

Thinking through Photographs

A resource binder
of questions and
thinking tools

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Introduction

As an accompaniment to UB Anderson Gallery's yearlong focus on photography, *Thinking through Photographs* was initially conceptualized as a physical exhibition. Re-designed as a resource binder, this project presents a set of thinking tools in the form of questions, books, and other resources.

This binder is organized around eight topics, each offering a constellation of questions as a way to navigate our image-saturated world. The topics build on one another and shape a multidimensional perspective of photographs as objects and images, as agents of history and instigators of contemporary conversations.

As imaging technologies evolve, so does our thinking around what we see—everything from a vintage black-and-white print to an image manipulated on a mobile device—and how we see. Hence, we draw on the work of artists, scholars, and teachers who urge us to look in-depth and with care, and offer myriad ways for us to think through photographs.

Thinking through Photographs is organized by Liz Park, Curator, with Hope Mora, Graduate Assistant, and is designed by Chris Lee. Special thanks to Shannon Ebner and Sara Greenberger Rafferty.

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Photographs in 1829 2020

GoPro and drone footage, Instagram and Facebook posts, security camera recordings, and telescopic and microscopic images—these are but a few ways in which photography manifests in our contemporary world. Not only do they signal a different mode of production and circulation, they also hint at the vulnerability of an image that is subject to easy alteration.

In the essay “In Defense of the Poor Image,” artist and writer Hito Steyerl addresses the relationship between circulation and manipulation of an image file:

The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance.

Embedded in her text are considerations of access to digital technology based on class, nationality, and regional and world politics. How do these factors inhibit or encourage our production and consumption of photographs?

What makes an image poor or, for that matter, rich? How do we value and evaluate a photograph? What qualities and possibilities in photographs compel us to edit, layer, remix, and share?

Suggested Readings:

- Hito Steyerl, “[In Defense of the Poor Image](#),” 2009
- Aria Dean, “[Poor Meme, Rich Meme](#),” 2016

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Excerpted from Hito Steyerl,
↗ "In Defense of the Poor Image," 2009

The poor image is 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.

The poor image is a rag or a rip; an AVI or a JPEG, a lumpen proletarian in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming...

↑
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...Poor images are the contemporary Wretched of the Screen, the debris of audiovisual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies' shores. They testify to the violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement of images—their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism. Poor images are dragged around the globe as commodities or their effigies, as gifts or as bounty. They spread pleasure or death

threats, conspiracy theories or bootlegs, resistance or stultification. Poor images show the rare, the obvious, and the unbelievable—that is, if we can still manage to decipher it...

...The poor image is no longer about the real thing—the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation.

In short: it is about reality.

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Excerpted from Aria Dean,
 ↗ “[Poor Meme, Rich Meme](#),” 2016

If memes reiterate the inequities of cultural appropriation, where could their potential energy and possibility lie? The meme resists traditional configurations of authorship and intellectual property, embodying the “post-productive” mode that had Nicolas Bourriaud so jazzed nearly 20 years ago when he declared it an ultimate threat to the prevailing “ideology of ownership” implicit in appropriation critiques. Memes replace the “ideology of ownership” with another form of value, one that Hito Steyerl argues is defined by “velocity, intensity, and spread.” In Steyerl’s “In Defense of the Poor Image”—a text that might as well be a treatise on the meme—she describes the “poor image” as “a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd... The condition of the images speaks not only of countless transfers and reformattings, but also of the countless people who cared enough about them to convert them over and over again, to add subtitles, reedit, or upload them.” In other words: TFW
 Hito Steyerl defines TFW.

Like the poor image, the meme finds its home only in this circulation—its true content is the many bumps and bruises that have occurred along the way. It is a copy without an original—a copy of a copy of a copy, and so forth. For better or worse, a meme asks instead to be considered as its total sum presence in circulation....

...The way Steyerl talks about poor images circulating, having been

pushed out of the mainstream and into new alternative circulations, rings true of blackness. The poor image vibrates along the frequency of Fanon: In its gesture toward the unreality and nonontology of the image itself, it also points toward the extra-ontological black (non)subject. The black, the meme, the poor image is a subject or object whose definition exceeds her body, whose instantiation is contingent on her history, and on the “shared history” of all other subjects/objects like her, even when in the hands of others....

...The meme as poor image, as black, operates against the rich image: the full-bodied high-res representation for which identity politics and visual theory taught us to strive. The meme is always writing and rewriting itself, operating, as Steyerl writes, “against the fetish value of high resolution.” In taking up this stance, it resists the co-conspirators of surveillance and neoliberalism in the ordering of bodies and desires. Perhaps we can render ourselves opaque, through our own serial, iterative excess.

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Excess of Photographs

Infinite scrolls, streaming content, and algorithmic customization are some common features that characterize the experience of navigating online media today. They address an excess beyond individual consumption and comprehension. Yet, they paradoxically center the human subject as the one scrolling and streaming, clicking likes and dislikes, which in turn feed the algorithm.

Joanna Zylińska's book *Nonhuman Photography* is a counter-intuitive exploration of the role of human creativity "where the whole world is a camera." With automatized image production outpacing consciously-composed pictures, Zylińska advises that we start recognizing ourselves as participants in today's "complex biological and technological network."

As an artist herself, Zylińska turns to fellow practitioners to explore the creative impulse to focus and find life in a seemingly infinite stream of banal images produced by surveillance cameras. Given the excess of photographs in circulation, how do we develop a conscious practice of looking while scanning? When does this looking practice become a creative practice?

What photographs catch the eye and why? How do we seize these moments to extract ourselves from the thicket of images? What do we do, and what can we see, once we are able to step away from the image stream?

Suggested Readings:

- ↗ Joanna Zylińska, *Nonhuman Photography*, 2017
- ↗ Andrew Norman Wilson, "[The Artist Leaving the Googleplex](#)," 2016

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Excerpted from Joanna Zylińska,
 ↗ *Nonhuman Photography*, 2017

Living in the media-saturated society of the twenty-first century has become tantamount to being photographed on a constant basis. Our identity is constituted and confirmed by the ongoing flow of photo streams on our mobile phones, tablets and social media platforms such as Facebook and Tumblr, not to mention the thousands of security cameras invisibly registering our image when we pass through city centers, shopping malls, and airports. This photographic process is largely automatized: it is subject to the logic and vision of the machine. Even the supposed human-centric decisions with regard to what to photograph and how to do it are often reactions to events quickly unfolding in front of the photographer's eyes, or responses to preestablished visual categories: landscape, portraiture, play, war. This chapter argues that human-driven photography—involving an act of conscious looking through a viewfinder or at an LCD screen—is only one small part of what takes place in the field of photography, even though it is often made to stand in for photography as such...

...This article offers a philosophical exposition of the concept of “nonhuman photography.” What is meant by nonhuman photography here is not just photos taken by agents that are not human, such as CCTV cameras, body scanners, space satellites or Google Street View, although some of these examples will be referenced throughout the piece. Yet the principal aim of this article is to suggest that there is

more to photography than meets the (human) eye and that all photography is to some extent nonhuman....

...The execution of human agency in photographic practice, be it professional or amateur, ostensibly manifests itself in decisions about the subject matter (the “what”) and about ways of capturing this subject matter with a digital or analogue apparatus (the “how”)...

...Any prudent and effective way of envisaging and picturing a transformation of our relation to the universe must thus be conducted not in terms of a human struggle against the machine but rather in terms of our mutual co-constitution, as a recognition of our shared kinship. This recognition of the photographic condition that encompasses yet goes beyond the human, and of the photographic apparatus that extends well beyond our eyes and beyond the devices supposedly under our control, should prompt us human philosophers, photographers and spectators to mobilize the ongoing creative impulse of life, where the whole world is a camera, and put it to creative rather than conservative uses.

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Excerpted from Andrew Norman Wilson,
 ↗ [“The Artist Leaving the Googleplex,”](#) 2016

I mined all the information about the yellow badges that I could from Google’s intranet, which led me to the internal name for the team—ScanOps. This class of workers, who left the building much like the industrial proletariat of a bygone era, actually performed the Fordist labor of digitization for Google Books—“scanning” printed matter from the area’s university libraries page by page on V-shaped tables with two DSLR cameras mounted overhead....

...And I wanted to contrast the movement of the Google book “factory” workers with other classes of employees to demonstrate how corporate hierarchy scripts different forms of movement. I also wanted to get to know the ScanOps workers, and see how they felt about all this....

...The day after, I sat near the Google sign outside the building and introduced myself to a few of them, offering my card and saying that I worked next door and would love to hear more about their work. The following day—almost a year into working at Google—I was fired....

...Then, I was convinced by a Canadian lawyer to release my Googleplex video, which I had been sitting on for two years because of the nondisclosure and employment termination agreements I had signed. He claimed that because Google Books was already such a legally contentious project when it came to copyright law, and

because he imagined many viewers would respond with commiseration, Google wouldn’t pursue legal action against an individual with nothing to lose. I took his advice....

...If being a person means being paranoid that you might be a puppet of some other force, like economic networks or algorithms or genetic coding, then being an artist means making things that defy that paranoia. It’s not that there’s no reason; ideally art takes a step beyond reason, towards what ought to be. To create disturbances in the seemingly natural order of things and unwind our counterfeit intuitions.

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Listening to Photographs

How do we listen to photographs? Listening is a durational and intentional practice; when we listen to something, we are experiencing an unfolding event.

Photographs do not emit sound but theorist Tina M. Campt insists that we can experience “felt sound” when we attend to them carefully. Campt studies identification photographs—passport photos, ethnographic portraits, and mug shots of prison inmates—through listening. Even if we are tempted to read such portraits as “muted governmentalized subjects of the state,” Campt proposes that we tune into the frequencies of the images.

Portraits are often created as a bureaucratic tool, and identification photographs populate countless digital and physical archives that are in service of regulation and enforcement. Composed for maximum legibility and facial recognition, an ID photo contains a unique set of features that belong to a subject. In this seemingly quotidian format, what is thrown into relief when we look at a face under full sensorial and emotive light?

Beyond the intended purpose of identification, why should we seek alternative interpretations of such portraits through listening? What do we miss when we do not listen?

Suggested Readings:

- ↗ Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*, 2017
- ↗ Allan Sekula, “*The Body and the Archive*,” 1986

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Excerpted from Tina M. Campt,
 ↗ *Listening to Images*, 2017

The relationship between quiet, the quotidian, and the everyday practices of refusal enacted and inherited by dispossessed subjects is the defining tension of this book and the archives of images it explores. It focuses on a genre of image that is both quiet and quotidian: identification photography. These photos are produced predominantly for the regulatory needs of the state or the classificatory imperatives of colonization....

...Rather than reducing identification photos to the instrumental functions for which they were created, *Listening to Images* engages these images as conduits of an unlikely interplay between the vernacular and the state. Taking a counterintuitive approach to understanding quiet as well as the quotidian, it theorizes the forms of subjectivity enacted through the vernacular practice of identification photography. I consider the quotidian dimensions of these imaging practices not in the traditional sense of a site of social reproduction; I engage them instead as instances of rupture and refusal....

...The foundational counterintuition that serves as my first point of departure is a contention that, contrary to what might seem common sense, quiet must not be conflated with silence. Quiet registers sonically, as a level of intensity that requires focused attention. Analogously, quiet photography names a heuristic for attending to the lower range of intensities generated by images assumed to be mute. Redirecting

Ariella Azoulay's evocative proposal to "watch" rather than look at photographs,¹ the choice to "listen to" rather than simply "look at" images is a conscious decision to challenge the equation of vision with knowledge by engaging photography through a sensory register that is critical to Black Atlantic cultural formations: sound....

...Here again, listening to images is constituted as a practice of looking beyond what we see and attuning our senses to the other affective frequencies through which photographs register. It is a haptic encounter that foregrounds the frequencies of images and how they move, touch, and connect us to the event of the photo. Such a connection may begin as a practice of "careful looking," but it does not end there. Focusing on the forms of refusal visualized through these images, the book rethinks foundational approaches to diaspora studies that emphasize mobility, resistance, and expressiveness. It uses the conceptual frameworks of quiet, stasis, and refusal to reclaim the black quotidian as a signature idiom of diasporic culture and black futurity.

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

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Excerpted from Allan Sekula,
 ↗ “The Body and the Archive,” 1986

Although photographic documentation of prisoners was not at all common until the 1860s, the potential for a new juridical photographic realism was widely recognized in the 1840s, in the general context of these systematic efforts to regulate the growing urban presence of the “dangerous classes,” of a chronically unemployed sub-proletariat. The anonymous lyricist voiced sentiments that were also heard in the higher chambers of the new culture of photography...

Both [Henry Fox] Talbot and the author of the comic homage to [Louis] Daguerre recognized a new *instrumental* potential in photography: a silence that silences. The protean oral “texts” of the criminal and pauper yield to a “mute testimony” that “takes down” (that diminishes in credibility, that transcribes) and unmask the disguises, the alibis, the excuses and multiple biographies of those who find or place themselves on the wrong side of the law. This battle between the presumed denotative univocality of the legal image and the multiplicity and presumed duplicity of the criminal voice is played out during the remainder of the nineteenth century. In the course of this battle a new object is defined—the criminal body—and, as a result, a more extensive “social body” is invented.

We are confronting, then, a double system: a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*. This double operation is most evident in the workings of photo-

graphic portraiture. On the one hand, the photographic portrait extends, accelerates, popularizes, and degrades a traditional function. This function, which can be said to have taken its early modern form in the seventeenth century, is that of providing for the ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois *self*. Photography subverted the privileges inherent in portraiture, but without any more extensive leveling of social relationships, these privileges could be reconstructed on a new basis. That is, photography could be assigned a proper role within a new hierarchy of taste...

...If we are to listen to, and act in solidarity with, the polyphonic testimony of the oppressed and exploited, we should recognize that some of this testimony...will take the ambiguous form of visual documents, documents of the “microphysics” of barbarism. These documents can easily fall into the hands of the police or their intellectual apologists. Our problem, as artists and intellectuals living near but not at the center of a global system of power, will be to help prevent the cancellation of that testimony by more authoritative and official texts.

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Violent Photographs

Photographs can help us reread the past and reconfigure how we see history. Mark Sealy's book *Decolonizing the Camera: Photography in Racial Time* examines photographic practices that have normalized and reinforced violence on subjugated people. Bearing in mind that looking at images captured in the past is "a journey across time," he looks for "a rare and direct moment when photographs have generated real social and political change."

He uses the example of *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, a project from 2000 that compiled photographic records of white mob violence on African American victims. He describes how images from decades ago, which were intended to celebrate the vigilantism, are now asked to "perform serious cultural and political work" to the opposite effect: to denounce racial hatred and to demand real justice.

Sealy asks: has photography been a liberating device, or an oppressive weapon that continues to hold us in a violent system of exposure? What knowledges have we inherited from looking at these old photographs? The photographs beg further questions: Who has the right to look? Who has the right to be looked at in their fullest human dignity?

When does a photograph fulfill its purpose? Is its work ever finished? What do we do with photographs that haunt?

Suggested Readings:

- Mark Sealy, *Decolonizing the Camera: Photography in Racial Time*, 2019
- Dora Apel, "Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib," 2005

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Excerpted from Mark Sealy,
 ↗ *Decolonizing the Camera:
 Photography in Racial Time*, 2019

...With reference to Johannes Fabian's 1983 book *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, I suggest that racial time is different from the linear progression of dominant time. Instead, racial time is a phenomenon where waiting forms the majority of the everyday. It is a time where progress is not charted through the prism of Western epistemologies. In racial time, slavery does not end, it merely evolves, changes shape and oppresses through different but equally violent regimes. Racial time also has its critical periods where progress is produced and reproduced through tangible events....

Racial time does not tick along in a fashion that produces seconds, minutes, hours, and days. It works more like a cultural pulse in which the political conditions around it cause it to quicken or slow down.

New formations of photography's previously orthodox history are indeed possible if we read photography through different political temporalities and cultural perspectives within the constructs of race and time. Race is a construct and photography has been mostly applied to aid the creation of a dominant Eurocentric symbolic order in which the subaltern has been condemned as an object, rendered and processed as a mute and inferior being. Given this, creating openings in which photographic epistemologies can surface from below allows different cultural readings and interpretations of photography to emerge....

...Reading photography from below, or from the south, opens the door for subaltern voices to address the impact of photography on the black body and mind, and enables them to recognize themselves as subjects in their own right....

Likewise, the *Without Sanctuary* project, made possible through the collecting work of James Allen, a white American from Florida who describes himself as a "picker," becomes a radical intervention in how we see race....

...By bringing a corpus of lynching photographs together and positioning them within the public realm, where they perform critical and ongoing political work, social change becomes a reality. The *Without Sanctuary* photographs were cited as being a significant contributing factor for encouraging the US Senate finally to acknowledge its complicity in lynching. Senators George Allen and Mary Landrieu sought a formal apology from the state to be given to the victims of lynching, and, in this, they were partly motivated by seeing these images. The visual vocabulary of the book helped them to secure progress through the Senate of non-binding "Resolution 39," which was passed by the Senate on 13 June 2005 (S. Res. 39 2005). On this historic date the US Senate issued a long-awaited formal apology to civil-rights political activists for not protecting people against lynching...

...Over a hundred years after some of these photographs were taken, they

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still perform serious cultural and political work and caused change at the highest level of politics when re-introduced into the public realm. Here, we can point to a rare and direct moment when photographs have generated real social and political change....

framed through the images and ideas of race, not because they are worn down by seeing images of violence against the Other, but because they are the Other so familiar with being framed in a violent totalitarian Eurocentric gaze.

Such a journey across time to a form of justice for those black people executed for white pleasure is an example of racial time in operation. Racial time is exhausting for those whose lives have been historically managed and

Excerpted from Dora Apel,
 ↗ ["Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib,"](#) 2005

In the topical commentary on the moral disgrace of Abu Ghraib, several commentators have noted a resemblance between the torture photos from Iraq and American lynching photos. These similarities have remained largely unexplored, however, including perhaps the most significant effects of the two sets of photos, which is that both came to function as sites of resistance against the very acts they represent. Between deeds that are very different in nature and motivation, and which took place at very different times and places, what might we learn from the similarities? What indeed constitutes these similarities?...

...Like the lynching photos which were appropriated and transformed into anti-lynching images by left-wing and liberal artists and organizations in the 1930s (such as the John Reed Club and International Labor Defense, both affiliated with the Communist Party

and the NAACP), the torture photos of Abu Ghraib also have become the basis for antiwar images and artworks. The photos of the man on a leash and the hooded man are now painted side by side as murals on a wall in Tehran, demonstrating once again that the meaning of images depends on the arena in which they circulate. Like their distribution in the world media, this public visibility transforms them from private souvenirs of American supremacy into blistering anti-American pictures....

...It took decades of struggle as well as economic and political forces to finally subdue the systematic lynching of black people and to transform lynching photography from a support of white supremacy into an antilynching weapon through the mass publication of lynching photos and especially the pictures of the vicious disfigurement of Emmett Till, which helped galvanize the civil rights movement. The Abu Ghraib

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photos had a more instantaneous effect, unleashing public horror and outrage around the world through global distribution of the pictures via the Internet and television. More recently, seventeen of the images were on view in the fall 2004 exhibition *Inconvenient Evidence: Iraqi Prison Photographs from Abu Ghraib*, curated by Brian Wallis for the International Center of Photography in New York and the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. Like the photographs of lynchings in the exhibitions of *Without Sanctuary* that began in New York in 2000, *Inconvenient Evidence* may raise the question for some of whether such exhibitions make the photographs available once again to a gaze of mastery, reinforcing their humiliating effect....

...How, then, do photographs of torture produce their own undoing? When is the power of an image turned against itself, transforming it into a picture that opposes the very thing the photograph means to uphold? We can affirm that different meanings are produced according to the arenas in which those images circulate, and that the association of photographs and artworks with the status of the real is critical to producing both a successful countereffect and an effectively persuasive protest art. But we must also recognize that torture images do not inherently produce their own undoing—it depends on us.

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Unlearning Photographs

Imagine that the origins of photography go back, past the nineteenth century, to 1492 instead: the year Europe claimed to have discovered a new world. Theorist Ariella Aïsha Azoulay presents this provocative thought experiment to link the revolutionary image-production method to Europe's imperial project to expand, to colonize, and to declare a new world at the cost of an existing one. Azoulay demands that we see photography not only as a tool to document the destruction that comes coupled with colonization, but as a participant in the destruction.

To view photographs as culprits rather than as evidence is a frightening proposition. Abandoning the objectivity of photographs, Azoulay explains that the camera's shutter creates asymmetric relations when it divides the looker from the looked upon, and the past from the future. To unlearn this logic of the shutter is Azoulay's campaign to radically realign photography's capacity to build and to destroy worlds through images.

Because learning takes many forms, from subtle social cues (smile upon cheese) to formal education, unlearning is an extraordinary challenge that undermines expertise and centuries-long values, customs, and practices. Yet, unlearning will have us ask foundational questions about the medium, and how we image and see multiple worlds.

But after we unlearn photography, how do we relearn it? After unmooring photography from imperialism, what forum can we build for it? How do we make new photographs and how do we read old photographs? What examples do we have to follow or diverge from?

Suggested Readings:

↗ Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, 2019

↗ Thomas Keenan, "Counter-forensics and Photography," 2014

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Excerpted from Ariella Aïsha Azoulay,
 ↗ *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, 2019

In a split second, the camera's shutter draws three dividing lines: in time (between a before and an after), in space (between who/what is in front of the camera and who/what is behind it), and in the body politic (between those who possess and operate such devices and appropriate and accumulate their product and those whose countenance, resources, or labor are extracted). The work of the shutter is not an isolated operation, nor is it restricted only to photography...

...The camera's shutter is not a metaphor for the operation of imperial power, but it is a later materialization of an imperial technology. Photography developed with imperialism; the camera made visible and acceptable imperial world destruction and legitimated the world's reconstruction on empire's terms...

...Unlearning imperialism is an attempt to suspend the operation of the shutter

and resist its operation in time, space, and the body politic in common cause with all of those who object to it. Unlearning imperialism attends to the conceptual origins of imperial violence, the violence that presumes people and worlds as raw material, as always already imperial resources...

...Restitution may be the right thing to follow in particular cases as defined by the claiming communities, but it should be questioned as a solution, as long as the problem that restitution means to solve remains defined through the same shutter that generated it, leaving untouched the imperial violence of the camera's first click...

...To refuse the shutter is to begin to practice potential history.

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Excerpted from Thomas Keenan,
 ↗ "Counter-forensics and Photography," 2014

Although [Allan] Sekula is wary of the realist restriction of photography to testimonial status, he is also interested in how and when it happens. In "The Body and the Archive," he notes that, from the beginning of Henry Fox Talbot's explorations with the calotype, the "evidentiary promise" of the image was prominent.... As Sekula told Debra Risberg, "the old myth that photographs

tell the truth has been replaced by the new myth that they lie."²

Neither is correct.... [Sekula] argues that we need to understand the evidence provided by the photograph not in terms of its relation to the reality it presents, as if the photograph offered a proof that was not only indexical but decisive or definitive. Rather, photo-

graphic evidence must be considered in terms of the forum or the debate into which its testimony is entered...

...This “indeterminacy” of meaning does not hold in spite of the indexicality of the image but because of it: Because there is a trace, an imprint, there is the possibility of interpretation, the opportunity for meaning, fiction, and hence the “battleground of fictions.” Because there is a trace, there is a battle. Around the image, a debate can begin—we decide what it says; it does not, it cannot. This is what the word *evidence* means: “everything beyond the imprinting of a trace, is up for grabs.” The reading of the evidence, which is the only thing one can do with evidence since it does not speak for itself (this holds even with nonmute evidence, like testimony in a courtroom), will always be a matter of “political maneuvering.” That is what “up for grabs” means...

...Sekula presents this claim about indexicality, realism, indeterminacy, and the “up for grabs” as a challenge, a provocation, a charge, a demand for responsibility... “Our problem, as artists and intellectuals living near but not at the center of a global system of power, will be to help prevent the cancellation of that testimony by more authoritative and official texts.”³...

...Forensics is not simply about science in the service of law or the police but is, much more broadly, about objects as they become evidence, things submitted for interpretation in an effort to persuade. The word is derived from the Latin *forensis*, which refers to the “forum” and the practice and skill of

making an argument before a professional, political, or legal gathering...

With the term [counter-forensics], he refers to nothing less than the adoption of forensic techniques as a practice of “political maneuvering,” as a tactical operation in a collective struggle, a rogues’ gallery to document the microphysics of barbarism...

...Listening to, and allowing others to hear, “what the bones tell us” is a practice with no guarantees. Forensics and photography both traffic in “the ambiguous form of visual documents,” documents that are up for grabs in law and politics. But they have important things to say, and Sekula’s work itself bears witness to the ongoing struggle “to help prevent the cancellation of that testimony by more authoritative and official texts.”

Unlearning Photographs

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2 Debra Risberg, “Imaginary Economies: An Interview with Allan Sekula,” in *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972-1996* (Normal: University Galleries of Illinois State University, 1999), 239.

3 Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 64.

Teaching Photographs: How Do Photographs Teach?

For three days in October 2019, a group of artists convened for Teaching Photographs, a symposium organized by Shannon Ebner and Sara Greenberger Rafferty at Pratt Institute. They explored three questions: How do photographs teach? How do photographs perform? How are photographs made?

As contingent and variable as the responses were, the questions all took aim at the intersection of photography as an artistic medium and as a technological apparatus inseparable from the conditions of image production today.

So, how do photographs teach?

The technical process of making an image of the visible world with light has long lent photography its credibility as a documentary tool. The word document comes from the Latin root *docere*, meaning to teach. We expect photographs to carry and transmit visual information, and to learn from it. What happens if they teach us incorrect or partial histories? What are our responsibilities as students of photographs?

What meaning do we seek from photographs when we look to them as bearers of knowledge? How is this search for meaning different from looking to a photograph for information, fact, or even truth?

In lieu of a reading list, we share sound bites from the symposium presenters:

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Fia Backström, “Some Proposed Strategies on How to Situate Images by Building Context beyond Representational Pointers: Presentation, Discussion, and Exercises.” Paper and workshop presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

“Most of us are aware that photography is and has been used for contro and surveillance for colonial power, and many other oppressive usages. So, learning from photography also means looking at this history of photography. [The camera is] a device that generalizes, excludes races from histories. The question of how photography can inform or what we can learn from it... We must explore the fantasy of the “neutral,” as well as push away from it.”

Gelare Khoshgozaran, “Writing through Images.” Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

“It’s really hard to push against documentary photography or anything that has a claim to providing evidence. One: it distances you from the subject. And two: it makes subjects more readable and similar to what you understand as humans and who you value as deserving life. It’s hard to make images about these things as an artist who deals with the world of images. I’ve been trying to take the opposite turn and preface this work with crisis and representation. These images are genuine dilemmas that I have as an artist about how to create images that don’t contribute to the same distance, alienation, and normalizing of violence.”

Stephanie Syjuco, “How Do Photographs Perform.” Panel discussion presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 12, 2019.

“Teaching photographs to stop behaving like assholes. I’m interested in that because it has a double meaning. When I was invited to this symposium, Teaching Photographs, my first reaction was not how does one teach photographs to other people, but what can we teach the photographs themselves if they are acting wrong.”

Carmen Winant, “Carmen Winant Teaching Photographs Interview,” March 5, 2019, in *Pratt Photography*, produced by John O’Toole, podcast audio, 34:07.

“Where else than in photography to point to an act, a sensate experience? But of course, no matter how many times you insist on an image, it can never describe the deeply phenomenological, lived, embodied, thing. So, in that way it becomes a study in the failure of photographs to do the thing they are supposed to do: teach about the experience, convey the feeling. In some ways the more I insist on the repetition of it, the more it unravels.”

Teaching Photographs: How Do Photographs Teach?

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Teaching Photographs: How Do Photographs Perform?

To perform means to carry out an action, to fulfill a purpose, to present, or to act. These definitions involve an audience or an arbiter. When a photograph performs, who is watching? Who directs the performance and who evaluates it?

Earlier, we summarized Mark Sealy's discussion of how old photographs can be made to perform a political work in the present. Hito Steyerl's "poor image" can be likened to a traveling troupe—fugitive performers in front of audiences all over the world. Photography is a mobile form, and depending on the stage granted, photographs perform differently.

When we call upon a photograph to perform, we ask that it fulfill a purpose. Laying the groundwork for photographs to present themselves is as much artistic and curatorial work as it is social and political.

How do we recognize and acknowledge a photograph's performance? What etiquette should we demonstrate as audiences? Tina M. Campt tells us to listen with more than our ears and to pay attention to the low frequencies of even the quietest images. How do we respond respectfully to performances that we find lacking, prejudicial, or incomprehensible? How do we draw out different performances from the same photographs?

Sound bites from the symposium presenters:

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Stephanie Syjuco, “How Do Photographs Perform.” Panel discussion presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 12, 2019.

“How do photographs perform? What are these photographic gifts that keep on giving, locked in images across time and space? And how do we strategically keep them from performing? Or train them to perform differently in order to rewrite and re-present new narratives that are more reflective of our realities?”

Matt Keegan, “How Do Photographs Perform.” Panel discussion presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 12, 2019.

“How do photographs perform? This question is connected to [my work] *“N” as in Nancy*. I’m interested in the two-part definition of the word perform both to carry out a task, action, or function as well as present a form of entertainment for an audience.”

Sara VanDerBeek, “What Is Color Correct? Investigations in Color Perception in the Twenty-First Century.” Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 10, 2019.

“Julie [Pochron] and her work of addressing and reappraising color theory and the work of Josef Albers at this moment is revelatory. It speaks again to a larger movement away from the modernist and exclusionary ideas of perception, to the more inclusive emotive and psychological space in which we exist now.”

Teaching Photographs: How Do Photographs Perform?

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Teaching Photographs: How Are Photographs Made?

Light, camera, time, and a way to fix an image onto a surface or to save as a digital file: these are the essential components that go into making a photograph. Yet, there are infinite variations in how these parts come together to make an image. Rather than ask “How are photographs made?” a related question, “Why are photographs made?” may offer relevant answers.

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay would say that photographs are made to serve an imperial purpose: to record and capture, to collect and classify, to know and possess. There is an aesthetic to the desired objectivity of such photographs. A photograph is considered accurate, truthful, and neutral when its subject is straight and center in the frame, sharp in focus, evenly lit, and color corrected. These standards apply to identification photographs as they do to documentation of art and artifacts.

For artists, these standards themselves become material and tool in making their own photographs. The Teaching Photographs Symposium brought together artists who collect and re-present, manipulate and remix, deconstruct and reconstruct photographs to narrate personal stories and to share intimate experiences and worldly observations. The why informs the how. So we ask: why are photographs made? Why today? Why now? For what and for whom are photographs made?

Sound bites from the symposium presenters:

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Julie Pochron, “What Is Color Correct? Investigations in Color Perception in the Twenty-First Century.” Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 10, 2019.

“Color correction is something people always ask me about because I spend so much time doing it. I don’t think about color correcting in the sense of making the perfect print. We have all of these tools and programs to help us get ‘neutral,’ balanced prints. But ‘neutral’ is subjective and impossible.”

Fia Backström, “Some Proposed Strategies on How to Situate Images by Building Context beyond Representational Pointers: Presentation, Discussion, and Exercises.” Paper and workshop presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

“The body is the most direct way to situate photographs in terms of embodiment. The question is how the photographer can be part of the shifting moment, how the body can be aware that it’s looking, how to be aware of the body, and how to move away from the idea of this ‘neutral eye’...”

Joanna Zylinska, “Undigital Photography: Image-Making beyond Computation and A.I.” Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

“I want to offer a more nuanced position on understanding our relationship with technology. Instead of pitching the human against the machine, I propose to see different forms of human

activity including photography and other forms of image-making as having always been technical, and to some extent, artificially intelligent.”

Anouk Kruihof, “The Secret Life of Photographic Images.” Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

“We consume the world through photos. Taking photographs is the most important thing to do right now, and humans are submerged in a vortex of photographic images. Some call this contamination, which can be seen as a metaphor for the time we live in. Photographs are evidence of human existence that scream, ‘We are still here!’ The reality projected onto a screen is more real than reality itself.”

Teaching Photographs: How Are Photographs Made?

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Teaching Photographs

A three-day symposium organized around notions of photography and pedagogy, the present and future of images, representation, and learning.

Organized by Shannon Ebner and Sara Greenberger Rafferty at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, October 10-12, 2019.

www.teachingphotographs.info

A Bibliographic Summary, Annotation,
and Select Transcription

Prepared by Hope Mora for UB Art Galleries,
March 24, 2020

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Julie Pochron and Sara VanDerBeek, “What Is Color Correct? Investigations in Color Perception in the Twenty-First Century.” Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 10, 2019.

Artists Julie Pochron and Sara VanDerBeek discuss color, its properties, effects, and interactions at the center of their work. VanDerBeek’s photographs utilize a variety of formal strategies including the interaction of colors and their impact and importance, and expand the idea of authorship. She collaborates with artist and printer Julie Pochron, who considers color in reaction to another and how color communicates intellectually. VanDerBeek and Pochron both look at the impact of photographic color on our perception of the world, and ask how we decide our color palette as artists.

Keywords: authorship, color correction, color theory, photography, Julie Pochron, Shirley card, Sara VanDerBeek

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Select Transcription

6:12 - 6:48

SVB Photographic color, more than any other media, is driving our understanding of the world and impacting our perception of it in significant known and unknown ways. Julie and her work addressing and reappraising color theory and the work of Josef Albers at this moment is revelatory. It speaks again to a larger movement away from the modernist and exclusionary ideas of perception, to the more inclusive emotive and psychological space in which we exist now.

10:50 - 11:06

SVB It is the interaction of colors and their impact upon each other and upon the viewer that I have learned through Julie’s guidance. It is of equal importance as what is being captured and conveyed in an image. Much of the work we do together factors into the final presentation of my images.

1:06:23 - 1:07:15

JP Color correction is something people always ask me about because I spend so much time doing it. I don’t think about color correcting in the sense of making the perfect print. We have all of these tools and programs to help us get “neutral,” balanced prints. But “neutral” is subjective and impossible.

Josephine Pryde, “What Is There Not to Care about?”
 Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium,
 Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 10, 2019.

In Pryde’s keynote, she offers an open-ended reflection on her experience as a professor and what it means to teach photographs. Pryde revises the question raised by the symposium organizers “How do photographs teach?” to “How do we learn with photographs?” to shift emphasis from the photograph itself to the process of looking and learning. To address this question, she draws from many sources including art historian Joanna Bourke and the late artist Alexis Hunter. Pryde refers to Bourke’s study of women’s self-defense instructional photographs, and asks what else is possible to learn from these images besides what they intend to teach. She also references Hunter’s serial photographs from the 1970s such as Approaches to Fear as a kind of “how to” instruction for undefined goals. In thinking about the connections between Hunter’s work to her own practice, Pryde wonders how teaching photographs can be a process that is passed down from a generation of women artists to another generation of women artists. Even though photographs do not teach us how to make them, making a photograph can teach us about photography. Instead of asking what to care about when making a photograph, Pryde asks, “What is there not to care about?”

Keywords: Joanna Bourke, care, how to, Alexis Hunter,
 instruction, teach, Josephine Pryde

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Joanna Zylinska, “Undigital Photography: Image-Making beyond Computation and A.I.” Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

Joanna Zylinska is a media theorist and artist working on digital culture, artificial intelligence, photography, ethics, and the planetary ecological crisis. Zylinska is interested in the current development of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) in relation to image-making and understanding our relationship with technology. She asks questions about the spaces and institutions where thinking and learning about technology, image-making, photography, and creativity take place. What happens to photography in the age of A.I.? What happens to us as photographers and image viewers when we are faced with A.I.? Or when A.I. sees photographs and mediates us?

Keywords: artificial intelligence, ethics, media theory, photography, technology, Joanna Zylinska

Select Transcription

7:10 - 7:35

JZ I want to offer a more nuanced position on understanding our relationship with technology. Instead of pitching the human against the machine, I propose to see different forms of human activity including photography and other forms of image-making as having always been technical, and to some extent, artificially intelligent.

22:33 - 23:20

JZ In my own notion of non-human photography, I argue that traditional photographic theory is inadequate for analyzing today’s image landscape. The concept of non-human photography refers to photographs that are not of, by, or for the human. The notion encompasses images as diverse as depopulated vistas, satellite images, and QR codes.

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Anouk Kruithof, "The Secret Life of Photographic Images."
Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt
Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

Artist Anouk Kruithof presents images from her 2016 exhibition Neutral for which she printed Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Instagram images on different flexible materials. Kruithof asks what a photographic image is in an ocean of images and how we can teach photographs when everything exists to end in a photograph.

Keywords: Wafaa Bilal, consumption, digital humanism,
Joan Fontcuberta, Instagram, Erik Kessels,
Anouk Kruithof, Jon Rafman

Select Transcription

3:34 - 6:57

AK We consume the world through photos. Taking photographs is the most important thing to do right now, and humans are submerged in a vortex of photographic images. Some call this contamination, which can be seen as a metaphor for the time we live in. Photographs are evidence of human existence that scream, "We are still here!" The reality projected onto a screen is more real than reality itself.

44:13 - 47:22: Question from the audience

What's being referenced in your talk is an ocean of images, which artists can pick from, reedit, and remix? Can you articulate any limitations you see as an artist, like things that you won't touch? In other words, as artists we pride ourselves on being able to exemplify this postmodern reality. We DJ, we sample. Everything is fair game. I'm wondering, in this process of consumption and re-representation of images, is the reality of tragedy or violence lost in the production of the original images?

AK I think photography is a medium with infinite possibilities. I feel that it's totally boundless but as an artist, you restrain yourself. You set boundaries for what you consume, work with, or appropriate in your practice. I'm more interested in the chunk out of that ocean and the reasons to work with that.

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Gelare Khoshgozaran, "Writing through Images." Paper presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

Gelare Khoshgozaran is an artist and writer whose practice encompasses literary theory, translation, and autobiographical fiction. She is interested in rewriting history through relooking at images, specifically ruins and landmarks of policing and violence, and the connection between embassies and asylum. Khoshgozaran turns to images of the embassy not only as representations of architecture, but as violent sites of false asylum.

Keywords: architecture, asylum, embassy, Gelare Khoshgozaran, literary theory, photography, representation, Zoé Samudzi, violence

Select Transcription

- 23:25 - 23:55
- GK I turn to images of the embassy, a site of exceptional law which grants a unique protection, as well as representation of architecture, to wonder what shelter, refuge, and asylum look like. An embassy is an unviable territory. Asylum, an unviable shelter.
- 26:17 - 30:34
- GK I want to reimagine spaces of potential protection, especially when we are dealing with our future. I'm interested in the connection between asylum and embassies which seems abstract, but I'm interested in the symbolic connotations of protection that asylum falsely grants or promises. Asylum is a violent process and mobility is policed and controlled. This promise of shelter is false and violent.
- 33:41 - 35:45
- GK It's really hard to push against documentary photography or anything that has a claim to providing evidence. One: it distances you from the subject. And two: it makes subjects more readable and similar to what you understand as humans and who you value as deserving life. It's hard to make images about these things as an artist who deals with the world of images. I've been trying to take the opposite turn and preface this work with crisis and representation. These images are genuine dilemmas that I have as an artist about how to create images that don't contribute to the same distance, alienation, and normalizing of violence.

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Matt Keegan, Sara Greenberger Rafferty, and Stephanie Syjuco, “How Do Photographs Perform.” Panel discussion presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 12, 2019.

Artists Matt Keegan and Stephanie Syjuco present their respective bodies of work that touch on the question of how photographs perform and what we can teach and learn from photographs that are considered “wrong” or misrepresent reality. Keegan presents “N” as in Nancy, a project that uses flash cards to question the images that we often assign to words. Syjuco shares her selection of images that have traveled through various stock sites, and explores how images circulate and take on meaning.

Keywords: Ariella Azoulay, image circulation, Matt Keegan, perform, photography, Sara Greenberger Rafferty, Stephanie Syjuco, “Unlearning Imperial Rights”

Select Transcription

- 3:08 - 3:30
- SS Teaching photographs to stop behaving like assholes. I’m interested in that because it has a double meaning. When I was invited to this symposium, Teaching Photographs, my first reaction was not how does one teach photographs to other people, but what can we teach the photographs themselves if they are acting wrong.
- 4:57 - 5:05
- SS I’m less interested in the technical medium of photography and more interested in how images travel, how they circulate, how they define and inscribe meaning.
- 11:02
- SS How do photographs perform? What are these photographic gifts that keep on giving, locked in images across time and space? And how do we strategically keep them from performing? Or train them to perform differently in order to rewrite and re-present new narratives that are more reflective of our realities?
- 36:22 - 36:42
- MK How do photographs perform? This question is connected to [my work] “N” as in Nancy. I’m interested in the two-part definition of the word perform both to carry out a task, action, or function as well as present a form of entertainment for an audience.

51:60 - 52:18

- SGR Art can illuminate and process the cultural baggage of the image. I think that's something both of you do and something that a different medium could necessarily do.

Fia Backström and Pradeep Dalal, "Some Proposed Strategies on How to Situate Images by Building Context beyond Representational Pointers: Presentation, Discussion, and Exercises." Paper and workshop presented at Teaching Photographs Symposium, Pratt Institute, New York, NY, October 11, 2019.

Fia Backström and Pradeep Dalal, two artists and writers whose work use both text and photography, conduct a workshop to strategize how to situate images and build context beyond representation. The workshop involved the use of mobile phones to photograph and a writing exercise for small groups to collaborate with each other around the question of how photography can be embodied.

Keywords: Fia Backström, Pradeep Dalal, embodiment, photography, representation, surveillance, workshop

Select Transcription

15:27 - 16:59

- FB Most of us are aware that photography is and has been used for control and surveillance for colonial power, and many other oppressive usages. So, learning from photography also means looking at this history of photography. [The camera is] a device that generalizes, excludes races from histories. The question of how photography can inform or what we can learn from it... We must explore the fantasy of the "neutral," as well as push away from it.

23:51

- FB The body is the most direct way to situate photographs in terms of embodiment. The question is how the photographer can be part of the shifting moment, how the body can be aware that it's looking, how to be aware of the body, and how to move away from the idea of this "neutral eye"...

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50:23 - 52:29: Workshop Exercise

PD, FB: We have two prompts. One is concerning the body. We would like you to leave this room, work in pairs of two or three people. We want you to be conscious of your body, your position, and your attitude as you photograph. Assist and communicate with each other while you're shooting and try unfamiliar positions to photograph from, collaborate and support each other. You need to forget about making the perfect image and rely on the experience.

And the second prompt is to write about the images without looking at the images, without looking at your phone. Try and photograph from the memory of the body's sensations. You can shift between the personal, familial, and local to the larger social and political. The writing form is free.

Carmen Winant and Sara Greenberger Rafferty, "Carmen Winant Teaching Photographs Interview," March 5, 2019, in Pratt Photography, produced by John O'Toole, podcast audio, 34:07, <https://soundcloud.com/pratt-graduate-photography/carmen-winant-teaching-photographs-interview>.

Sara Greenberger Rafferty interviews artist and educator Carmen Winant on her body of work My Birth and poses six questions on the pedagogy of photography. My Birth is comprised of over 2,000 found images of women giving birth, and points to identity both in terms of who is being pictured, and who is not being pictured. Winant discusses the potential of images to teach and source ideas about culture, and the failure of photographs to describe an embodied experience such as labor. Rafferty continues to ask what the purpose of photographs is, how they might be didactic, and how they serve, if they do.

Keywords: absence, audience, circulation, failure, identity, labor, photography, Sara Greenberger Rafferty, Carmen Winant

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11:15 - 12:39: On the Audience

SGR What is an audience—a public, a student, and a teacher? I think there are so many different levels in your work. Do you think about that, or do you think about that not in relation to your work but in terms of art more broadly, both in the classroom and in our society?

CW Yes, I think about that often. I've never thought about it more than in the MoMA installation. I don't know if you were able to see that piece, but it was two facing walls in which there were about 2,000 found images of women in the process of labor and childbirth. Like a lot of people, I've used words like "the viewers activate the piece" and meant it. But I've never meant it more than after witnessing what happened there, where the audience embodied each term on that list. An audience, a public, a student, and a teacher. The way that people interacted or didn't interact with, the way that they spoke to and around, the way they explained it to their children and their own mothers.

17:24 - 19:25: On Purposelessness and Failure

SGR How does artistic purposelessness operate?

CW I don't know what that question means.

SGR Okay, that's some good feedback there. I think that it means we're talking about the purpose of photographs, and how they might show you something. How they might be didactic, how they might be edifying. All these different ways of thinking about how photographs might teach. Your piece is not actually a service to learning. It's an artwork.

CW I think about this a lot. I don't think about it in terms of purposelessness so much as failure. In my mind, the essential pivot of the MoMA piece... in some ways I made that work with the hope, however bottomless and improbable, that photographs would be able to have the capacity to describe the experience of birth that, I had at that point, gone through two times. There could be, there was, a potential. Where else than in photography to point to an act, a sensate experience? But of course, no matter how many times you insist on an image, it can never describe the deeply phenomenological, lived, embodied thing. So, in that way it becomes a study in the failure of photographs to do the thing they are supposed to do: teach about the experience, convey the feeling. In some ways the more I insist on the repetition of it, the more it unravels.

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Abel-Hirsch, Hannah. "Sara VanDerBeek Explores Representations of the Female Form." *British Journal of Photography*, October 9, 2019.

↗ <https://www.bjp-online.com/2019/10/sara-vanderbeek-explores-representations-of-the-female-form/>.

Agüera y Arcas, Blaise. "Art in the Age of Machine Intelligence." *Arts* 6, no. 4 (December 2017).

↗ <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts6040018>.

Alexander, Elizabeth. "Can you be BLACK and Look at This?: Reading the Rodney King Video(s)." *Public Culture* 7, no.1 (Fall 1994): 77–94.

Elizabeth Alexander is a poet, essayist, playwright, and teacher. Her text is a meditation on the complex fiction of race and the struggle for racial self-identification. African Americans do not witness violent events in a uniform way, and images and videos that record violence have reason to be remembered rather than suppressed. Her essay considers the way that black people might understand themselves to be part of a larger group, and what it is to think of oneself as having a people. The Rodney King videotape and stories of racial violence demonstrate that a collective memory of trauma rests in the present moment. There are different versions of the truth and Alexander urges us to question the ways in which documentary photography has inadequately represented black life.

Keywords: Elisabeth Alexander, documentary photography, Rodney King, lynching, Emmett Till, Pat Ward Williams, witness

Allen, James, Hilton Als, John Lewis, and Leon F. Litwack. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000.

Anastas, Rhea. "Language Is the Social Dress." In *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice*, edited by Teresa de Lauretis, 253–259. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Apel, Dora. "On Looking: Lynching Photographs and Legacies of Lynching after 9/11." *American Quarterly* 55, no.3 (September 2003): 457–478.

⁴ This bibliography is compiled by Hope Mora and acknowledges existing scholarship that has been instrumental in organizing the symposium Teaching Photographs as well as in developing *Thinking through Photographs*.

Apel, Dora. ↗ “Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib.” *Art Journal* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 88–100.

Dora Apel, a cultural critic and art historian, explores the public distribution of torture photographs of Abu Ghraib and their resemblance to American lynching photos. Apel argues that torture and its representations are conscious political acts which follow recognizable protocols of power and subordination. Apel analyzes how these photographs uphold social control and protect whiteness, and questions photography’s historical role in promoting and resisting racial violence. She asks what we might learn from the similarities in these iconic images and how photographs of torture produce their own undoing.

Keywords: Eddie Adams, Dora Apel, Chen Chieh-jen, Forkscrew Graphics, *Inconvenient Evidence: Iraqi Prison Photographs from Au Ghraib*, International Center of Photography, New York, Iraq, Abdel-Karim Khalil, lynching, torture photographs, Qasim al-Sabti, Salaheddin al-Sallat, Richard Serra, Nick Ut, Brian Wallis

Azoulay, Ariella. “Unlearning the Origins of Photography.” *Verso Books* (blog), September 7, 2018.

↗ <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4013-unlearning-the-origins-of-photography/>.

Ariella Azoulay is an author, curator, filmmaker, and theorist of photography and visual culture. In her series of essays, *Unlearning the Origins of Photography*, Azoulay forces us to think about photography’s active role in the history of imperialism. She questions the moment of emergence of photography, and locates it in the colonization of the world in which photography was assigned the role of documenting and recording what is already there. Azoulay argues that photography did not initiate a new world—the new world was created in the place of the one that was destroyed.

Keywords: Ariella Azoulay, body politics, colonization, imperialism, photography, technology, violence

Azoulay, Ariella. “Unlearning Imperial Rights to Take (Photographs).” *Verso Books* (blog), October 10, 2018.

↗ <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4075-unlearning-imperial-rights-to-take-photographs>.

Azoulay, Ariella. “Understanding the Migrant Caravan in the Context of Imperial Plunder and Dispossession.” *Hyperallergic*, November 29, 2018.

↗ <https://www.hyperallergic.com/473575/understanding-the-migrant-caravan-in-the-context-of-imperial-plunder-and-dispossession/>.

Bakrania, Falu, Santhi Kavuri-Bauer, Kasturi Ray, and Paul Sherwin. *Picturing Parallax: Photography and Video from the South Asian Diaspora*. San Francisco: San Francisco State University, 2011.

Barco, Mandalit del. “How Kodak’s Shirley Cards Set Photography’s Skin-Tone Standard.” *Color Decoded*, NPR, November 13, 2014. Podcast audio, 6:31. ↗ <https://www.npr.org/2014/11/13/363517842/for-decades-kodak-s-shirley-cards-set-photography-s-skin-tone-standard/>.

In an NPR podcast, Mandalit del Barco reports a story on how Kodak’s Shirley cards set photography’s skin-tone standard. The “Shirley” card, named after the original model hired by Kodak, represented the “normal standard” used to balance and calibrate skin tones. This story uncovers racial bias in camera technology, and questions technology as the ultimate equalizer.

Keywords: Mandalit del Barco, color correction, Kodak, race, representation, Shirley cards, technology

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In *Listening to Images*, Tina M. Campt explores a way of listening closely to photography, engaging with lost archives of historically dismissed photographs of black subjects taken throughout the black diaspora. Campt looks beyond what one usually sees and attunes her senses to the other affective frequencies of these photographs. She hears in these photos—which range from late nineteenth-century ethnographic photographs of rural African women and photographs taken in an early twentieth-century Cape Town prison to postwar passport photographs in Birmingham, England and 1960s mug shots of the Freedom Riders—a quiet intensity and quotidian practices of refusal.

Keywords: Archives, black diaspora, Tina M. Campt, ethnographic photographs, listening, photography, sound

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↗ <https://reallifemag.com/poor-meme-rich-meme/>.

Aria Dean is an artist, curator, and critic. In "Poor Meme, Rich Meme," Dean speaks of the power of repetition and memes—originally black—as a strategy for cultural dispersion and as a powerful vernacular appropriated by white capitalist forces. The meme as poor image, as black, operates against the rich image: the full-bodied high-res representation. She asks, "if memes reiterate the inequities between black creators and white appropriators, can they also move us into a new collective blackness?"

Keywords: body, circulation, cultural appropriation, Aria Dean, identity politics, meme, repetition, representation, surveillance

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↗ http://unthinkingphotography/stuff/Zylińska_Dewdney_Nonhuman_Photography.pdf

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↗ <http://www.alexishunter.co.uk/texts-content3/Interviewah-mf.htm>.

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Thomas Keenan is an author, educator, and scholar with research interests that include media and conflict, literary and political theory, and violence and politics. In this article, he examines “Sekula’s patient exploration of the relationship between photography, evidence, and humanism—and with it, the politics of human rights.” For Keenan, counter-forensics expands a notion of humanism, engaging photographic archives as sites for political struggle. Forensics and photography both traffic in “the ambiguous form of visual documents,” documents that are up for grabs in law and politics.

Keywords: counter-forensics, evidence, forensics, human rights, indeterminacy, Thomas Keenan, photography, politics, Allan Sekula, testimony, violence

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 ↗ https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/26978_seeing_machines.

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 ↗ <https://anthology.rhizome.org/9-eyes/>.

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↗ <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2019/09/against-empathy/>.

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Decolonizing the Camera examines how Western photographic practice has been used as a tool for creating Eurocentric, violent visual regimes. The book analyzes how photography works within and against the political and destructive reality of Western imperialism. In the hands of the colonizer, photography has dominated how the Other has been portrayed. Reading photographs gives insight into how present understandings of oppressed peoples' making in history have been constructed. Sealy asks two questions. First, has photography been a liberating device, or an oppressive weapon that holds the viewer/producer and subject in a violent system of continual exposure? And second, what epistemic value has photography brought to our understanding of difference?

Keywords: decolonization, photography, race, representation, Mark Sealy, violence, *Without Sanctuary*

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⁵ This book is recommended by artist Leslie Hewitt, whose forthcoming post script response to the symposium Teaching Photographs will be available on the website: ↗ teachingphotographs.info

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