INTRODUCTION TO META-PHOTOGRAPHY: A SELF-REFLEXIVE AND SELF-CRITICAL MIRROR FOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN DIGITAL CULTURE

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Abstract

This dissertation is an introduction to the term meta-photography that suggests it both as an already established genre and a new ontological distinction that emerged with digital photography. It explores self-referential, self-reflexive and self-critical states of photography in the digital culture as outcomes of the 'death of photography as an autonomous medium'; then contrasts it with the abundance of digital images. It focuses on the digitised, networked and manipulated photography by giving an extensive survey of the existing literature on the different propositions of 'next-photography' suggested by philosophers, scholars and critics of 1990s onwards. The self reflexivity of photography in digital culture explored through the works of both established and emerging artist such as Oğuz Yıldız, Phil Chang, Berkay Tuncay, John Hillard, Victor Burgin, Lucas Blalock, Liz Deschanes, Meggan Gould, Erik Kessels, Mishka Henner, Joachim Schmid, Thomas Ruff and Corinne Vionnet revealed a potential multifaceted character of meta-photography. It operates in two meta-levels, both as an act of self-criticism and a new microscopic ontological difference. Digital photography manifests itself always by reading and referencing two computational codes; 'data' and 'meta-data'. The research undertaken for this paper revealed that it is possible to join all existing 'next-photographies' and merge them under meta-photography that also refers to all pixel-based photography.

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Declaration

I herewith declare that no portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.

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Introduction To Meta-Photography: A Self-Reflexive And Self-Critical Mirror For Photography In Digital Culture

Introduction

Photography is not what it used to be. But what it is and what it was to begin with? It has been accelerating in proliferation and diversification even before the emergence of the World Wide Web redefined the terms and probably the meaning of dissemination. The increasing use of photographic images in the press or journals, gallery and institutional exhibitions and emergent photo-books kept the traditional relationship between photograph and paper. However, as Rosalind Krauss reminded, the screen as a support for the photograph began to replace paper as early as 1983 on French television with *Une Minute Pour Une Image,* by Arlette (Agnés) Varda; giving an omnipresent character to photographic image.[1] From the 1990s onwards, new technologies such as electronic sensors, image processing softwares, the Internet, virtual reality, cyberspace, and the public interest around them has brought change to photography and to photographic image in both cultural and ontological levels. The abundance and multiplicity that surfaced with perplexing and provocative digital photography brought even more confusion about the ontology of photography and a photograph. Studying the existing discourse would reveal the ontological and cultural multifaceted character of photography. My intention (or at least priority) is not to attempt to answer the

[1] The program showed a single image for one minute with a voice over commentary. The comments were by photographers themselves, writers, political figures, art critics or any man on the street. The next day the photograph and the comments were published in the newspaper *Libératon*.

question of what is a photograph (by attempting to limit its definitions) but it is rather to focus on its current 'digitised' and 'networked' state. The term digital photography refers to images that transform light into coded data, with no chemical but only electronic and optical apparatuses. One scholar pointed that photography emerged at the same time as J. M. Jacquard's invention with punched paper cards and Charles Babbage's 'Analytical Engine', two mathematical technologies precursory to computers. Light based image making and mathematical technologies finally joined together with digital photography.[2] However, this paper is not a meta-discursive 'digital photography' investigation either.[3] It is rather an attempt to deconstruct it to its ones and zeros only to join them again within a self-critical self-reflexive frame.

Before we even start thinking about photography I would like to concede (willingly) the notion of an 'ontology of becoming not of Being' proposed by Sarah J. Kember to embrace and reflect on photography's ever changing (and expending) as well as simultaneously plural technological and cultural nature; from unique to reproducible, from analogue to digital, from film to code and so on.[4] The sense of 'becoming' has echoed in a variety of writings on photography as well: Geoffrey Batchen pointed out the differences between formalist and postmodern characters of the medium[5]; John Tagg and Allan Sekula argued against the 'identity of photography' that hasn't already been determined by

[2] Sylvia Wolf, *The Digital Eye: Photographic Art in the Electronic Age* (PRESTEL, 2010). 24
[3] For such endeavor I refer to William Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*, New edition edition (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994)or Martin Lister, *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, 2 edition (London: Routledge, 2013).
[4] Sarah J. Kember, "The Virtual Life of Photography," *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 175–203. 176
[5] Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999).

Foucauldian power relations, concluding, "photography has no identity […] its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it"[6]; André Bazin, Clement Greenberg, and John Szarkowski, tackled photography as a mechanical image production technique and explored its place in the arts.[7] I believe it would be fair to say photography has an identity that can change and fit to a certain utilisation. Therefore we can also argue that photography is in a protean state that continuously changes in shape and form, assuming different roles and characters; I want to look at protean photography in one of its moments of 'becoming'.

It had already emerged with a natural duality almost simultaneously in France and England in 1839. That polysemy has only multiplied throughout photography's technical, cultural and philosophical histories. From the official emergence of the medium, it has been surrounded by a fog of technical and philosophical speculative discussions that have rarely generated a paradigm of photography and a photograph, or a common ground for theoreticians, practitioners and even consumers.[8] The last couple of decades, namely the digital revolution, have brought to us one of the rare moments in the history of photographic discourse; which I believe is a pattern in the conception, in the discourse and a theoretical similarity or maybe a parallel pattern in the practice.

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[6] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (December 1, 1986). 3–64

[7] Argued in Batchen, *Burning with Desire*. 12-17

[8] For example John Szarkowski's formailst modernist paradigm of photography can be conceived as one of these moments where photography was reassigned from its plural functions in documentation, illustration, information and reduced to the singlular modernist aoutonomous art. Through its authority the museum (not only as a taste-maker but as an institution that determines the understanding) gained by its exhibitions and publications, it was able to create a paradigm of photography. See Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (MIT Press, 1993), 66-83

That pattern of conception is the apprehension of obsolescence of photography and the soteriological belief – even prophecy – of an 'after', 'post', 'beyond', 'hyper' or 'evolved' condition of photography that will emancipate it from its representational burden through a digitalised resurrection that breaks the basic rules of Pierciean semiotics and Kantian causality. That pattern, in other words, is one of a 'next' photography. Kember argued "photography did not die the death of digitisation predicted in the last decades of the twentieth century."[9] For her, it is now more fertile than it has ever been. However, many writers[10] seem to agree that photography, one of the many gifts of industrial revolution, as it was generally conceived in its 150th year, was dead or was superseded by its successor, the digital revolution. That unexpected 'loss' of such a well-integrated, scientifically functional and artistically expressional medium called for an investigation of its all operations, as well as an ontological questioning of itself as a Being (for it is popularly an ontology of Being). But did photography actually die, or did it just go through a (r)evolutionary change to another state in its never ending 'becoming'?

While philosophers and critics are resurrecting the 'next' photography, photographers are experimenting on the verge of the medium's new, expanded premises, investigating their own medium and reflecting on their investigations of their medium within the medium. For example, Rosalind Krauss once stated of Cindy Sherman's film stills that, "she is not creating an object for art criticism but constitutes an act of criticism. It constructs photography itself a meta-

[9] Kember, "The Virtual Life of Photography." 175

[10] Including but not limited to Geofrey Batchen, William J. Mitchell, Hubertus von Amelunxen, Florian Rötzer, David Tomas, Jacques Clayssen, Fred Ritchin, Tim Druckrey, Anne-Marie Willis, the list goes on...

language."[11] This array of practice and visual reflections on photography – whether material or immaterial – is precisely what I will be exploring (not in, but) through the works of celebrated artist such as John Hillard, Victor Burgin, Thomas Ruff and Joachim Schmid as I attempt to bring new readings to their work; and also in the works of a younger generation of artists including Misckha Henner, Oğuz Yıldız, Berkay Tuncay, Corinne Vionnet whom are amongst the first 'digital natives'. They, and others discussed in this dissertation constitute an act of criticism regardless of their generations, the difference between their practice and the nuances between their approaches.

It is somewhat tempting to think the self-referentiality, self-reflexivity and the self-criticism[12] manifest and mirror various aspects of photography within Mieke Bal's notion of 'thinking object' or 'art that thinks'.[13] However the artwork, Mitchell pointed out, does not think, at least not like a person; they, on the other hand can and do reflect on the thoughts of the artist and sometimes reverberate the projected ideas of the viewer.[14] Meaning that the self-criticism in an artwork is not an accidental, unintentional state, but rather a self-conscious critique of the discourse intended by the artist, or the viewer within the act of a joined authorship. We will, in the following chapters, even look at examples of machines looking at images. But is it possible that computers can posses the capability of bearing a critical gaze? Recent studies on several archival algorithms reveal they can 'see' things that have been hidden to art

[11] Rosalind Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral," *October* 31 (1984): 49. 27
[12] Please note that I am seperating the act of photogorapy's mirroring itself as self-referentiality, self-reflexivity and the self-criticism only in order to join them under the terms I am proposing.
[13] Mieke Bal, *A Mieke Bal Reader* (University of Chicago Press, 2006). 205
[14] Asbjørn Grønstad & Øyvind Vågnes, *An Interview with W.J.T. Mitchell,* Image [&] Narrative, 2006, accessed September 22, 2014, http://goo.gl/kZclcp

historians so far.[15] But are they capable of, in Bal's words, 'close reading'?[16] Reading itself is basically internalising a set of external signifiers through an intelligible process. How can computers critically read which is already internal to itself, the code that is already a part of its memory?

These are the main themes that will be addressed in this dissertation. What I will propose further to these discussions is a multifaceted term (just like photography) that neither denies nor approves the death of photography but refers to a critical tool and to a different state that came with the digital technologies. In other words it will (potentially) replace the preexisting prefixes that refer to (and to some extent define) an ontological distinction of photography. At the same time, it will refer to an approach, a (pseudo)genre; and last but not least to an act of referencing, reflecting on and criticizing itself by continuously questioning its own being. I propose to call this meta-photography.

I feel obliged to acknowledge that the act of self-criticism, in all of its forms has been widely explored as a concept both within and out of photography, usually in each mediums' specificity. The task of 'criticism of the means of criticism itself' started with Kant's epistemology where he justifies 'pure reason' through self-conscious self-criticism in the 18th Century and resonated through almost three centuries. For example the 'critique of apriori', which is to say, the paradigms of the analytical and continental philosophy, or in

[15] "An Intelligent Algorithm Made A Discovery That Slipped Past Art Historians For Years," *The Creators Project*, accessed September 28, 2014, http://goo.gl/wzMGR7; "Computers Can Find Similarities Between Paintings – but Art History Is About So Much More," *The Epoch Times*, accessed September 28, 2014, http://goo.gl/jWA7va.
[16] Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (University of Toronto Press, 2002). 8-10

other words the critique of the discourse within the discourse manifested itself in the form of meta-language (with the linguistic turn) in the works of de-constructivist philosophers spearheaded by Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan in the early 20th Century. Clement Greenberg declared Kant as the first modernist. He argued that the modernist art, especially painting was transforming itself and developing by way of self-criticism; he wrote, "the essence of Modernism lies […] in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself – not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence".[17] He pointed that the criticism comes from the inside "through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized."[18] On the other hand, he also believed that the uniqueness of an art form ultimately comes from its medium specificity; the elements that the medium does not share with another one. Greenberg's notion of medium specificity is somewhat similar to Kantian disciplinary purity. Each art searches for 'purity' and in that purity, nothing borrowed from another medium can be tolerated. Greenberg's transformative self-criticism of modernist painting is, thus, restricted to paintings medium specificity.

However, especially from the 1990s onwards, photography with the transformation it has been going through was subjected to an increasing amount of discursive act of self-criticsm. In William J. Mitchell's, 'metapicture' and Fred Ritchin's 'meta-image', self-criticism has been verbalised within the medium specificity of photography. Mitchell states, "pictures want equal rights with

[17] Clement Greenberg*, The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Volume 4, John O'Brian, ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). 85
[18] Ibid. 85

language, not to be turned into language".[19] A 'pictorial turn' should succeed the 'linguistic turn'. He starts this task by separating 'picture' and 'image'. He takes picture in an extremely broad sense – pictures on our walls, picture shows in the cinema, pictures in the mind and so on – whereas the image for him is any likeness, figure, motif or form that appears in a picture format.[20] In that context he distinguishes between three different meta-pictures: the picture that reflects on or doubles itself in an act of 'mise en abime'; the picture that contains another picture of a different kind instead of itself; the picture not framed in another picture but within a discourse that reflects to the nature of pictures. All three create a critical space in which images can function.[21] Ritchin's meta-image is a term he introduces (but not explain) in *After Photography*. According to him, digital photograph can be conceived as meta-image, "a map of squares each capable of being individually modified and, on the screen, able to serve as a pathway elsewhere".[22] Both investigated 'different' aspects of meta-levels of photography. They are however, not so different from each other in terms of operation as I will try to merge them in a totalising approach. I will, not on the contrary but in conjunction with them, first claim (from Flickr forums where it is widely popularised and only superficially discussed) then introduce a broader term, meta-photography, and attempt to demonstrate what is meta-photography, why it is meta-photography, and maybe more importantly the importance of meta-photography in the following chapters.

[19] W. J. T Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). 47
[20] Ibid. xiii-xiv
[21] Ibid.
[22] Fred Ritchin, *After Photography* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010). 261

I.

Obsolescence: Non-image, non-context, non-material

Amelioration of digital technologies revolutionised the way we produce, disseminate and experience art and photography today. For some critics, mostly from early 1990s onwards, these digital tools heralded the death of photography, just like the painter Paul Delaroche suggested to declare, upon seeing his first daguerreotype, "From today painting is dead".[23] New technologies of image making and new modes of visual representation have always tempted a renouncement of the older ones, for they awoke a sense of obsolescence of the subjected medium. The 'death of photography' as a theme, and its potential replacement pervaded in the visual culture studies through almost three decades. Let us begin, since we are already tempted to 'kill' photography, with a close reading of some of the sub-concepts of the 'next' photography and slowly begin the defense for meta-photography.

William J. Mitchell wrote, "From the moment of its sesquicentennial in 1989 photography was dead – or, more precisely, radically and permanently displaced – as was painting 150 years before" in his 1992 work which was one of the earliest and strongest responses to the unsettlement of our established conception of photography.[24] According to him, with 'the dawning of the digital era', 150 years of belief to the truthfulness of photography came to an end, breaking down Piercian indexicality and the causal relationship between

[23] As Batchen points in Each Wild Idea, there is no evidence about Delaroche's statement. He was actually a supporter of the emergent medium.
[24] Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye*. 20

photographed and *photograph*. We are, he argued, in a 'post-photographic' era. Post-photography is a term and a concept frequently borrowed to refer to photography's current manipulated, networked, digitised state, originally used in 1991 "*Photo Video: Photography in the Age of Computer*" exhibition and the accompanying publication. It was one of the earliest institutional responses to 'next photography' that created a public interest and a discourse. However, post-photography has gained a multi-faceted character since then.

Geoffrey Batchen, as one of the most prolific writers on the 'death of photography as an autonomous medium', wrote, "Everyone seems to want to talk about photography's own death"[25]. But according to him photography has always been somewhat associated with death and, 150 years after its invention, it was facing a *metamorphosis* in two major levels; one is technological (the introduction of computerised images) and the other is epistemological, that has broader consequences (originated by digitisation) in ethics, knowledge and culture.[26] He examines the different states between taking and making a photograph as an attempt to demonstrate the difference between both photographies. Elsewhere he claims, "It appears we have already entered a 'post-photography', that moment *after* but not yet *beyond* photography [my italics]." However, he then argues post-photography's implications are vividly expressed in works that reflect on the 'objectness' of the photograph, observing, "We are forced to look *at* photography rather than *through* it".[27] He observes the MOMA exhibition, *"Photography Into Sculpture"* (1970) curated by Peter C.

[25] Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History* (MIT Press, 2002). 129
[26] Ibid. 129
[27] Ibid. 109

Bunnell focused on the object-photograph. The recent ICP exhibition "*What Is a Photograph*"(2014) curated by Carol Squiers also explored the photograph as object, often underlining its uniqueness as a product of artists' craftsmanship forty-four years later; according to Batchen, they showed *post-photographic* practices. It is rather interesting that in a period where images are rapidly being digitised and dematerialised thus breaking the Sassonian contextual bound (will be discussed further) between image and its support -the material- through the emancipating screen, both Batchen and Squiers seem to turn the discourse backwards, either for better or worse.

Batchen's post-photography is perhaps, best interpreted through his cross reading of Derrida and Pierce. For him, Pierce's work never allows us to "presume that there is a 'real world,' an ultimate foundation, that somehow precedes or exists outside representation".[28] Real and representation are integral to each other in Pierce's epistemology, allowing Derrida to argue "the thing itself is a sign. . . . From the moment there is meaning there are nothing but signs."[29] In other words, there is nothing outside the system of signs therefore the sign must also be the thing itself. Going back to the object-photograph and see it as Derridian 'the thing itself' would bring us to the conclusion that Batchen's 'post-photography' is actually 'beyond' photography, since photography (through representation) is either *of* or *about* something but it is not the thing itself; but when it *is*, then it must be beyond photography, or in Batchens words 'post-photography'.

[28] Ibid. 155
[29] Ibid. 155

On the other hand, post-photography and post-photographic images, Timothy Druckrey argues especially for digital or digitised images, have very little if nothing to do with conventional photographic systems since they no longer refer to or require an external reality within their own *rhizome*.[30] Therefore, it looses the *power* of report or verification of something that exists in the world. It is not photography as we know it anymore and the very foundation and status of the [photographic] document is challenged. For him the digital montage, for example, uses images from the new technological post-photographic environment that have "absolute control over image's construction in digital montage, where verification is no longer an issue since objects are not *recorded* but *rendered* in this new medium".[31]

David Tomas sees the concept of post-photography differently, by developing it into "an effective counter-practice in the visual arts and beyond"[32], and adds the element of criticism. He begins by identifying the conventional ways in which the visual arts are criticized within each medium's specificity. He lists the strategies typically employed as: drawing attention to the way we look; challenging traditional media on their own terms; offer unknown or marginalised subjects; propose different readings of existing subjects; reposition photography within the existing hierarchy of media. He also observes "it is surprising to note how the images produced by these new technologies are situated in relation to,

[30] Timothy Druckrey, *Fatal Vision* in Hubertus von Amelunxen, Stefan Iglhaut, and Florian Roetzer, *Photography after Photography: Memory and Representation in the Digital Age* (s.l.: G&B Arts International, 1997). 83
[31] Timothy Druckrey, *From Dada To Digital Montage In The 20th Century* in Sri-Kartini Leet, *Reading Photography* (Farnham ; Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2011). 347
[32] David Tomas, *A Blinding Flash Of Light: Photography Between Disciplines and Media* (Montréal, QC: Dazibao, 2004). 231

or remain within, existing subject repertoires", emphasising the simultaneity of photography's old and post practices[33]. For Tomas, "post-photography is based on the premise that critical and strategic transformations in the cultural dimensions of photographic modes of production lead to the development of alternative representational practices".[34] With the adoption of a post-photographic ecosystem, plural cultures of representation result in a number of important changes in the relative values that have been granted to traditional photography. Because post-photography is a complex ecosystem of different elements, interconnections and contexts, "post-photography is thus able to redefine its culture and practice continually".[35] His post-photography challenges traditional photography and reflects, articulates, critiques, and continually redefines its own operational logic, practice and existence; the notions that are also very important aspects of meta-photography I am hoping to establish.

Andy Grundberg argues photography has transformed our essential understanding of reality. Photographic images are no longer regarded as 'mirrors with a memory', as Baudriallard described, merely reflecting the world back at us in a simple one-to-one fashion; they are rather elements that construct the world for us. With digital construction tools the photograph itself becomes subject to construction in a macro level. For Grundberg, "the recognition that photographs are constructions and not reflections of reality is the basis for the medium's presence within the art world. It defines photography as both personally and culturally expressive", emancipating it from the burden of pure

[33] Ibid. 234
[34] Ibid. 247
[35] Ibid. 238-9

documentation.[36] He then reminds us, the prefix 'post' is currently enjoying a widespread vogue in cultural circles, postmodern, postindustrial, post-Freudian, post-capitalist, post-Marxist, poststructuralist and so on. “We seem to want to be beyond the past but we find ourselves without absolutes, without standards of reference by which to make judgments”.[37] He identifies this experience with Baudrillard’s simulacrum, a socially constructed hall of mirrors with no external points of reference, which theoretically resembles post-photographic images that are created with computer technologies. He believes “if photography survives into the next century, it will be as something more overtly fabricated, manipulative, artifactual, and self-conscious than the photography we have come to know."[38]

Fred Ritchin examines the notion of truthfulness in press images. His discussion about digital technology not only proposes a more objective depiction of reality; it can broaden our perceptual capabilities, offering up a hyper-textual unfolding of events. Multimedia links accompanying the standard caption became accustomed to be seen with images. Those links, he argues, have created an evolving forum in which the viewer can comment, the exact time is recorded, the geographical coordinates are revealed and multiple images can be synthesised into a coherent whole which claims to offer a greater understanding of the “truth,” a term of increasing malleability given the manipulative possibilities offered by technology. Ritchin looks towards next photography through ‘hyper-photography’ that extends so far beyond the bounds of a ‘simple

[36] Andy Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography* (New York: Aperture, 2010). 216
[37] Ibid. 224
[38] Ibid.221

paper rectangle' that it loses all connection to history and becomes diffused among the sciences, sheds linear story telling structure and demonstrates the relativistic connection an image has to the world.[39] He points that 'hyper-text', is a non-linear narrative, that's a narrative which includes not just the beginning, the middle and the end, but like a rhizome, it has multiple pathways and entries in it. Hyper-photography begins with acknowledging that there is not a single truth of a situation. It is, he argues, like Quantum Physics which posits many probabilities as opposed to simply *what is*.

> It seems to me that oftentimes the beauty of photography rests in its ambiguous relationship to reality. This new hyper-photography allows us to deconstruct the minutiae of each pixel, but, at the same time further fragments our modes of communication into shards of commentary, which can potentially leave the viewer inundated with so much information that they walk away from their screen without having absorbed anything at all. And yet, the potential for a multi-layered understanding of images and the vehicles of their production maintains its allure.[40]

In the economy of all photographs, both analogue and digital or constructed (synthetic), hyper-photography offers tempting new possibilities. For example, being accompanied by hyper-textual visual information, which is to say an ecosystem of related image-text data that can offer, according to Richtin, a greater piece of 'truth' than a version of 'truth' in a truthful photographic record. He argues through critic John Berger that photography should be incorporated into the social and political memory rather than using it simply as a substitute for memory. Rather than being a reporter to the rest of the world, hyper-photography requires the photographer to consider the contexts and concerns of the photographed, but he should embrace them into the

[39] Ritchin, *After Photography*. 144
[40] Ritchin, in Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 37

hyperlinked complexity of the photograph itself; within the hybridised rhizome of image, text and the complex, multiple-entry network they create. If post-productive manipulation opens up the possibility to express and represent the situational truth better than a pure (let's say straight) photograph, as hyper-photography presupposes to do, altering an image then, must be the next, well-rounded stage of photographic representation. (We will get back to that later on.)

'After photography' has been studied in the form of an exhibition curated by Hubertus von Amalunxen, Stefan Iglhaut and Florian Rötzer, 1995, *Photography After Photography* project organised by Siemens Kulturprogramm in Germany with the collaboration of international institutions. They gathered different after-photographic practices in an exhibition and deciphering texts in the accompanying publication. The project attempted to investigate changes that the medium is undergoing. The curators believe that photography, in our everyday lives has always been, and still is, understood as documentary, reproductive and world-bound in character. For the curators this presented some questions to be explored with the digital revolution, such as; is an image brought about by means of computer and electronic technology radically different from an image taken by a lens and projected onto film; does digital image processing force us to re-evaluate such fundamental concepts such as realism and representation; is the referential character of photography cancelled out when the computer is used not only as a digital photographic laboratory but also to simulate photographic images? Through these questions they examined what they called the paradox of *photography after photography* that emerged

with the “collapse of the boundaries of photography, its infiltration, and its inclusion via the computer in the media network."[41]

In Jacques Clayssen’s “Digital (R)evolution” where he discusses the digital convenience of image manipulation (which according to Batchen was already always integral to photographic practices) and dramatic change in the ‘meaning’ or in the reading of the image through the famous O. J. Simpson case (will be explained). The name of the article ‘The Digital (R)evolution’ itself is a brilliant play that reflects on its multi-faceted nature. An evolution is a process of gradual, peaceful, progressive change or development, as in social or economic structure or institutions; whereas a revolution is an overthrow or repudiation and thorough replacement of an established government or political system by the people governed. In photography’s short history, there have been a great number of evolutionary steps. The dramatic change in the ontology that came with the digital can only be a revolution, whereas culturally – by that I mean the many uses of photography integrated in the society from amateur, professional or artistic perspectives – it was an evolution. Clayssen wrote, "The virtual Stone Age places us in the presence of worlds that are real but whose microscopic materiality is so imperceptible that there is something disturbingly immaterial about them”.[42] He points out that as far as the general user is concerned, the difference between analogue and digital photographs, regardless of the ease of dissemination (uploading, posting, shearing), is only a difference in the

[41] Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 9; Please note that these questions erected by the editors were investigated in individual essays that also included to this dissertation individually such as, Ritchin, Druckrey, Manovich and so on.
[42] Clayssen in Ibid. 77

microscopic level. Grain and pixel, however different they are, ultimately and fundamentally create an image.

As seen above, the major concern has been a revolutionary virtual square called the pixel that replaced the grain, which (through its reign over the visual representation in the last 150 years) was culturally and globally familiar integral part of photography. Through the 1990s onwards, with the replacement of its constituent element, photography was precipitously declared dead but, interestingly, only to be resurrected through logic and philosophy in the forms of hyper-photography, beyond photography, after photography and multifaceted post- photography. I would like to take one-step backwards, pause my investigation on the preexisting literature of next-photography and pose a question; is it possible to join them and how are they to be joined? Mitchell's post-production; Batchen's objecthood *beyond* conventional representation; Grundberg's internality with no external signifier; Tomas' act of criticism; Richtin's hyper-photography and concerns about truth; the after-photography and all the questions it rises; Clayssen's manipulated image; displacement of photography and distrust to the image; how are they to be reflected, criticized and how are they to be joined? First of all, it must be underlined that there is, according to all the writers above, still an image whether analogue, digital or synthetic; in physical material form, as computer data or as a photosphere located nowhere and attached to no external signifier. Even though they share the concept of no-more-photography, they still look at images and talk about images whether singular or within seriality. Before attempting to join them I will take another step backwards and look at examples of no-images of no-more-

photography, or (let us call it) in François Laruelle's words 'non-photography' (will be explained).

Non-Image:

In 2010, Turkish artist Oğuz Yıldız (1973-) realised the groundbreaking *Karanlık Oda [Darkroom]* (Fig.1,2), a performance of non-photography in the periphery of a small, non-profit institution, K2. He displayed five non-fixed vintage-print portraits in the gallery space lighted by the red gloomy darkroom bulbs. During the opening reception, he switched on the gallery lights that had a destructive effect on the non-fixed photographs and over-exposed the photographic paper until there were no images left, except the non-images. The condition of spectatorship immediately and dramatically changed; at first the viewer was looking at photographic images, internalising the image-based photographic message whereas later, there was only the act of looking at rapidly darkening photographic paper as the images disappear. Minimalist poet Aram Saroyan (1943-) wrote his infamous one-word poem, 'lighght' (1965), which I believe (intentionally or not), reflects on the dual character of light in photography only by multiplying the 'gh' in the word, which is silent in speech, but intelligible in writing.[43] Light is the main substance of (almost) all that is a photograph; the light is (arguably) the most destructive element for a photograph.[44] Having said that, would it be inconceivable to think of 'lighght' as

[43] Aram Saroyan and Ron Sillman, *Complete Minimal Poems, 2nd Edition*, 2nd edition (Primary Information/Ugly Duckling Presse, 2014). 227
[44] Amongst with temperature, relative humidity, pollution, vibration, etc.

Plato's 'Pharmakon'[45], something that is the 'cure' and the 'poison' (and for Derrida, 'scapegoat') at the same time?[46] Yıldız's performance is (perhaps unintentionally but still) precisely and purely a reflection on the duality of photographic light and a criticism of the ephemerality of image (with everything it represents), where he reevaluates it in an act of –what I would call – suicidal criticism.

Phil Chang's (1974-) *photographs* from 2007-2008 in a series of nine, *Double (Exposure 1-9)* (Fig.3,4) are questioning photographic meaning and photographic indexicality in both Pierce's and Krauss' sense. Pierce suggested index both as a trace or a state of 'sign' that points to something. *Double (Exposure)* is created by two simultaneous exposures using unexposed and expired sheets of black-and-white paper and an archival book scanner. Chang scanned a single sheet of Kodak *Kodabrome RC* black-and-white paper that generated the nine final photographs. The two (double) exposures involve the scanner recording an image of the photographic paper; the paper itself undergoes exposure from the light that is produced by the scanner which is necessary to make the recording and the ambient light at the same time.

> I wanted circularity to this process, which was a strategy of offsetting representational impulses in the interest of gaining meaning from the process of the work. I was also interested in 'resurrecting' an expired form of photographic material–expired both in functional value and, soon, as a widespread material within photographic practices. This

[45] Clearly, the notion of pharmakon in photography has more to it then *lighght*. Considering the discussions about photography and its functionality in remembrance from Proust to Barthes, which is to say, a supplement for memory that we remember things and events by, but at the same time an element that atrophies the memory itself.

[46] And can we not think of 'pharmakon' as the drops of ink that the Gernsheims used to make 'empty' daguerreotypes visible again after decades of being in non-image state, considering a number of the photographic history relics are non or barely visible anymore. The ink makes the image visible but destroyes the remaining chemical compound.

> resurrection took place by illuminating the expired and unexposed sheets of B+W paper for it's very recording.[47]

He transforms a material physical object, the unexposed, unfixed photographic paper into a digitised non-image, that are neither traces of something that has been, nor a signifier that signifies that something is/was. Krauss argued that the indexicality in contemporary art derives from a document or 'proof' of something that is not (always) visible or perceptive to human eye but has been, such as ephemeral, time-based performance art pieces or non-stable land-art.[48] The object of Chang's work doesn't seem to fit in either of the definitions.

Berkay Tuncay in his 2011 work *This Image or Video Has Been Removed or Deleted* (Fig.5) takes the criticism of non-image in the realm of digital technology and presents the non-image on a screen of variable dimensions. Images are uploaded and easily shared globally via the Internet where accidents, memory (data) losses and displacements happen on a daily basis. His work reflects on the ambiguous nature of binary data displaying the confused computer between *image* and *video,* which already, *cannot be found.* He wrote, "The fact that technological products designed to work "rationally" give errors and end up with irrational results shows us how futile this struggle is. Specifically, as one of these products, I find the Internet worthy of study in terms of exhibiting the repressed irrational behaviors of the public."[49] He takes on the criticism of digital image that turns into a non-image with the loss of the data, and what Batchen would call 'da[r]ta'[50] or Daniel Rubinstein would call 'meta-

[47] Quoted in Alexandra Wetzel, e-mail message to author, September 25, 2014
[48] Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America," *October* 3 (1977): 68.
[49] Berkay Tuncay, *Artist Statement,* accessed September 22, 2014, http://goo.gl/FMIuqV
[50] Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*. 176-192

data'[51], that is supposed to manifest an image from corresponding code of 1s and 0s.

As it should be getting clear now that, non-image, or non-photography is no less photographic than an actual image-photograph. It doesn't depict an iconoclasm but criticize the opposite, the visual as semiotically icon, symbol and index. All of these artists use photography as medium but they don't want to fall back into photographic image. They create within Laruelle's notion of 'non-photography', that he coined in conjunction with the notion of non-philosophy. For him western philosophy is the source of the confusion between the World and its image. He asks, if philosophy has always understood itself and its World according to the model of the photograph –such as the thing itself and its image– then how can there be a 'philosophy of photography' that is not viciously self-reflexive, like in the reflexivity of the artists we have seen? Or in other words, we can say that through the self-reflexivity and self-criticism, philosophy of photography is and always meta-philosophical. I will argue that for the same particularity, the term and the movement of 'non-photography', but now as a self-reflective, self-critical blanket that covers the sub-themes of displaced photography, is a form (and a branch) of –what I call – meta-photography. Even though non-photography can be conceived as a form of meta-photography, for Laruelle, non-philosophy is not meta-philosophy because, philosophy is already meta-philosophical through its constitutive reflexivity. And for the same reason one might be tempted to declare all photography is meta-photography, arguing that a photograph always reflects on photography (or at least on itself which

[51] Rubinstein, Daniel and Sluis, Katrina (2013) Notes on the Margins of Metadata; Concerning the Undecidability of the Digital Image. Photographies, 6 (1). 151-158.

only postpones the representation of all photography). However, one of the most important notions of the meta-photography that we are constructing here is the act of conscious self-criticism. And for that reason, not every photograph is meta-photographical. Non-photography, on the other hand, as a reflection to the death of photography and as the combination of emergent photographies; post-photography, beyond-photography, photography-after-photography, and hyper-photography, that continuously reflects, articulates, critiques the operational logic, practice and existence of obsolescent photography, is meta-photography; which now 'looks *at* photography *through* photography'. To proceed after merging 'next-photographies' under meta-photography and identified the image as one of the (critically) displaced elements, let us seek other photographic elements that has displaced with the 'metamorphosis'.

Non-context:

The persuasive and demonstrative powers of photographic image have been jeopardised and discredited through the manipulative post-production systems, questioning the document and the meaning. The traditional trust of photographic truth in the Aristotelian sense has disappeared: "To say what of what is that it is, or to say what it is not that it is not, is the truth; but to say of what is not that it is, or to say of what it is that it is not is falsehood".[52] But how is that photographs seem to say of what is that it is? Kember asked "how can we panic about the loss of the real when we know that the real is always already

[52] Marian David, "The Correspondence Theory of Truth," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2013, http://goo.gl/zlJ0he.

lost in the act of representation?[53] Batchen already suggested that the "production of any and every photograph involves practices of intervention and manipulation of some kind. After all, what else is photography but the knowing manipulation of light levels, exposure times, chemical concentrations, tonal ranges, and so on?"[54] That notwithstanding, digital manipulation discredited the cultural conception of photographic truth. However, Manovich argued if manipulation was always integral to photography since from the beginning, "digital technology does not subvert 'normal' photography because 'normal' photography never existed."[55] Mitchell wrote; "we have indeed learned to fix shadows, but not to secure their meanings or to stabilize their truth-values; they still flicker on the walls of Plato's cave."[56] He refers to Orwell's *1984* and recalls the 'elaborately equipped studios for the faking of photographs' in the sinister Records Department and argues, "What really happened in 1980s was that elaborately equipoised studios became unnecessary. It became possible for anybody with a personal computer to fake photographs."[57] Mitchell's work was published in 1992 when the notions of truth and reality dominated the discourse of digital photography, therefore he called the digitally manipulated images 'pseudo-photographs'.[58] Grundberg concluded, "The belief in the veracity of

[53] Sarah Kember, *Virtual Anxiety: Photography, New Technologies and Subjectivity* (Manchester University Press, 1998). 17
[54] Batchen, *Burning with Desire*. 139
[55] Manovich in Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 60
[56] Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye*. 225
[57] Ibid. 19
[58] One problem about Mitchel's book is that he takes analog photography as an artistic medium and tool of expression but when it comes to digital photography he doesn't take it as such. He doesn't refer to any artists or works and takes it as a thing itself, disassociating, distancing and abstracting it from its cultural values.

photographic information is a cultural convention" rather than a fact[59]. And our imminent loss of faith in the veracity, credibility and truthfulness of photographic images demonstrated on a daily basis in the digital culture was actually recognised and criticized by artists long before computers began to jeopardize the evidentiary nature of photographs.[60] It is clear that photographic meanings and contexts, however strong, are fragile.

The brittleness of meaning has been reflected upon in the genre of meta-photography as early as John Hilliard's (1945-) *Cause of Death* (1974) (Fig.6) where Batchenian manipulations such as framing or cropping dramatically changes the meaning and the message; 'Crushed', 'Drowned', 'Burned' and 'Fell' are the only anchors directing the viewer to the intended meaning. [61] The existence/decease of the lying figure covered with -what appears to be functioning as- a shroud is a clash of image-generated meanings. Another work by Hilliard, *Camera Recording its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)* (1971) (Fig.7) reflects on the (primary) manipulation of light conditions used while photographing the same subject, a camera recording itself and the operating hand of the artist. This assemblage of seventy black-and-white pictures goes (according to the exposure, aperture and mirror used) from white to black, from another non-image to another. Even between the ultimate white

[59] Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real*. 271

[60] Grundberg points a very interesting consequence; he argues that photography has come to function less as a report on real-world events and more as a subjective, interpretative medium after the displacement of the trust. And, like most cultural artifacts, he wrote, it has found refuge in the museum and the art world. For this discussion I refer to Ibid.

[61] If we go beyond Batchen's 'every photograph is manipulation of a number of elements' approach, manipulation, still in various forms has been an integral part of photographic practices of artists like H. P. Robinson or Oscar Gustav Rejlander or occasionally, practically used others like Camille Silvy, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and Hippolyte Bayard, they were, unlike Hilliard's, not conscious criticisms of the fragility of the meaning but a way to construct it.

and opposite where the indexical modes of representation operates within the terms of Pierce and Krauss, it doesn't give a picture of 'reality' except for different variations of it. The primary manipulation of chemicals, tones and environmental situations like in the practice of Hilliard's notwithstanding, the photographic image, whether analog or digital born, can be subjected to a secondary manipulation of either the grains or the pixels (the code) that changes, alters the integral elements and therefore (can) change and alter the meaning.

Having distinguished manipulation from Batchen's manipulation (which is a part of every photograph) – say by putting a Derridian *jalousie* between the two uses of the word – let us examine the manipulative digital post-production elements and consecutive displacement of trust in photographic meaning in digital culture that eventually shatter and maim the context. To go back to Rithin and hyper-photography, he discussed the -wrong- conception of photography being a somewhat transparent medium has been taken advantage of by media in forms of reportage, advertisement and so on. The increased manipulation of photographs jeopardised photography as reliable documentation in public eye, raising questions about its role in recounting personal and public histories. He argues that there is even a "tendency to the news media to use the photograph to illustrate preconceived editorial ideas".[62] Meaning that, the manipulation, regardless of how much it alters or changes an individual photograph, the context can still be bended or manipulated (further) by the editor's or the institution's agenda. Therefore he points two levels of manipulation, one is of

[62] Fred Rithin, *Photojournalism in the age of computers*, Carol Squiers, *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography* (Seattle: Bay Press,U.S., 1994). 28

the image and the other is the culturally coded meaning that is attached to that particular image but this time, in a single-use (and ready-to-use) context.

Even though the pixel as opposed to the grain is a scientifically contained Cartesian square, its reality and its relation to reality was questioned much more than analogue photography, its modernist quesi-scientific sibling.[63] The rhetoric of the digital image has seen a number of famous meta-discursive cases of pixel-based alterations. First applications of digital 'alterations' are from the world of science and started as early as 1964, when NASA scientists used digital processors to remove imperfections in photographs of lunar surface sent back by space explorer Ranger 7.[64] The most famous case however, was on June 27, 1994, where Time Magazine and Newsweek featured two different copies of the same mug shot of O.J.Simpson (Fig.8). The Newsweek cover is the original mug shot, whereas the Time cover is digitally manipulated. O.J.Simpson's face is darker, blurrier and unshaven. The photographer that manipulated the picture claimed that he wanted to make it more 'artful', more compelling. Any manipulation distorts the truth and abstracts the context. In the O. J. Simpson case, image and the meaning were altered in sync.[65] The 1982 National Geographic cover case (Fig. 9) with re-positioned Pyramids was maybe not the most famous but one of the earliest and most interesting cases of image

[63] But Barthes has already discounted truthful depiction and resemblance to reality of (analog) photography pointing the photograph only depicts the sitter at a certain time; the resemblance and truthfulness is a temporal one in its best. For this argument I refer to Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981).
[64] Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye*. 11
[65] I do not wish to go into detail for each of them but the other case studies commonly discussed by Mitchell, Batchen, Ritchin, Clayssen and so on that includes The Rolling Stone removed a shoulder holster and a pistol form a photograph as Miami Vice star Don Johnson to make it look less violent; *A Day In Life of America* editors made a horizontal image a vertical image when they had 235.000 more images to choose from.

manipulation. The editors decided to abridge the space between one pyramid and the other aiming a more 'appealing' vertical cover image. Martha Rosler, through the NatGeo case asked, "If we move them photographically, are we betraying history? Are we asserting the easy domination of our civilisation over all times and all places?"[66] She sees the pyramids as one of the immutable objects of human history and argues where an object with historically proven stability such as the pyramids changes its location, we are betraying history; absorbing it as a form of visual looting.

So it is actually, as Rosler and Kember pointed, a crisis of system and belief, "apparently fading but always mythical realism, and loss of the real is actually a displacement of our dominant and as yet unsuccessfully challenged *investments* in the photographic real."[67] Kember argues that positivism is photography's 'originary' and formative way of thinking. However as she reads between the lines of *Camera Lucida,* she comes to the conclusion that photographic truth is an *internal* (punctum) one rather than *external* (studium) one. Therefore we should not look for positivist truthfulness in photographic image whether it is analog or digital, straight or manipulated.[68] They have, at best, a (Rousseauian) supplementary relationship to real.

What about synthetic images solely created by computer with no external reference whatsoever? Tim Druckey gives an example from press photography, a photograph of a fighter plane crashing in Finland. Although there was a plane and it did crash there was no photograph of it. The image was simulated,

[66] Rosler in Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 26-36
[67] Sarah Kember, "'The Shadow of the Object' 1 : Photography and Realism," *Textual Practice* 10, no. 1 (1996): 145–63. 203
[68] Ibid. 208-209

assembled by a computer on the basis of eyewitness descriptions.[69] Batchen stated since at least 1989 and Photoshop, photography, because of the ability to construct itself without any stable substance (except for its binary code which is already instable) has been, in the words of French philosopher Lyotard, an *immaterial.*[70] Mitchell proposes that in 'the age of electrobricolage', the 'real' is experienced through counterfeit vision, where facts, fictions and untruths are appropriated and freely exchanged.[71] To this logic, we are in an age where images reproduced in a condition that Jean Baudrillard describes as endless simulacra.[72] Röetzer suggested 'extra-photographic truth', a digital truth with simulacral structure rather than a visual one in post photographic era's new forms of representation.[73] Jonathan Crary draws attention to the implications of computers being used to make images without reference to an embodied viewer or photographer located in the physical world. The constructed virtual visual spaces of computer generated imagery which were then emerging, were radically different form the mimetic capacities of film and photography and television.[74] Victor Burgin's (1941-) 2010 work *Bir Okuma Yeri/ A Place to Read* (Fig.10) was made during an artist residency in Istanbul. He used photographic material to create a 3-Dimensional model of the space which he then 'walked' with a virtual camera and took respective captions. He once wrote, "This continuum is in its turn implicitly formed in reference to another, one which

[69] Druckrey in Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 81-88
[70] Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*. 179
[71] Leet, *Reading Photography*. 335
[72] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (University of Michigan Press, 1994).
[73] Röetzer in Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 14
[74] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, New edition edition (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

stretches from the automatic and objective operation of the camera, 'pure technology', to the human and subjective gesture of painting, 'pure personality'. One effect of the arrival of digital photography has been to collapse this continuum, uniting its previous antipodean extremities."[75] His work combines pure technology and pure personality as the distinction between taking and making collapse.

To return to meta-photography, we can say that a photographic image whether analog or digital, cannot ontologically but for sure culturally, insist upon its reality. Therefore the criticism of the context, or in other words meta-photography of/about context, would have to reveal the apparatus and process of manipulation itself. Lucas Blalock (1978-), examines internal information of photography's post-production, making its tools visible. In *Beans on Blue* (2011), the process begins by photographing beans with an analog camera; he then processes them through the computer using Photoshop(Fig.11) and deletes the blue background from left to right with a transparent fashion. The marks and gestures left by both him and the computer, including the renowned but usually unconscious and well-camouflaged checkered background of Photoshop as a non-background, are clearly visible. Liz Deschanes in her 2001 installation *Green Screen* (Fig.12) reveals another non-background, the 'greenbox'. This is a non-spatial context that is located in a 'studio' – which is already a non-space that can potentially 'be' any space – that is then used to subtract the subject from the real background and place them in a virtually created spatial context. By

[75] Burgin, in Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 26-36

displaying the greenbox in a real gallery space she dispels the illusion of digitally fabricated realities, criticizing their subtle difference.

Non-material:

Another displaced element of photography is its material. Even though Batchen (and Squiers) believed the post photographic practices emphasize the 'objecthood' of photographs, what really happened was quite the opposite. The images that were once supported by a physical-material support were digitised and uploaded to the Internet where traditionally they were displayed as prints, projected as transparencies or reproduced in printed pages. By the direct conversion of light into a digital format image, 'photographs' that only exist in the digital form can be seen, Sassoon argued, as 'truer version' of photography, writing with light.[76] However, the translation from material to data state of image abolishes the 'sense' of size or texture therefore the material-contexts and transforms our relationship with the photograph. Sassoon points out the process of digitising the photographic collections reduce the complexities of its nature to a 'single, unitary digital form'.[77] For her, digitisation pulls researchers further away from the photograph's format as a material, cultural object, an object which was made in a certain way for a reason. Digitisation is on one hand an act of democratic connection, fulfilling demands for increased access to collections while conserving the conditions of the original object, on the other hand a control mechanism over the public rights to see and study cultural

[76] Joanna Sassoon, *Photographic Meaning in the Age of Digital Reproduction* in Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs Objects Histories: The Materiality of Images* (Psychology Press, 2004). 186-202
[77] Ibid. 186

relics.[78] Translating (reducing) the diverse photographic materials and techniques into a digital image endangers the multifaceted nature of the medium curtailing the polysomic dynamic body of theory, practice and criticism. She points that what were once three-dimensioned physical objects become one-dimensional and intangible digital surrogates, with the tactility and materiality of the original object being reduced to both an ephemeral and an ethereal state, to what she calls a 'digital ghost'.[79] Dematerialisation with digitisation changes the way we see the 'image' and the 'context'. Where once material and meaning were bound up in a complex, synergistic and symbiotic relationship, the resultant digital object is an ephemeral ghost that's materiality is at best intangible.[80] Elisabeth Edwards similarly offers a critique of the negative effects of digitising photographs which were material in their original form. Further to Sassoon, she argues the image on the computer screen is not only intangible but still demands levels of sensory interaction: "the slight flicker of the screen, the tap of the keyboard, the physical movement of operating the mouse and the social networks of image exchange".[81] But is that enough? She wishes to extend the understanding of photography beyond the semiotic, linguistic and instrumental models to a more phenomenological approach, in which sensible materiality holds the key to understanding as she suggests a reevaluation of the hierarchy of the senses, in which seeing and hearing traditionally stand for the production of rational knowledge.[82] She points that

[78] Ibid. 187
[79] Ibid. 191
[80] Ibid. 199
[81] Edwards in Ibid. 31
[82] Ibid. 36

most photographs exist in everyday context rather than art objects: as postcards and in family albums, newspapers or magazines where they are experienced in a multi-sensory interaction.[83]

These multi-sensory means of image dissemination such as newspapers and magazines were first able to reproduce photographs instead of line drawings in the mid-1880s with the invention of the half-ton printing press. They initially started with staff photographers but eventually independent freelance photographers took over. One of the first major stock photography agencies was founded in 1920 by H. Armstrong Roberts to create an image bank, a pool of ready to use images, which continues today under the name RobertStock. It was a traditional, by that I mean on a material level, archive. In 1989, Bill Gates founded Corbis, a company that licenses the digital (online) rights of photographs, footage (form early 2000s) and expanding fields of other media, with an archive of 100 million images and 800,000 video clips.[84] However, Corbis is only one of the ever-expanding online image databases competing with Getty Images and Sipa Press.[85] Over the course, Corbis signed with Andy Warhol Foundation, Douglas Kirkland, James White, The Smithsonian Institution, The National Gallery, London, The State Hermitage Museum, Christie's Images, and the Bettmann, Hulton-Deutsch, Sygma and Brett Weston collections and many others. Batchen points that in 1996 the database signed a long-term contract for the reproduction and distribution with the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust,

[83] Ibid. 39
[84] Corbis History, accessed October 03, 2014, http://goo.gl/0yYSr7.
[85] To my knowledge, there are 23 major online image databases, however this number doesn't include advertisement photography archives or the university library archives, which adds up to hundreds.

however Corbis was only interested in the 'digital rights' of Adams' images; for Batchen that signaled the impending displacement of materiality of photographic archives and appraisal of digital image 'empires'.[86] With photography, for Benjamin, the 'aura' was 'sacrificed' for dissemination in the age of mechanical reproduction, with Corbis and the age of electronic reproduction, we have seen the material being 'sacrificed' in its totality[87].

About the displaced photographic material in the act of digitisation, both Sassoon and Edwards raised very important issues considering chosen material and the way it was made is also a part of the objects context; it is not just the support for the image but also its connection to history as much as the image-content. So the digital image is reducing the photograph to an 'image' that has a fixed material-context, the screen. Let us ask the necessary question which both Sassoon and Edwards somewhat discounted: what happens to the sensory information like the size, condition, texture, the verso and so on in the process of digitisation? They are (not always but usually) transformed with the image as well. For example in her 2008 series *Verso,* (Fig.13) Meggan Gould looks behind the photographic image. She scans, prints and displays the verso of her own family snapshots as well as found photographs, press and military photos.

> I am interested in looking at how photographs are customarily used, touched, written upon, folded, cherished, torn, […] the way that the marks, stains, and text on the photographs point to or hint at the lives that these photographs have led as objects in the world.[88]

[86] Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*. 147
[87] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2008).
[88] Zach Nader, "An Interview with Meggan Gould | SRO Photo Gallery," accessed September 22, 2014, http://goo.gl/JwLVvC.

She reproduced these ‘relics’ instead of framing and exhibiting the real objects for two reasons; one is that she wanted to present them bigger then they are to reveal the detail of the smallest writings and marks, the other reason is that she wanted to subject the photographs to the act of photographing therefore declaring that the verso of the photographic object is also photogenic-attention-worthy. These are often photographs that were never intended to be seen outside of a very specific context, such as personal mementos or military records. Hints of text, dates, stamped numbers, tape and glue marks, all ‘relics of a pre-pixel age’, invite the viewer to imagine the image that potentially sits in the verso. Her digitised images focuses on the verso where the writings or marks are shown; a form of Rubinstein’s ‘meta-data’ and Batchen’s ‘dar[t]a’. To answer my question further; after digitisation, photographic image becomes ‘data’ whereas the material context becomes ‘meta-data’; which is also the two same substances of a digital born image which I will explore shortly.

II.

Abundance

Echoes of the so-called death of photography and its aftermath, which is to say an absence of trust and displacement of the conventional mode of photographic representation, have resonated through artistic practice and theoretical writing; if that is what we wish to look for. However, in this chapter I will not only contrast the obsolescence of photography with an abundance of photographs but also succinctly extend and advance my exploration of different aspects of meta-photography as I analyze the works that criticize and reflect upon the 'abundance of image' that we so densely experience. As I have shown, photography only faked its own death and went through an ontological and cultural 'metamorphosis'. Now that we have seen the digital age's translation from material to digital as 'data' and 'meta-data', it is appropriate to analyse their conditions.

Photography, by its nature (actually we should say by its cultural conception since we established that photography has no particular nature except for an ever-changing one) is an abundant mode of visual representation: Talbot's 1841 *calotype (talbotype)* with the possibility of making multiple prints from a single negative; Disdéri's *Card de Visite* of 1854s that was reproduced by the millions; Kodak's 1888 *Brownie* with the ease and convenience of image making that created a whole genre of 'anonymous snapshots'. These examples

have created a world with a copious ecosystem of images.[89] However the digitisation of image making that started as a Kodak research project at 1975 and early consumer digital cameras in 1980s such as *Canon Xapshot* remodeled that world, transforming the photographic image and advancing the sense of proliferation and omnipresence.[90]

With the development of technology, digital cameras shrank to credit card size; moreover mobile phones became high quality cameras that are readily connected to the Internet allowing an almost instantaneous transmission of image and text, data and meta-data through e-mail or social network websites. Grundberg described this with "André Malraux's 'museum without walls' and further argues that we now live in a 'museum without limits'.[91] Today, the biggest photographic network in terms of daily expenditure is Facebook Inc. with an average of 217 images uploaded per user daily. That adds up to 350 million images in total uploaded daily, creating a database of total 250 billion images.[92] That makes Facebook about forty-six times more 'photographic' than Flickr, the rival image depository. Yahoo Inc.'s annual report does not specify the daily uploads but according to a public graphic (Fig.14) the average daily uploads were over 60 million, where there are over 10 billion photographs uploaded onto Flickr in total. Facebook establishes and maintains a network of personal images; Flickr operates as the official means of image distribution for artists, institutions

[89] Elizabeth Anne Mccauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-71*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
[90] Michael R. Peres, *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography: Digital Imaging, Theory and Applications, History, and Science* (Taylor & Francis, 2007).
[91] Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real*. 225
[92] Facebook Inc. 2013 Annual Report, accessed October 6, 2014, http://goo.gl/JqfqNF

or even governments; the White House for example, releases its official photographs via Flickr.

The overwhelming quantity of images created and shared daily were reflected upon and criticized by many. For example artist/curator Erik Kessels' 2011 installation for "The Future of Photography" exhibition in the 10th anniversary of FOAM, Amsterdam *Photography in Abundance* or *24 Hrs of Photos* (Fig.15), flaunts the images that are uploaded to Flickr within 24 hours. He first materialises (prints) then installs the images that were (possibly) never intended to be printed and seen outside the screen context; he observes that there are very intimate and sentimental images amongst the pile;

> First of all you're amazed by how many pictures are uploaded in 24 hours. Then, when you walk over it, you realise you have access to very many intimate moments. We're living in a totally different age, compared with when everybody had a family album. So there's that whole discussion about private and public, when you're in a room, walking over pictures of babies being born, and private parties and weddings. It can be quite awkward.[93]

He demonstrates and criticises (in an interactive and somewhat amusing way) the abundance of images. One million photographs may not be impressively a lot in terms of digital imaging and screen-based spectatorship, but when materialised and put into gallery, they bombard the viewer (harder). For many, the context of the gallery wall is still the discursive space for photography but how can we reject the screen as the new discursive non-space. The screen, as being the standard support for an infinite number of images – that operates almost like Freud's 'mystic writing pad' – comforts the spectator by making the

[93] "Is Erik Kessels the Smartest Photo Curator around? | Photography | Agenda," *Phaidon*, accessed October 6, 2014, http://goo.gl/00puRP.

terms of viewing more convenient.[94] And as we have discussed, the equalising and reductive screen with this convenience already replaced the multi-sensory form of physical-material photograph. But what is it that we engage with on the computer screen and maybe more importantly, how do we engage with it?

According to Hito Steyerl, the digital image, or the digitised image is – what she called – 'the poor image', a low-quality, low resolution but easy-to-disseminate preview. She addresses the importance of image resolution in 'the class society of appearance'. Her argument is that the 'contemporary hierarchy of images' is primarily based on resolution, specifically the twisted dialog between low-resolution and high-resolution images. She defines the poor image as "a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution."[95] She proposes a new assessment of image values not based on appearance, but on the power of circulation and of being shared in an alternative economy of images. Ironically, the poor image operates against the 'fetish value of high resolution,' yet also plays further into commercial capitalism by their ability to thrive in an environment controlled by "compressed attention spans, on impression rather than immersion, on intensity rather than contemplation, on previews rather

[94] Sigmund Freud, A Note upon the "Mystic Writing Pad" in General Psychological Theory, Chapter XIII, 1925. 208-212

[95] Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *E-Flux Journal*, November 2009, http://goo.gl/U0YiYJ.

than screenings."[96] The glorification of resolution reinforces the capitalist values of images; on the contrary the poor image undermines and criticises the same values. There is only one (invaluable) original Mona Lisa; a limited number of high-resolution reproductions (replicas, posters, etc.); but there are (literally) millions of poor images (that can be downloaded freely) of the painting. Since the poor image is much more convenient, it only accelerates its dissemination and popularisation in contemporary visual culture, therefore it must be (because of enormous quantities) the most 'powerful' variation of images that we engage with today.

Mishka Henner is one of the highlights of the artistic transformation of the poor image. For example the celebrated, Deutsche Börse Photography Prize winner *No Man's Land* (2011) surveys prostitution sites in the outskirts of large cities of Italy and Spain only by using Google Street View.[97] These street view images may not be instantaneous but they are free-to-access and omnipresent. He follows the same strategy for this documentation project as Harry Callahan, which he photographed (poor) images from the television some forty years before. The images often show a sole figure in a seemingly desolated environment (Fig.16). The subject's unnatural presence (and occasional temporary shelters of parasols, an umbrella for the sun, tables, sofas) is almost surreal as Henner provides us a voyeuristic gaze into this 'discrete' and underground practice. He said;

> I loved it because it didn't pretend it was trying to understand the experience of the women. It's about us looking, being witnesses to a

[96] Ibid.
[97] For information about Google Street View I refer to, "About - Google Maps," accessed October 7, 2014, http://goo.gl/U0YiYJ.

> whole world with which we cannot empathies. […] Inadvertently, the work has taken on an archival role. 'Street View is updated every two or three years. I revisit locations online and the women are no longer there, the landscape has changed. Most of these images will disappear without ever being looked at.[98]

His work – like Joachim Schmid's – raises questions about authorship and ownership since the images from Google Street View are freely available online to everyone with an internet connection, artists working with such images consistently encounter issues regarding originality, authorship and copyright.

Joachim Schmid's *Other Peoples Photographs* (2008-2011) for example not just criticizes and materialises but also re-cycles the 'poor image' in a 96-book set containing 32 images each. For this project he gathered images found on photography sharing sites such as Flickr, categorised them in a way to form a library of contemporary vernacular photography in the age of digital technology and online photo hosting in which he explores the themes and visual patterns presented by everyday, amateur photographers. One of the themes is photographs of artworks, including Mona Lisa(Fig.17). To go back to the bespoken masterpiece, only in Flickr, there are 25,539 images that are 'tagged' as Mona Lisa (October 6, 2014). In some of them, the painting is not even in the frame or in focus. There is, however another (and bigger) issue that needs to be pointed here. The act of tagging, in digital culture, technically means adding another layer of meta-data attached to that particular image. In a search, the images called according to the tag/s. Within that rule, in a search for 'Mona Lisa the painting', the searcher would get any images that were tagged as 'Mona Lisa', even though the image has nothing to do with the painting. This points to

[98] Lucy Davies, "Deutsche Börse Photography Prize: Mishka Henner," April 13, 2013, sec. Culture, http://goo.gl/1OqHH5.

the precarious and manipulative nature of meta-data. As Batchen argued, dar[r]ta takes the electronic worlds as its medium and subject at the same time. Just like meta-data, it too has the potential to disrupt the smooth flow of electronic data-based communication. He wrote;

> Drawing sustenance from the very thing it disorders, it cannot be killed off without that host also being condemned to death. In short, *da[r]ta* is the name we might give to a new kind of parasite, an info-virus capable of creatively infecting the artificial nature that now immerses ourselves and our planet. Neither organic nor inorganic, neither nature nor culture, neither representation nor real, neither message nor code—neither nor, that is, simultaneously either or—*da[r]ta* enjoys a disturbingly undecidable viral existence. But most important, *da[r]ta* testifies that everything—even a data field as powerful as television [or in our case a single digital image or the whole internet]—can be infiltrated, occupied, and, at least for a moment, made not to look itself.[99]

Even though we the viewer know that the image is not of Mona Lisa, for the computer algorithms that reads the data, the distinction does not exist. However more and more images are processed, sorted, stored, archived and distributed by computers (non-humans) each day.[100] They cannot see an image; but they can read the data and meta-data (or at times falsified da[r]ta) which is to say the system of codes that the image is created from. On the other hand, recent studies with paintings and several computer algorithms showed that, for example the one by Lior Shamir and Jane Tarakhovsky of Lawrence Technological University in Michigan, computers have successfully 'seen' patterns of brush strokes, color, texture and shapes and identified the differences between painting styles.[101] Furthermore, other computer scientists

[99] Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*. 204
[100] John Tagg, *Mindless Photography* in J. J. Long, Andrea Noble, and Edward Welch, *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2008). 20-21
[101] Lior Shamir and Jane A. Tarakhovsky, "Computer Analysis of Art," *J. Comput. Cult. Herit.* 5, no. 2 (August 2012): 7:1–7:11.

from Rutgers University in New Jersey Babak Saleh, Kanako Abe, Ravneet Singh Arora and Ahmed Elgammal were able to create an algorithm that can differentiate not just colors and shapes but depicted objects (such as desks, stoves, figures etc.).[102] Does it mean they can bear a critical and interpretative gaze as well as an analytic one? Can they 'critically' look at an image and to the code that creates it? In image recognition systems that have been in use for a more threatening agenda, as Mitchell predicted, perhaps they can. In the form of social surveillance, "image interoperation system can be employed […] to monitor satellite images for signed of missile silo construction, to identify perpetrators by automatically matching fingerprints from the scenes of crime to archived plates that have been recorded".[103] In that case, we see computers 'looking' and 'judging'. This almost science-fictional use of images and algorithms now work on a daily basis with the interoperation of just two kinds of code, data and meta-data.

Rubinstein & Sluis constructively define digital image as "a layer of ubiquitous information that continually combines and recombines figures, texts, glitches, and numbers by passing electronic signals between the nodal points of the internetwork; constructing cells, building new connections and creating proliferating, mimetic surfaces."[104] The 'data' is the layer of code that creates the image. Meta-data for them has two sides to it. One is a descriptive meta-data which is generated mechanically as the image is created and contains

[102] Babak Saleh et al., "Toward Automated Discovery of Artistic Influence," *arXiv:1408.3218 [cs]*, August 14, 2014, http://arxiv.org/abs/1408.3218.
[103] Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye*. 13
[104] Daniel Rubinstein, "The Grin of Schrödinger's Cat; Quantum Photography and the Limits of Representation," in *On the Verge of Photography: Imaging Beyond Representation*, ed. Daniel Rubinstein, Johnny Golding, and Andy Fisher (Birmingham: ARTicle Press, 2013). 33–48.

information such as date, location, camera make, owner, keywords, dimensions, shutter, aperture, ,so and so on.[105] The second one is collected as a by-product of interaction with the image such as tags, comments, ratings, number of viewings, data about the viewer and so on.[106] Data and meta-data create together the substances of digital image in microscopic level, individually discrete pixels. A digital image is subsisted on a pre-given number of pixels according to the capacity of the light sensitive sensor or the image size determined in the software whereas, Mitchell argues, an analogue image has "more data than meets the eye"; the enlargement of a analogue image therefore yields 'better' results than a digital one, "once it is enlarged to a point where its gridded structure becomes visible, further enlargement can reveal nothing new." We can visualise this with the celebrated work of Thomas Ruff (1958-). In 2009, the Aperture Foundation in New York published *Jpegs*, a large-scale book dedicated exclusively to his monumental series of pixilated enlargements of internet-culled images, all compressed using the standard *JPEG* format.[107] But before that, they were already printed (in 2007) enormously (240x185 cm.) and turned into monumental objects where he broke down the image into squares and revealed the structure of both the image and the pixels that create it (Fig.18).[108] By showing the 'molecules' he reflects on the

[105] This side of meta-data is also called the 'EXIF' (exchangeable image file format). For information about 'exif' see *CIPA DC- 008-Report 2012 Exchangeable Image File Format For Digital Still Cameras: Exif Version 2.3,* (Camera & Imaging Products Association, Japan, 2012), 13-17

[106] Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis, "Concerning the Undecidability of the Digital Image," *Photographies* 6, no. 1 (March 2013): 151–58, doi:10.1080/17540763.2013.788848.

[107] Thomas Ruff, *Jpegs* (Aperture, 2009).

[108] David Campany reminded that this strategy was already being used by analog – but this time blowing the grain – practitioners of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s photo-reportage. See David Campany, *The aesthetics of the pixel: Thomas Ruff's JPEGs.* (IANN Magazine, 2, 2008). 32-47

dimensional limitations of the digital image. However, recent developments in software that turns an image with finite number of pixels to an unlimited pixelled image such as *Live-picture* or *Matador*, as Manovich discussed, discredited Mitchell's early determinations. Pixel, he wrote "is no longer a final frontier; as far as the user concerned, it simply doesn't exist".[109] He also argues against Mitchell's ideas about ad infinitum reproducibility of digital images.[110] Unlike his conceptions, digital images too degrade, deteriorate and lose data.[111] For Manovich, while the digital imaging 'perfectly' replaces the techniques of photograph (and film) making, it also finds new roles and brings new value to photography; for him this is the paradox of digital photography.[112] Images created with computes for example is one of them, however he reminds that they tend to be "too clean, sharp and geometric looking […] they are free of the limitations of both human eye and camera vision. They can have unlimited resolution and an unlimited level of detail […] everything is in focus, it is free of grain, the colors are sharp".[113] To be seen photographical, they have to be degraded, their perfection has to be diluted to match film's imperfections. They should (at least digitally) come to the terms of the 'poor image' that we are accustomed.

On the contrary to the poor image, digital captures translated into numbers and stored as data allow for higher resolution at a more accessible scale, enabling photographers to present their work in much larger prints and

[109] Manovich in Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 60
[110] Ibid. 59
[111] For information about digital detoriation and conservation I refer to "Digital Art Conservation", accessed October 7, 2014, http://goo.gl/rb5ZBb
[112] Amelunxen, Iglhaut, and Roetzer, *Photography after Photography*. 58
[113] Ibid. 63-64

projections than ever before. But perhaps the most significant development is the electronic dissemination that has changed the way we think about and interact with images, therefore photography. The digital image (data and meta-data) is omnipresent whether it is 'poor image' or a high-resolution image of the older hierarchy. With the instantaneously shared abundant digital image, the spectator's sense of temporality of image has somewhat shifted from Barthes' 'that-has-been' to 'this is happening!'. Photography with its editions and multiple prints has already brought the image a material omnipresence in the 19th century. "We have faith in the photograph not only because it works on a physically descriptive level, but in a broader sense because it confirms our sense of omnipresence as well as the validity of the material world."[114] However, digital photography lost the validity of the object but gained a cyber-omnipresence. There are two temporalities that need to be pointed out: one is the abridged time between taking, shearing and viewing; the other is the increased multiple 'spatialities' that the same particular image is seen at the same time. Victor Burgin points that photography emerged in a period when the Western world was drawing boundaries where digital photography emerged in a historical period where the boundaries between "geo-political regions, institutions, media structures and epistemological distinctions" are shifting or disappearing, intensifying and globalising the dissemination of image, boosting its cyber-omnipresence.[115] David Bate argues that interactive Web 02 (html) has created a non-centralised network of images by creating a user-friendly image sharing economy. He looks at the dissemination through post-colonial and global

[114] Ritchin in Kember, The Virtual Life of Photography. 175–203
[115] Amelunxen et al., *Photography after Photography*. 30

mechanisms and identifies three aspects; a local accumulation whose aim is local [like Corbis]; a global network whose aim and use is local [like Facebook and Flickr]; an aim neither local nor global, but simply one defined as 'distraction' [like StumbleUpon].[116] These three modes of dissemination enable the user to combine different kinds of media in different ways.

That creates a sense of shared (joined) authorship. The photographer (in certain occasions) no longer offers a petrified work, a fossil. The Internet facilitated an open dialogue with the spectator, who participates and shares in a creative dialogue. We can to some extent see this as an echo of Polaroid process where, as Wolf pointed, the invention of one-step process by Polaroid Corporation in 1947, made photography an instant [and in-house] practice long before digital photography made instant viewing a standard feature of photography. Photographers became able to share instantly and on the spot, offering a photo to takeaway. It formed a basis for instant reactions and a sense of shared authorship similar to its online model. In that sense, joined authorship has two sides to it. One is the creative, open-ended process-based dialog between the photographer, the photograph and the viewer that works against the fossilisation of the meaning by constantly re-reading and changing it. According to that even a preexisting archive, no matter how immutable it may seem, is no longer a matter of discreet objects stored and retrieved in specific contexts. Now it is also a continuous stream of data, without geography or container, continuously transmitted and therefore without temporal restriction.

[116] David Bate, *Photography* (Oxford ; New York: BERG, 2009). 153

Exchange rather than storage has become the archivist's principal function.[117] The archive is therefore becomes not static, but a dynamic open-ended process. Every time an image-record is called from the repository, a digital copy is created with added meta-data, which show "when, by whom and for what purpose the record was activated. Every activation adds a layer of metadata to the primary record. All these activations are acts of co-creatorship determining the record's meaning".[118]

The other one is re-cycling and appropriation of other people's photographs, (like Schmid) changing the context of existing (vernacular) photosphere. This strategy corresponds perfectly with the déjà vu condition of our contemporary life. It was foreseen by Mitchell, "Soon we will no longer go and take photographs, [...] because we are running out of motifs, buried under a flood of ever more similar images showing reality, or what we have staged as reality, to the point of exhaustion. Soon images will be continually recycled."[119] Schmid's 'taxonomy' is only one strategy of re-cycling, sharing a somewhat similar quantitative approach with Penolope Umbrico's famous *Suns (Sunsets) From Flickr* (2006-ongoing) work that displays appropriated photographs side by side. In that context I would like to look at Corinne Vionnet's *Photo Opportunities* (Fig.19) in which she combines average of hundreds of snapshots of popular tourist destinations she gathers from the Internet. Her focus is immutable, monumental sites of attraction.

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[117] Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*. 183
[118] F. C. J. Ketelaar, "'Archives in the Digital Age: New Uses for an Old Science,'" *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 1 (2007), 83-84, http://goo.gl/CpUHU5.
[119] Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye*. 22

> *Photo Opportunities* tries to speak about our collective memory and […] it attempts to raise questions about our motivations to make a photograph in our touristic experience. It tries to speak about our image consumption and how ubiquitous images actually are. I mainly try to conjure up questions, using my personal story to create these images; however, the perception of images for each of us is different and has its own response.[120]

As her works shows, the representation of tourist sites are created in a very similar if not the same way. She creates images of collective impression of how these places are represented. By merging images from a single point of view she emphasises the global connection through the images.

Evidently, the criticism of photography with photographs or photographic works can be found within the abundance of images as well. Self-referentiality, self-reflexivity and self-criticism that we have already merged in different combinations and prioritisations under meta-photography's medium specificity uses photography as a medium to explore photography's digitised, materialised, omnipresent and reciprocal states. As I have hopefully demonstrated, photographers adopt and use the meta-lingual approach to 'talk' about their visual language. In one way, meta-photography is – by its philosophical and art historical origins – photography looking at photography through photography, like Mitchell's meta-picture; or in other words (broadly) meta-photography is the medium *as* the message. But is that all it can be? We have, since the beginning of our defence of meta-photography, thinking and talking within photography's medium specificity; can we discard medium-specificity from our meta-photography equation? Can the criticism of the

[120] Gregory Eddi Jones, Photo Opportunities: An Interview with Artist Corinne Vionnet, accessed October 7, 2014, http://goo.gl/kFk5mO

medium be fulfilled within the premises of another medium, can the ‘message’ be conveyed with another ‘medium’?

Conclusion

As we have seen in the works discussed, meta-photography as a self-reflective act of criticism is not necessarily a photograph (in its broadest sense), but can be a performance like Yıldız's, an installation like Deschanes' or even writing. For example, there are crossovers between literary theories in Proust's *À La Recherche Du Temps Perdu* as Brassai signaled.[121] For sure it offers a photography theory that is literary theory. In the well-known novel, Proust gives a photographically detailed description of the scene (perhaps any scene); can we say that this offers a 'photograph' that is in the form of 'writing'? Can it be conceived within Batchen's post-photography or Ritchin's hyper-photography (therefore our meta-photography) since Proust uses the vocabulary and intellectual apparatuses of photography but at the same time rejects (so strongly) the image? By doing so, didn't he create a meta-photography that exists in literature? If in meta-levels, photography becomes a message rather than the medium, then it can be conveyed with other mediums or inter-medium expressions. If so, that means we already have a meta-photography that 'looks' at itself regardless of the medium and regardless the current ontology[122] in its

[121] Brassaï, *Proust in the Power of Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, 1 edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2001). 17

[122] The ontology of the photographic image as formulated in the 1920s from Kracauer to Benjamin and later from Bazin to Barthes and even Pierce's index theory now seems obsolete and irrelevant with digital photography that is data and meta-data. Let me remind that the digitized image has a material reference, an original, a source, whereas digital born image has no such reference, it operates within the conventional system of photographic representation. We already know that an analog image is printed, projected or scanned form a negative (or a slide) in material world, and its (not latent but) prospective and incipient form is the negative where the digital born image's prospective is the data and meta-data since it turns light directly to an electronic system of codes. Rötzer even argued that the traditional comparison or parallel between the eye and the camera is actually more valid for the digital apparatus of photography.

protean state, allowing us to look at the computer code from a similar perspective.

Before conclude, I would like to abbreviate the defense for meta-photography to an adjacent comparison of four 'images', or to be more precise, four variations of an image. The *oldest* surviving photograph by Niepce (Fig.20) was captured and fixed on a pewter plate coated with bitumen of Judea in 1926-27; in 1952 Helmut Gernsheim and Kodak Research Laboratory collaborated to make a silver gelatin (with applied watercolor) reproduction of the image (Fig.21), changing the material context from pewter to paper; Joan Fontcuberta collected images from a Google-search for 'photo' or 'foto' to reconstruct Niepce's heliograph using 10,000 found images with a mosaic software. He brought photography's unique chemical origins and dematerialised abundant pixel-based state together (Fig,22); the *différance* between the same image multiplied. However in 1995, Andreas Müller-Pöhle constructed 8 code-based images that digitise and translate Niepce's 8-hour-exposure-image into alphanumeric signs, making the code visible and visual (Fig. 23). In his works we no longer see Niepce's home, the rooftops, neither the dots, the grain, the emulsion, the light; not even the pixel of the 21st century; but a flock of alphanumerical signs that is actually a reproduction of the same image; all the visual elements are written (hidden) inside the data and metadata he visualised.

With the light focused through the lens, the film reacts and exposed, thereby bears a visible image of the outside world. The eye however is not where the visual appears. It operates just as a transmitter of the image to the brain where it becomes a visible, readable form. Just like in digital photography where photo receptive censors capture light, the image is not visible, can never be visible until it is translated from 0s and 1s to an image.

Having said that, the new ontology that is based on binary elements of computational code, requires a reading (and translation) from it in order to create or summon an image. In other words, the image seen on the screen, projected on the wall or printed on any material is created from the data and meta-data inherent within the code of 1s and 0s. The photograph already exists in another language and with a click, it transforms from code, from its meta-levels to an image. For this reason, in this new digital ontology, photography can be seen and called as meta-photography.

Word Count: 14,923

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Illustrations

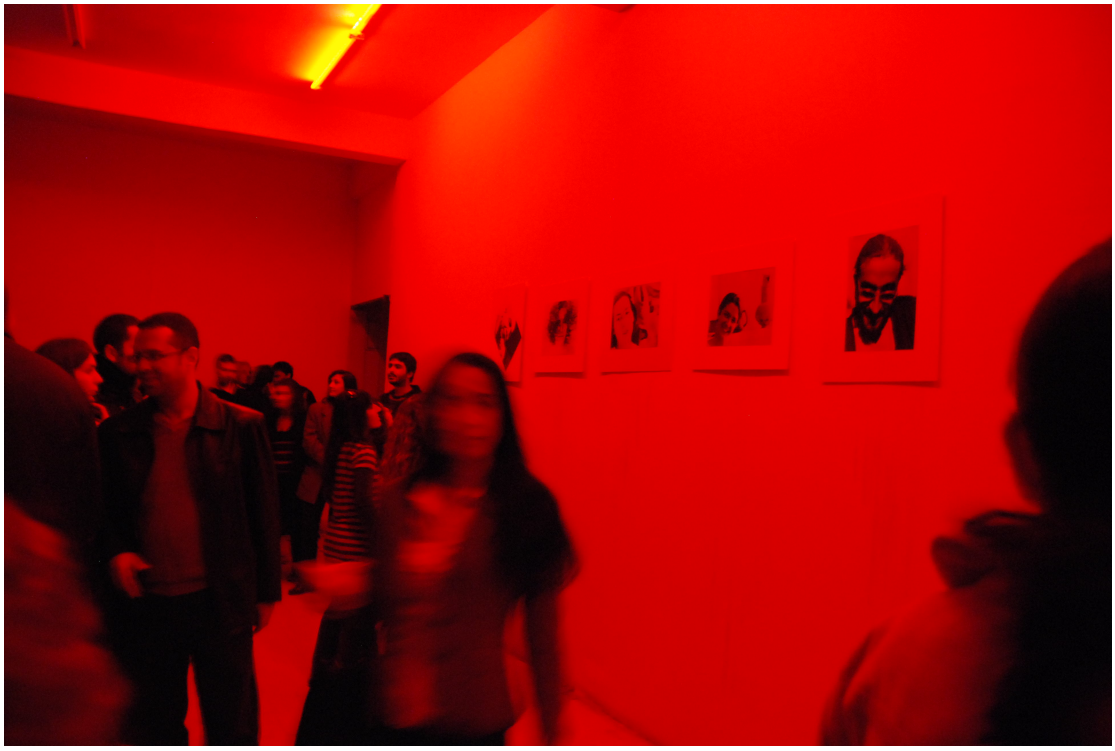

Figure 1: Oğuz Yıldız, *Karanlık Oda [Darkroom] installation shot*, 2010, Courtesy of the artist

Figure 2: Oğuz Yıldız, *Karanlık Oda [Darkroom] installation shot*, 2010, Courtesy of the artist

Figure 3: Phil Chang, *Double (Exposure 1)*, 16x20 inches, Digital C-Print, 2007-9, Courtesy of the M+B Gallery

Figure 4: Phil Chang, *Double (Exposure 6)*, 16x20 inches, Digital C-Print, 2007-9, Courtesy of the M+B Gallery

Figure 5: Berkay Tuncay, *This Image or Video Has Been Removed or Deleted,* 2011, Digital image (JPEG), screen, dimensions variable, Courtesy of the artist

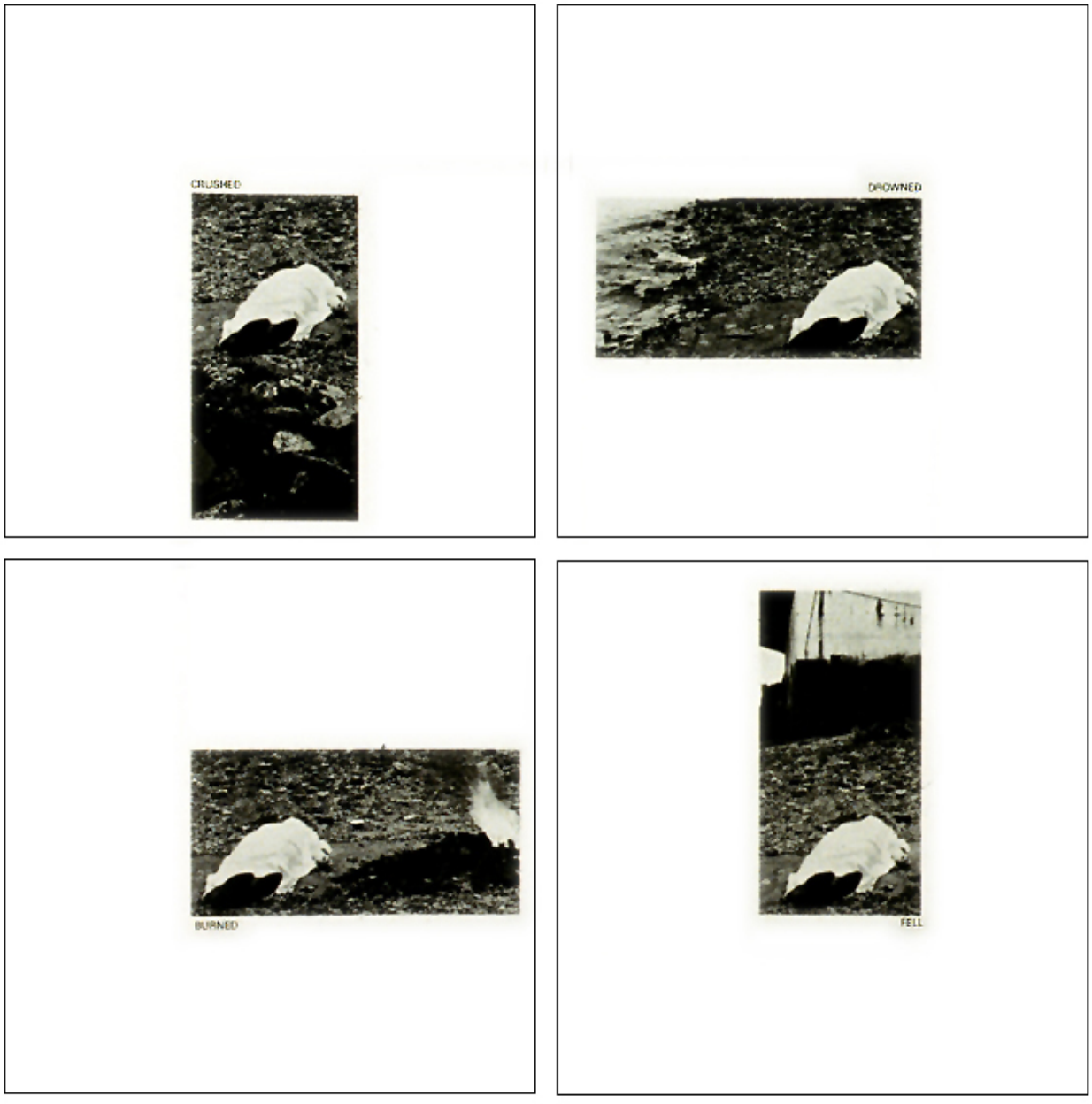

Figure 6: John Hilliard, *Cause of Death,* 1974, Reproduced from http://www.wikiart.org/en/john-hilliard/causes-of-death-1974

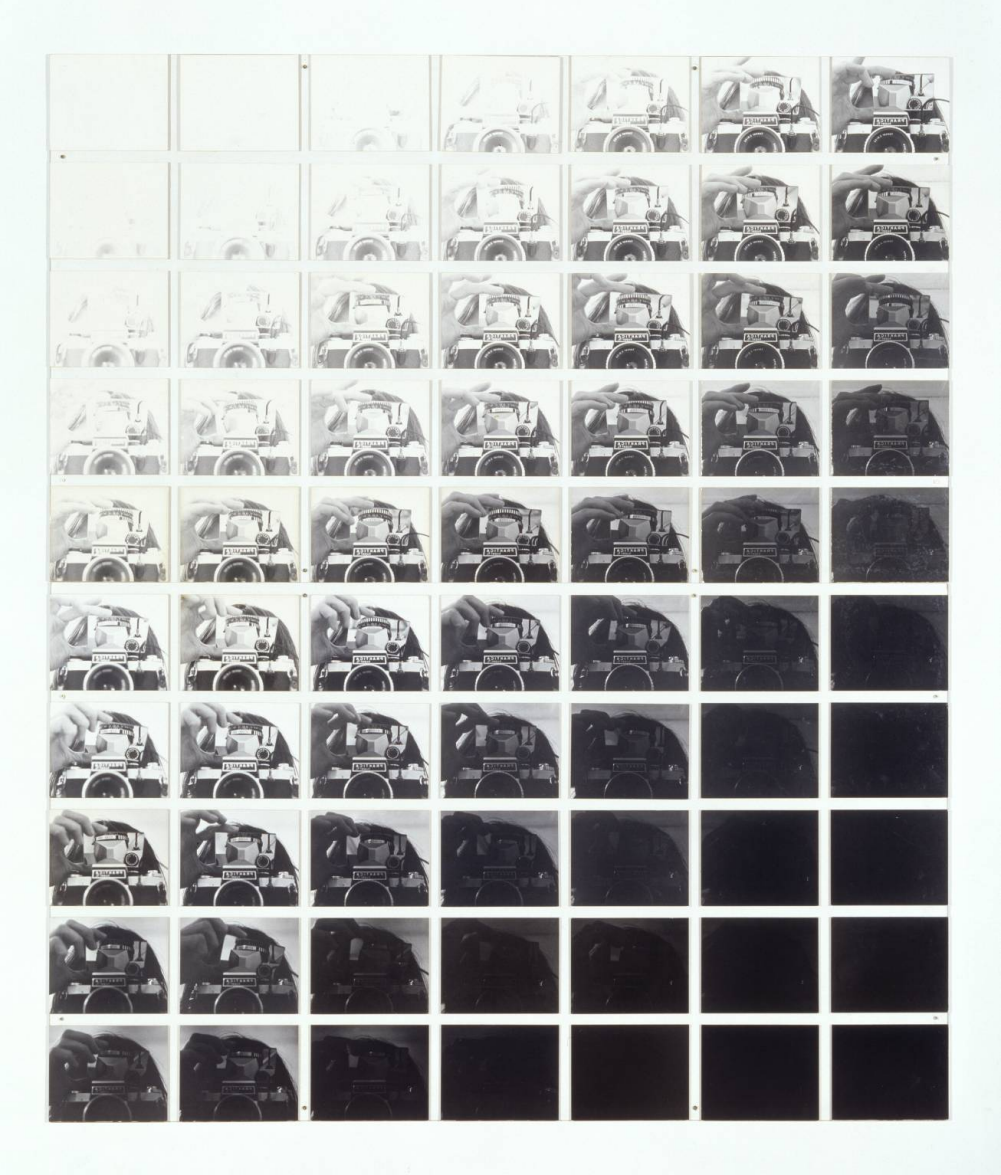

Figure 7: John Hilliard, *Camera Recording its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)*, 1971, 70 photographs, black and white, on card on Perspex, Image: 21,74 x 18,32 cm, Reoroduced from http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hilliard-camera-recording-its-own-condition-7-apertures-10-speeds-2-mirrors-t03116

Figure 8: Newsweek Magazine, *Trail of Blood*, Jun. 27, 1994; TIME Magazine: *An American Tragedy*, Jun. 24, 1994

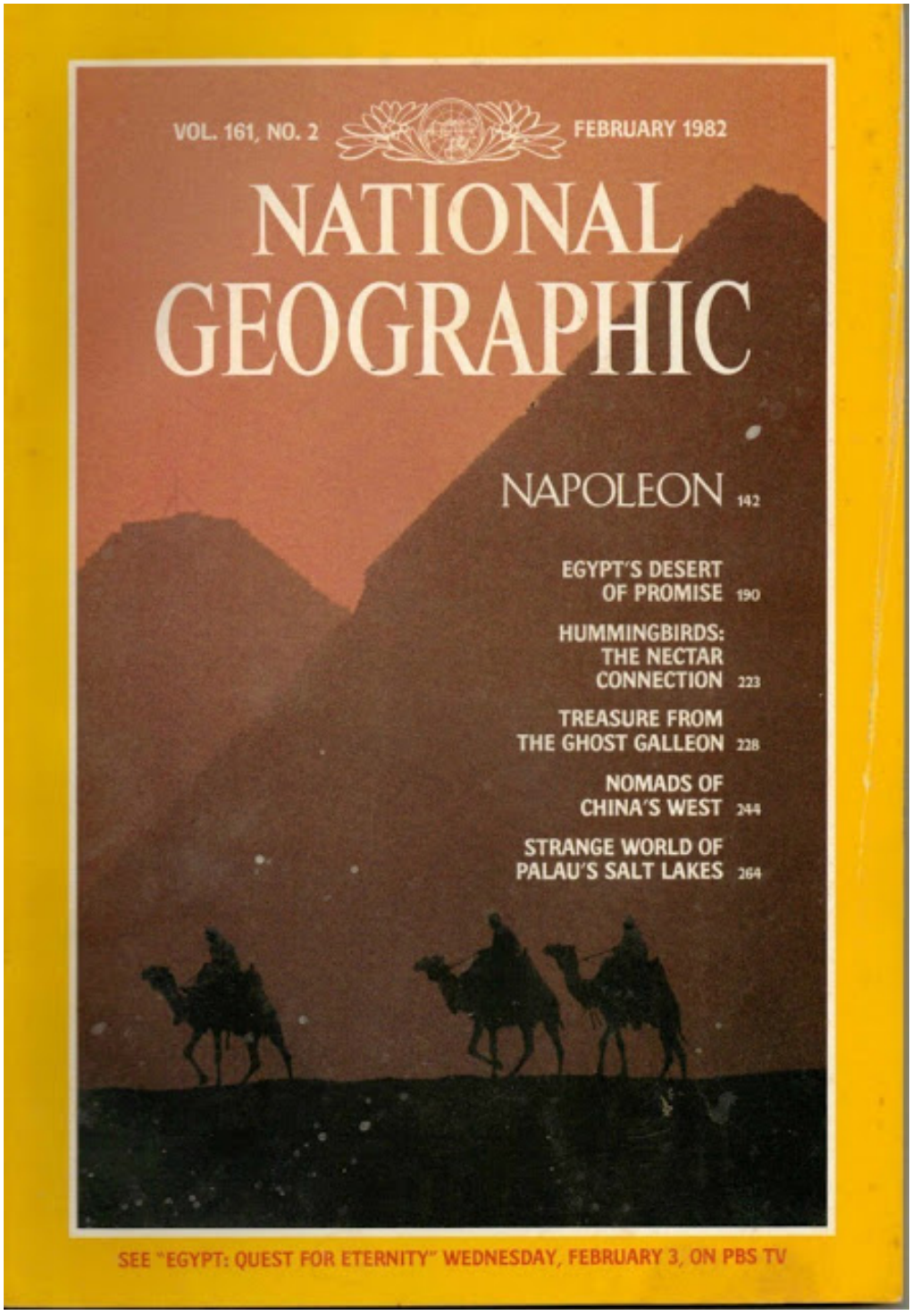

Figure 9: National Geographic, *Egypt's Desert of Promise*, February 1982

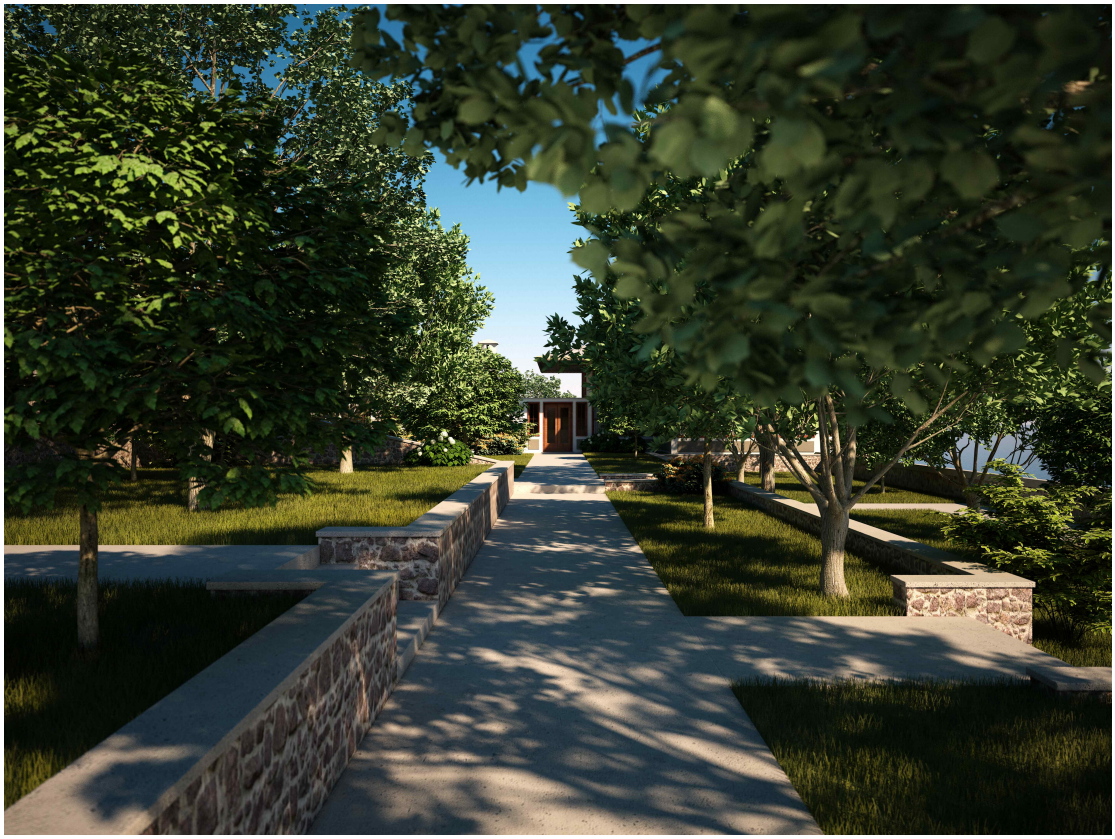

Figure 10: Victor Burgin, *Bir Okumam Yeri / A Place to Read,* 2010, Digital Image Projection (color, Silent, Loop Duration 4'05") © Victor Burgin

Figure 11: Lucas Blalock, *Beans on Blue*, 2011-12, Reproduced from http://harveybenge.blogspot.co.uk/2013/05/lucas-blalock-at-white-cube-london.html

Figure 12: Liz Deschenes *Green Screen 4,* 2001, Double laminated inkjet print (Front: UV lamination, back: Duratran material). 180.3 x 464.8 cm, Courtesy the artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York

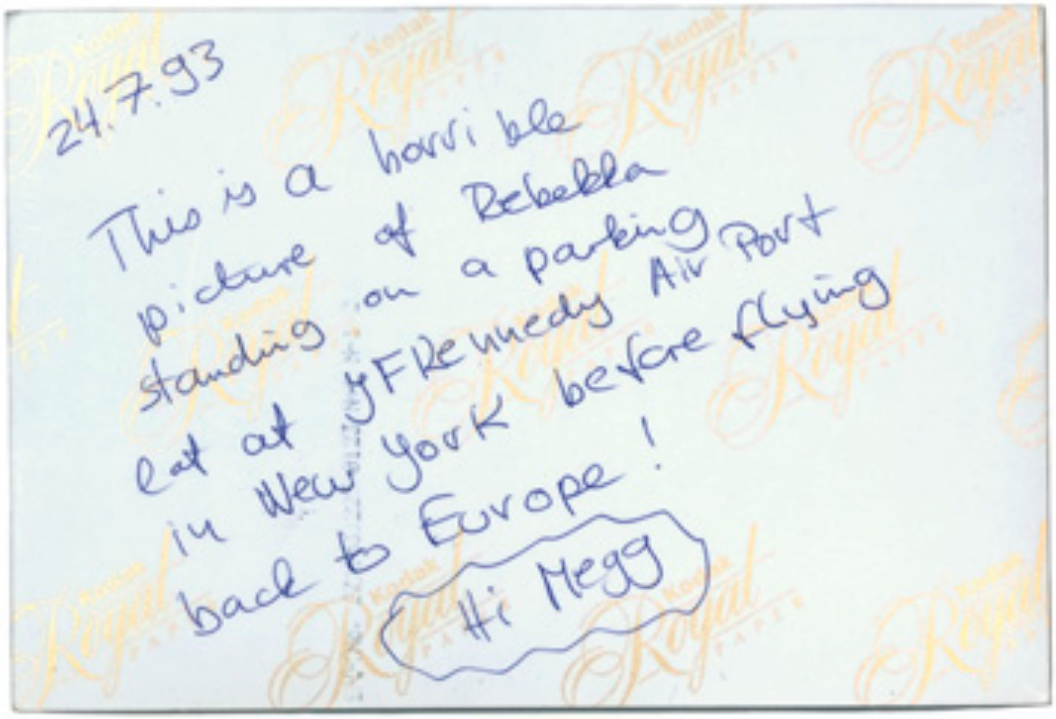

Figure 13: Meggan Gould, from the series *Verso*, 2008, Courtesy of the artist

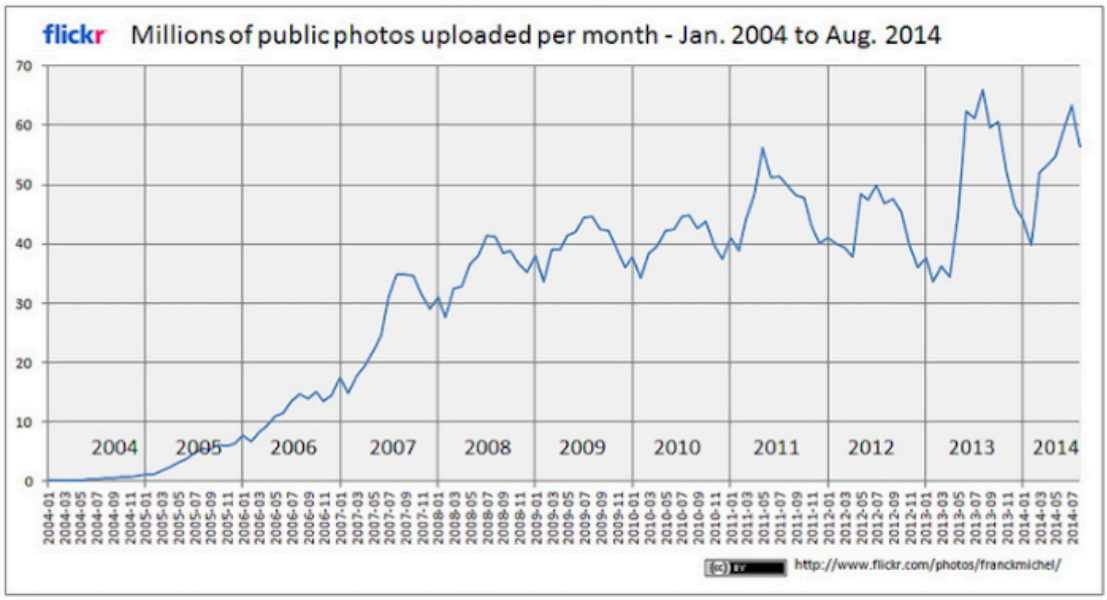

Figure 14: Flicker graphic showing *Millions of public photos uploaded per month, 2004-2014*

Figure 15: Erik Kessels, *24 HRS in Photos* installation shot, 2011

Figure 16: Mishka Henner, *Carretera de Gandia, Oliva, Valencia, Spain*, from the series *No Man's Land*, 2011, 50,8×60,69 cm, archival pigment prints, Reproduced from www.mishkahenner.com

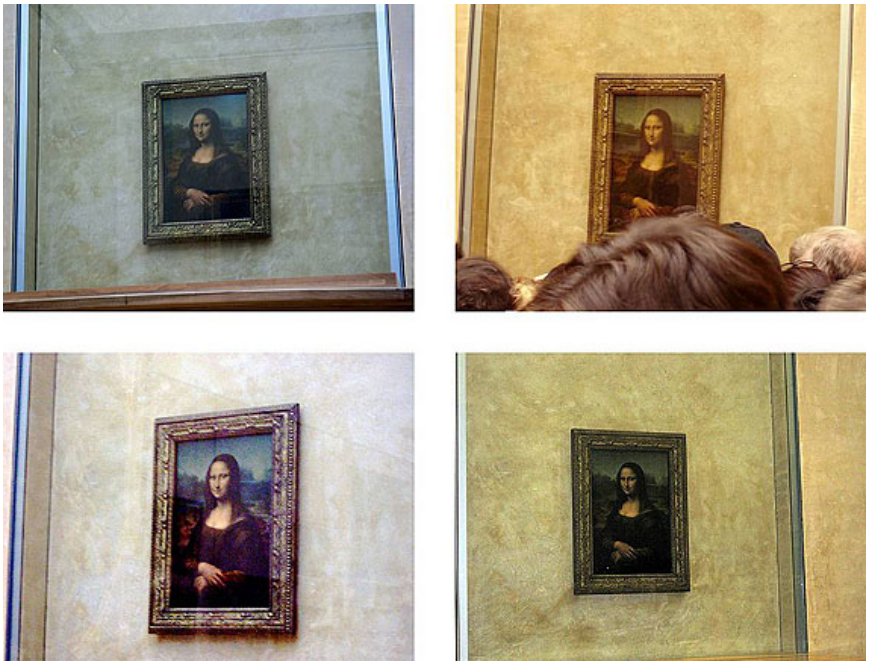

Figure 17: Joachim Schmid, *The Picture* From the series *Other People's Photographs*, 2008–11, Reproduced from http://schmidbooks.wordpress.com

Figure 18: Thomas Ruff, *Jpeg ny01*, 2004, C-Print, 249 x 188 cm, Courtesy of Gogasian Gallery

Figure 19: Corinne Vionnete, *Stonehenge*, from the series *Photo Opportunities,* 2007, 89 x 119 cm, Pigment print, Courtesy of Danziger Gallery

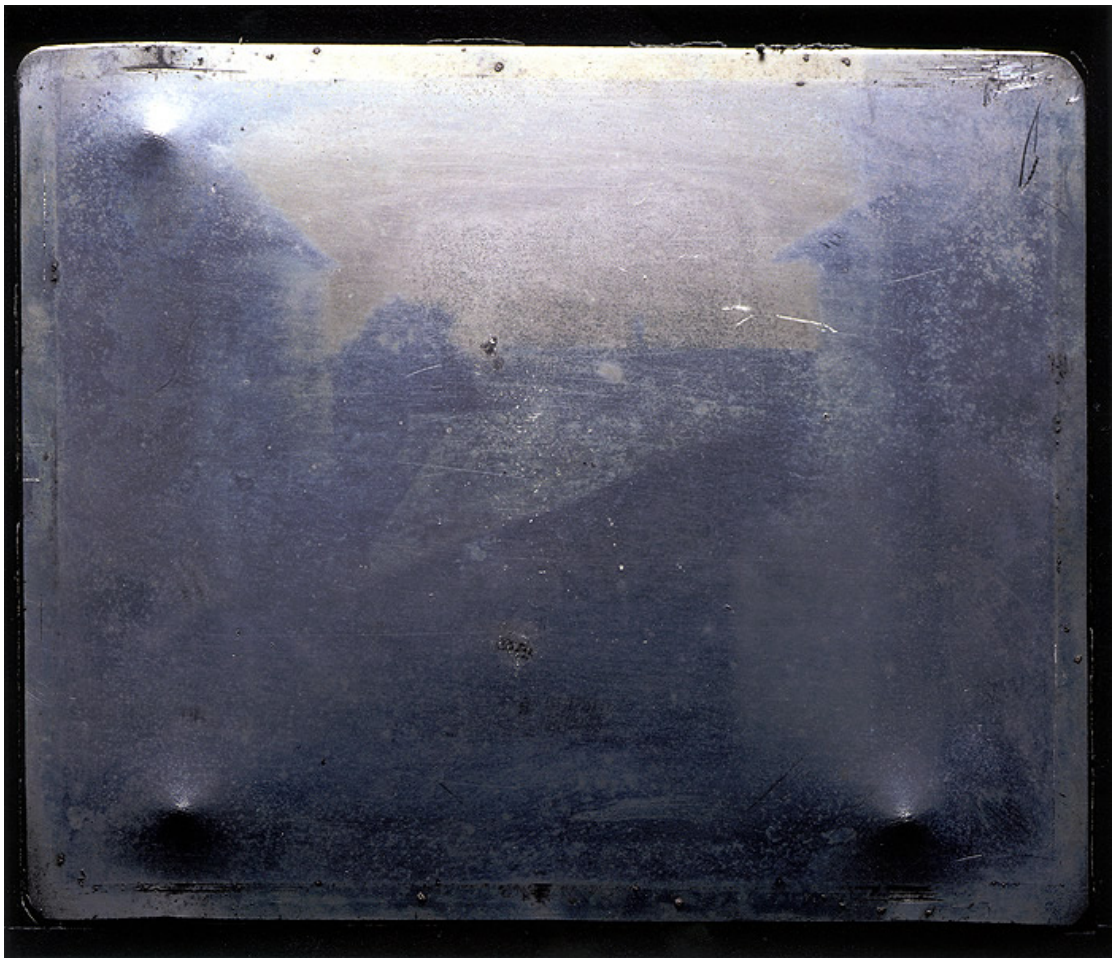

Figure 20: Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, ca. 1826, heliograph, 16.5 x 20cm, Reproduced from http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/firstphotograph/process/#top

Figure 21: Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, ca. 1826, (Enhanced version by Helmut Gersheim, ca.1956, silver gelatin print, 16,5x20 cm, Reproduced from http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/firstphotograph/process/#top

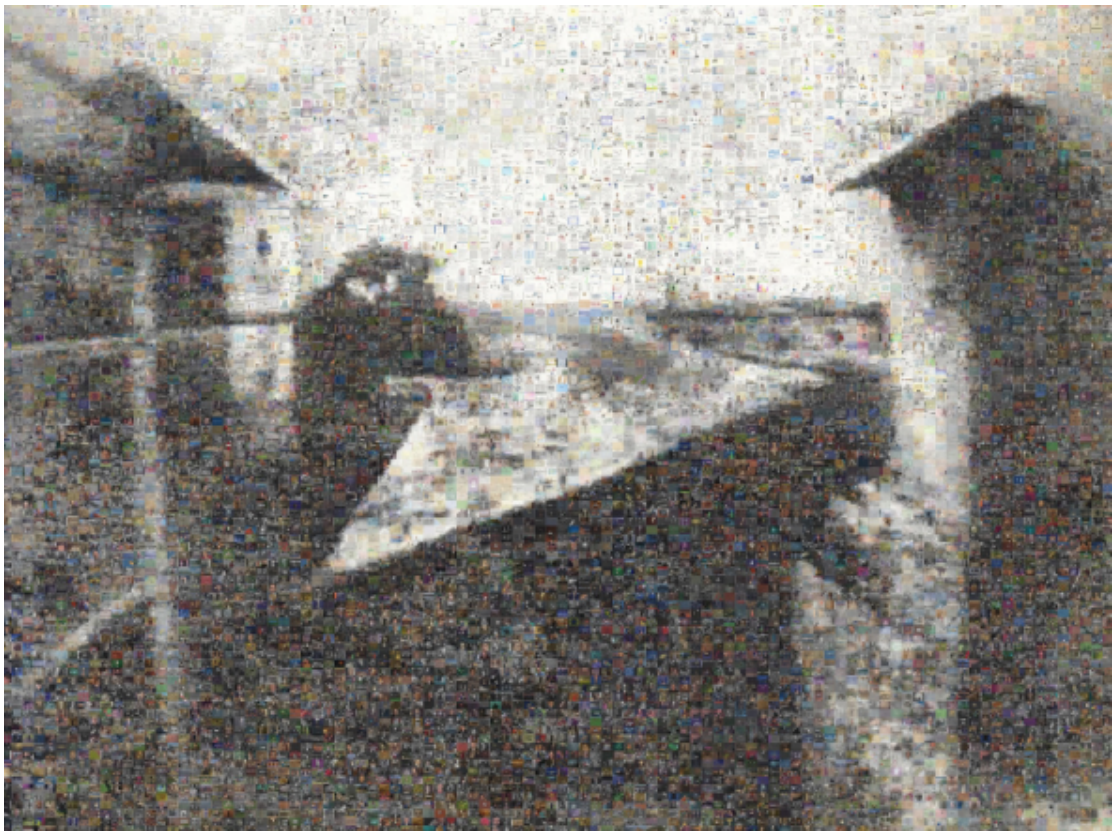

Figure 22: Joan Fontcuberta, *Googlegram: Niepce*, 2003, C-print 120 x 160 cm, Reproduced from http://www.fontcuberta.com

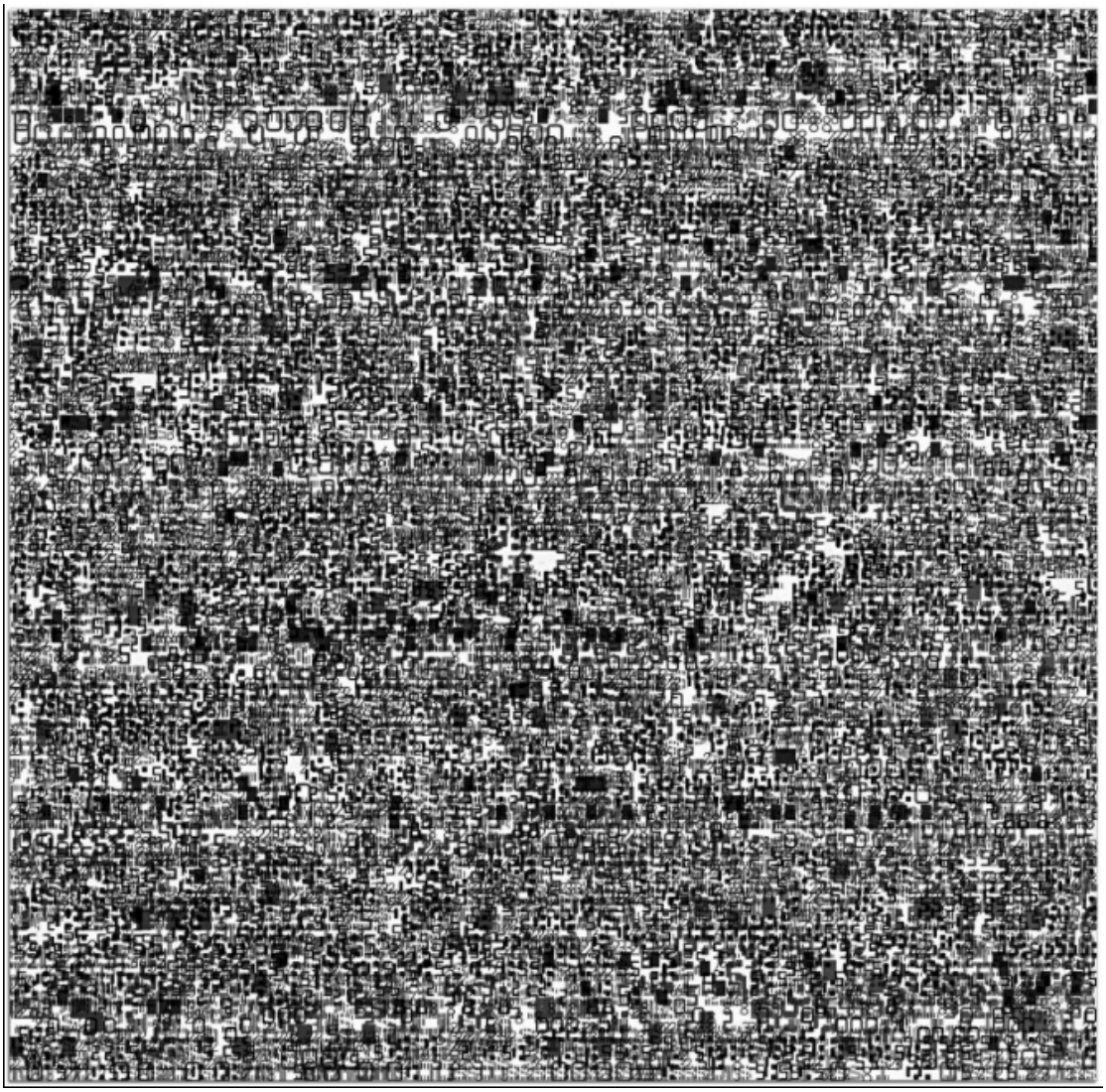

Figure 23: Andreas Müller-Pohle, *Digital Score III (after Nicéphore Nièpce*), 1995, Iris Giclée prints, 8 plates, 66x66 cm each, Reproduced from http://www.muellerpohle.net