

Essay Title

Visual Culture

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Digital imaging involves a radical break from previous photographic practices leading to a new era of 'post-photography'.

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Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Digital Imaging involves a radical break from previous photographic practices leading to a new era of ‘post- photography’

This essay will discuss and focus on the developments of the camera and photographic practice, going from analogue to digital photography. Suitcase and book cameras to subminiature cameras that can fit into pockets. The start of the ‘Kodak Culture’, making photography appealing to those who have never taken a photograph before. Professional photography to amateur photography, making photography a hobby. Photoshop replacing the darkrooms, enabling the access to edit images. The genius of being able to preview an image before taking it and the invention of the delete button to discard images that came out poorly. The consumption of images on social media, excessive sharing and replication of images within a click of a button, the change of when people would look at old photographs from a dusty shoebox to gathering round a computer screen to view an image. The popularity of banal imaging, taking photographs of the everyday without thought and the obsession of the selfie.

Digital technologies do not involve a break in searching for photographic realism or an elimination of the real. The digital image is no different to the analogue image, it upholds the search of authenticity, realism, affectivity and the validity as document. Analogue photography is mainly based on the iconic and the indexical compared to computer management and logarithmic coding digital images are based on (Tagg, 1988). The digital

image comes from a reality within which is interwoven making it material that is then discussed and displayed (Lechte, 2017). Moving images receive new meanings through their networked circulation, which are then easily navigated, appropriated, posted, shared and exchanged (Armitage, Bishop, 2013). Photographs are three-dimensional and goes beyond the two-dimensionality of the image, they have a material presence in the world moving across times and places, 'as chemical deposits on paper' (Ibid, p 1). The digital image combines tactile, visual and auditory dimensions, when projected onto screens enabling networks of communication and participation (Kessler, 2017)

What has come to be known as post photography is the reprise of the difference between Analogue and digital photographic images whereby the 'Analogue' is created with a camera, 'digital' created with a computer (Jager, 1996). There is a huge shift from analogue to digital photography known as the "digital revolution" in the 1990's. The framework of current traditional photographic practice is incorporated into digital technology. Digital imaging began gradual changes in the habits of hobbyists and amateurs who bought scanners, computers and ink-jet printers and started to use them within the old examples of analogue photography. Photoshop and colour printers replaced the photographic darkroom and the photo lab. The swap from the photo lab to domestic digital set-up meant that there is no need for a darkroom to make prints (Rubinstein, Sluis, 2008). The changing roles of the professional photography to amateur photography, in the past, professional practitioners dominated the arena of public photography. Currently, the work of professional photographers appears side by side with images produced by amateurs who do not have the

same professional investment in photography (House, 1856).

Analogue photography goes through the physic-chemical process which included materials such as glass, cellulose acetate, silver halide and gelatine. In comparison to the materials contained in digital photography such as plastic, graphene, oxides, silicon, metals, and rare earths which is part of that frantic ocean of materials wherein images and humans are engrossed (Ingold, 2007).

Live Photos is a feature which makes it possible to capture 1.5 seconds before and after the photo has been taken. A more emotional dimension is added to the context of the photographic instant frozen in time becoming a permanent alive memory. This method perfects photo realism resulting in today's images are still and moving at the same time (Hoelzl, 2010).

Living in an era when images never appear individually, singular images appear as discrete artefacts, whilst digital images are experienced as multiples existing simultaneously in different places (Lister, 2013). According to Sluis and Rubinstein, digital images appear in repetitions, series, sequences and rapid streams with no necessarily identifiable original (Sluis, Rubinstein, 2013). Digital images have the capacity to bring upon the past on platforms such as Facebook and Snapchat labelled as memories encouraging us to recirculate them (Henning, 2018). The camera phone photography's four main uses are creating and maintaining social relationships, self-presentation, self-expression and building personal and group memory (House, 2005). According to Kemper, a photograph is a tangible object, small token defining the passing of time and maintains the presence of that which it depicts. The

digital image is made up of pixels formed in a Cartesian grid of units. These pixels undergo a range of distortions including shearing, rotation, morphing and filtering. These never-ending sequences of the data forms images that will outline teaching strategies regarding patterns of seeing in post-photography cultures (Crary, 1993).

For many decades, popular photography was the focus of studies by historians and cultural theorists, artists and curators. The spread of personal photography online went from Kodak to Nokia culture becoming shared on a scale comparable with commercial photography and news (Chalfen, 1987). The flexibility of digital photographs has become a central part of the digital revolution which some may say began the “death of photography” crushing the privileged status of the photograph as the unbiased truth (Robins, 1995). The digital image acts as evidence, from CCTV stills, traffic control and monitoring systems. The syntax of truthful and Authentic reportage of photographs and video clips using an early camera phone gives a low-resolution, pixilated appearance compared to what was, the grainy black and white photograph (Mann, 2006., Fung 2005., Lo, 177). According to Chalfen, consumer photography is broadly described as ‘Kodak Culture’ referring to the social practices of sharing images of the subjects such as holidays, birthdays, friends and family. The domestic of everyday living through photography where narratives and memory are mediated through technology and visual culture.

Instant image sharing all started when digital cameras became more affordable for the consumer market. Family and friends would have to gather around a single computer screen to access digital photographs, which relied on the presence of a person who can operate the software. Photographs could be sent by email although there were significant barriers such as internet access, internet access in the 1990’s was slow and expensive (Rubinstein, Sluis,

2008). The reality of the vernacular photographer is the ability of an accumulation of tens and thousands of images. The hard disc has replaced the dusty shoebox full of neglected prints. According to Daisuke Okabe, images shared directly through the camera screen is the most fluid and instant way of sharing images. The camera screen has grown in size in recent years from an electronic viewfinder into a portable frame designed to view, edit, compose, review and share photographs without having to use computers or photo labs (Salwen, 2007). A new generation of tools such as iPhoto and Picasa avoid the photographic practices and skills of the old and references to the dark room. The trouble of downloading photographs from camera to the computer “chain of pain” is when Apple’s CEO, Steve Jobs made the change and revealed iPhoto in 2001 (Steinburg, 2002). Apple’s new software stored images according to date and time, photos could be shared as photo books, slideshows and web pages.

Photography taking place without the camera but the camera phone instead. Nineteenth-century photographic apparatus included bowler hat and walking stick cameras, suitcase and book cameras and bow tie cameras. In comparison to the twentieth century, subminiature cameras could fit into finger rings, mechanical pencils, pens and pocket watches (Huhtamo, 2007).

Screen based photography meant that the digital camera acquired a delete button, providing a way of deleting unwanted shots from memory making better photo opportunities. The delete button decreases the chances of discovering hidden truths in photographs. The first digital camera with a screen in 1995 made it possible before taking a picture to preview the image. These two innovations of digital technology led to the two important barriers for engagement with photography: the cost of each exposed frame and the suspension between taking a

picture and viewing it (Bourdieu, 1990). Without years of training, the digital camera made it possible to see automatically as the lens/cameras sees, incredibly narrowing the gap between the amateur and the professional photographer.

The founder of Kodak, George Eastman, made photography appealing to a wide amount of people who have never before taken a photograph (Tagg, 1988). “Kodak Culture” applies to the production and consumption of traditional photographs collected and contained in shoeboxes and albums (Chalfen, 1987). Today’s teens have new ways of capturing, producing, compiling and viewing with new image technologies and other media devices that are far removed from this Kodak Culture. These tools enabling the storage, viewing and sharing of images between individuals within online communities create behaviours and activities that in the past were only associated with face-to-face communications (Slevin, 2002).

Without programming skills, it became possible to alter content online, one could directly interact with the webpage itself to upload, annotate, rotate, distribute, distribute and organize images. A major appeal of photo sharing is the ability to connect with others by posting images, not through writing. It has become a kind of visual speech replacing writing (House, 2007). People’s images online become a form of leisure and social activity when uploaded to a photo-sharing site which can gather a thousand of viewings and a mass number of comments (Slater, 1995). Each action of uploading an image may be given a potential reward marking it as a favourite or a comment may be left by other users meaning that there is a likelihood that someone will view and enjoy it (Burgess, 2007).

Flickr is an online image-based environment that captures, displays, stores and shares digital

photographic images which encourages community engagement, shaping experiences of photography (Schiano, Chen, Issacs, 2002). Snapshots and photo-booth portraits known as personal photography's form part of the pre-digital discussion in the study of the advancement of the amateur in photography. The evolving capture technologies like always having a camera to hand (mobile phone) allows us to capture more brief and instant moments than before (Murray, 2008). Adding new layers to the insight and treatment of image content, such as tagging, sharing and mashing are tools on Flickr result in new expressions of the consumption and production of the photograph.

If the author acknowledges its photographs as narrative or identities of itself, then this has consequences for the post-photographic era. Daily information and announcements of the social networks user's life is published for consumption by other members of the community. These web tools help to mark important histories, organize memories and thread meaningful stories through these recollections in ways that replicate spoken narratives (Rodden, Wood, 2003).

According to Ibrahim, capturing and uploading images of the everyday, unimportant and without much thought involved is known as 'banal imaging'. The sharing of the everyday, improving and commodifying the routine and the non-event. Many apps and websites such as Instagram, Flickr, Snapchat and Pinterest share images with the popularity of mobile telephony. The popularity of these video/photo sharing sites play a vital role in representing the real, authenticating and recording events in our everyday lives, as young people move to mobile chat and photo sharing sites such as Instagram and Snapchat (Parmy, 2012). The mobile phone with the camera is what started the banal imaging of capturing everyday items creating humorous ways of making stories (Makela, 2000). Capturing a scene or object that

produces comfort of the everyday such as a barista style coffee ritualizes the everyday through imagery and introducing a continuous visual contact (Katz, Aakhus 2002). Banal imaging archives rituals and daily routines, celebrations such as birthdays, festivals, reunions. Ceremonies are photographed because they are outside daily routines, the importance of many kinds of ceremonies is reflected in whether or not they are photographed. The lower class were not as concerned about the aesthetics compared to the upper class (Bourdieu, 1990). Banal imaging is occupied with the non-events, recording the routine normality of the everyday, life's milestones and life's mortal passage bringing rituals of daily living through imagery. Banal imaging enables consumption as part of today's digital visual economy, commodifying life's rich and trivial moments consumed by others through personal photography (Barthes, 1981, Chalfen, 1987, Bourdieu, 1990, Rose, 2003). Content can be created and uploaded of boundless rituals of the everyday, on the move with the use of smartphones. The role of photographs is like a form of gift exchange of the everyday photographic practice (Harrison, 2002). In the context of a social biography, photographs can be seen as a performance where things become active and not passive in the creation of meaning (Edwards, 2001). The camera phone users inclined to raise banal objects and events to photo-worthy occurrences (Okabe, Ito, 2003). Banal imaging intertwines the visual into our everyday practices and habits.

One of the developments in camera technology in the twentieth century is the fact that all you needed to do is point and press (Harrison, 2002). Posting experiential images of everyday life validates and authenticates experiences through images throughout human existence chronicling life. The chronicling of life has taken various arrangements in public and private platforms such as diaries, publications of intimate feelings through books and monographs. The act of posting and uploading images that are shared which can lead to further image

manipulation and personalization. By liking and sharing, people are validating these images, linking it to a wider consumption economy and technology where images can be tagged, archived, showcased and reconfigured creatively shed from its ownership. The invitation to look at the unthinking, ordinary and personal enables us all to connect with each other in our everyday rituals by looking at each other (Ibrahim, 2015). Transforming the everyday into a culture of gaze and consumption. Common slang terms for self-representation such as the selfie objectifying the self is part of the everyday. There are expectations that others will consume and partake in your visual postings, while your experiences are validated by a community, you are consumed both as a commodity. The constant content creation to post and share is to affirm one's presence and being in the world.

With the improvement of the camera quality on the mobile between 2013 and 2016, a high-resolution image looks more impressive, brilliant and magic compared to a poor one. The selfie made its way into the Oxford Dictionary. The selfie is defined as "A photograph that one has taken of oneself, taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website" (Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year, 2013, p. 1). Immediate circulation of an image via Instagram etc. is what makes the selfie considerably diverse from its earlier photographic predecessors (Tifentale, 2014). The considered loss of photographic indexicality (traditional photography theory) in an assumed "post photographic" era of digital image reproduction was loudly debated in the 1990s (Mitchell, 1992; Robins, 1996). The spatial divide between photographed objects and the photographer's body is a key aspect remaining the same as the analogue. Timers, remote-control devices and reflective surfaces puts oneself in the picture creating the respected photographic self-portraiture (Lingwood, Spence, 1986). Part of this transformation is group selfies where the person taking the photo is at the forefront of a mass of faces and bodies, clearly partaking in the process of composing

the image as it is being taken (Becker, 2013). To compose now refers to the act of posing together. The selfie is equally expressive and disciplinary. Narcissism is one of the most common themes in public discussion about selfies (The Carceral Net). The media occasionally gives credence to a kind of moral panic over selfies and selfists, supposedly narcissistic, selfish and self-absorbed (Agger, 2012). Another feature of dishearten when it comes to narcissism is the frequent posting of selfies online (Frosh, 2015). Ethnographer and writer Anne Burns helps reverse the cliché of the selfist as inevitably selfish or narcissistic, instead is a means of for portraying discipline and social control. An unreal, monitored, artificially positive identity is created giving an unhealthy performance of the self-leading to contradictions of accusations of not only self-absorption and selfishness. Selfies show a self, performing itself, they are at the same time gestural, mediated and sociable. The selfie has become central to our everyday, routine experience of digital activities (Hjorth, Pink 2014).

Conclusion

Gathering my thoughts together, when discussing post photography, analogue photography is created with a camera compared to digital which is created using a computer. The move from professional photography to amateur photography, the access to scanners, computers and ink-jet printers enables the use of analogue photography. The digital camera makes it possible to see automatically as the lens sees without years of training. The social practices of sharing photographs of birthdays, holidays, friends and families using digital technology referring to the 'Kodak Culture', narrates everyday living through photography creating memories. Replacing the dusty shoebox full of prints with a hard disc full of images. Apple's new software iPhoto makes it easier to store images according to their date and time, before that people had to make photobooks and write down the date the picture was taken. Organising

memories and marking important histories. It is now hard to find the hidden truths in photography due to the delete button. It is now possible to edit images without programming skills. Posting images has become a type of visual speech, replacing writing, a reward for it can be a like or a comment giving the ability to connect with others. Banal imaging is taking photos of the everyday, encouraging anyone with a mobile phone to capture brief and instant moments of our lives. These images are posted to social media such as Instagram and Snapchat recording our rituals and daily routines archiving the normality of our everyday lives. Content is created on the move, resulting in everyday practices and habits affirming one's presence and being in the world. One of the biggest developments in photography and most popular is the selfie, that fact that you can take a picture of yourself on your own without any assistance. The use of timers helps create a respected photographic self-portraiture. This form of photography can be debated as narcissistic meaning selfish and self-absorbed, or a form of discipline and self-control. The selfie has become part of our everyday routine of digital experiences. All of these developments in photography have evolved through the digital interface of previous photographic practices. Although we are already moving into the digital stage of photography, plenty of people around the world including myself prefer the excitement of using forms of analogue cameras such as disposable cameras. The excitement of not knowing what the pictures are going to turn out like until you develop them. These are the kind of analogue photography that's becoming popular again and will

live on.

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Image 1: Digital Camera World, Creator: Sean Gladwell, Credit: Getty Images, Copyright:
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Image 2: <https://www.sony.ie/electronics/cyber-shot-compact-cameras/dsc-w830>

Image 3: www.apple.com/ie/shop/buy-iphone/iphone-12