seeks to finesse philosophical conceptions of agency and automatism. He takes agency to pick out a conceptual space between the opposites of the ancient *autómaton* (chance) and the modern automatic. Stepping back from the immediate issue of photography, Maynard observes that, in a universe in which nearly everything happens by chance or necessity, only a tiny amount is done—that is, comes to be—on purpose, for purposes. Given that acting is typically taken to be the locus of freedom, it is no wonder that agency is at the core of our idea of fine art, ethics, history, law, and much else besides. Because agency exists in a world of necessity and accident, it not only vies with these factors but uses them, with intent. We can never grasp what has been done without first grasping the background roles of necessity and chance. Since photography has been, from its first inventions, a quickly evolving family of technologies for doing things, it continuously shifts agency's relationships to both necessity and chance, thereby requiring repeated reidentification of the roles of agents. Given the problems this creates for thinking photography as art, Maynard argues that a foundational inquiry into the natures of fine art, agency, photography, and their connections is long overdue.

In his response to the papers collected here, Dominic McIver Lopes, who has himself made an important contribution to philosophical debates

about photography, brings a fresh perspective to recent debates concerning agency and automatism by setting them within the context of foundational work on the concept of intention and the philosophy of action by Elisabeth Anscombe and Donald Davidson respectively. By doing so, Lopes shows that agency cannot simply be reduced to intention. Intention may require agency, but agency does not *require* intention. Thus it is possible for agents to perform acts unintentionally. In Lopes's example, Hamlet stabs the figure behind the arras intentionally, but he does not stab Polonius intentionally, though they are the same act under different descriptions—Polonius being the figure behind the arras. The gap that Lopes's account opens up between agency and intention shows that standard philosophical intuitions about the automatism of the photographic apparatus somehow compromising artistic agency with respect to photography only arise by running agency too close to intention. But Lopes shows that photographic agency can vary (indeed can be present or absent) while automatism is held constant; so agency and automatism need not be in competition. On the account to be preferred, a photographic process involves agency, irrespective of its mechanical or automatic dimensions, just in case it is intentional under some description.

In this introduction we have emphasized the similarity of the assumptions about the nature of photography held by most philosophers and art theorists, yet we have also seen the divergent consequences of these same assumptions across the two fields. We believe that the essays we have gathered here go some way to unpacking those assumptions about the agency or automaticity of photography. We also hope that this special issue offers some suggestions as to why such a disparity of views about the impact that photographic automatism has on photography as an art arose in the first place. Rather than assess the extent to which these essays achieve such goals ourselves, however, we have had the good fortune to be able to round out the issue with Lopes's afterword.

Suffice it to say here that some of the essays we have collected advance arguments about the specific combinations of agency and automatism in the photographic process, while others stress that harnessing the automatism of the photographic apparatus can itself constitute an expression of artistic agency; in the latter case, the exercise of agency will, depending upon one's conception of photography "proper," count either as part and parcel of the photographic process, properly so-called, or a pre- (or post-) photographic act. Together, the essays offer philosophers a chance to reflect on the recent history of art and its deliberate abnegation of authorial control in favor of chance, accident, and automatism. At the same time, they offer theorists of photography the opportunity to consider the place

of photography in a longer history of art in which the artist is acknowledged to have control over recalcitrant matter through consummate skill. These differing historical perspectives, we believe, may be one reason for the divergence of disciplinary perspectives. The irony of this divergence is that agency for philosophers and automatism for art theorists are equally associated with an ideal of freedom. Whereas for philosophers human agency is the sole domain of freedom, for many artists there is something arid, not to say mechanistic, in the idea of a world in which all our purposes result in predictable consequences, where we are completely transparent to ourselves and where intentions always result in expected actions. Since Mallarmé and surrealism many artists have welcomed the interference in human agency offered by the unconscious, language, or the apparatus of the camera.[22] An adequate conception of photographic art should provide scope for both highly skilled photographic practices that follow in the tradition of the fine arts, and for chance-inflected practices that aspire, by means of the camera's automaticity, to short-circuit artistic convention and habits of mind alike.

22. See Iversen, "The Aesthetics of Chance," in *Chance*, ed. Iversen (Cambridge, Mass., 2010), pp. 12–27.