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# Art Photography and Everyday Life

Curtis Carter

Marquette University, [curtis.carter@marquette.edu](mailto:curtis.carter@marquette.edu)

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# Chapter Six

## Art Photography And Everyday Life

Curtis L. Carter

*Department of Philosophy, Marquette University  
Milwaukee, WI*

By their very nature, most human beings are curious about every day subjects and actions as such, as well as objects and the relationships between them. Even for the shallowest of minds, "An original, moving, shapeless or undifferentiated world must be brought to rest and given stable form ... ."1 Not every human being can be a philosopher bent on solving such relationships by analytical thinking or a scientist who traces the constancies and transformations of change in both human and natural phenomena using empirical strategies. Even among those philosophers charged with examining the major concerns of aesthetics today, accustomed to thinking of aesthetics in terms of concepts applicable to the arts or nature, it is not always easy to focus this mode of thinking on the everyday objects and actions. Is it demanding too much of philosophers whose pleasures and interests

are mainly bound up with a life of contemplation, and to whom analysis and introspections are understood as the pre-requisites for a proper understanding of the world, to appreciate a world that is largely non-intellectual, non-artistic in the common sense, which often relies on discharges of physical vitality or simple and naive expressions of emotion? It is, I think, precisely the call of this volume that challenges us to engage in this task. My approach will be to look to photography as one means of facilitating our inquiry into the aesthetics of everyday life. Its accessibility to all makes photography seem the most suitable art medium to aid in understanding the aesthetics of everyday life.

The aim of this chapter is to look at the role of photography in everyday life as seen through its developments in art photography. I propose two related hypotheses: first, that the experiences offered through art photography are integrally connected to everyday life experiences, and second that art photography is, perhaps more so than other art media, useful for examining the aesthetics of everyday life. I will be using examples from different approaches to art photography of the past century to show how photography addresses the aesthetics of everyday life.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, photography has become an increasingly popular medium both for the public and for artists. A reference to photography in one of Henry James' 1892 short stories, "The Wheel of Time," affirms the role of photography in everyday life and in literature even before the beginning of the twentieth century: "The young man had only one marked taste, with which his mother saw no way to deal-an invincible passion for photography. He was perpetually taking shots at his friends .... "<sup>2</sup> Maurice remarks: "I don't ask for much, but I ask for beauty . . . My eyes must be gratified-I must have a wife I can photograph. As the relationship progresses, Maurice's mother becomes increasingly worried that it is in trouble when she notes that her son has dropped photography. With respect to our concern with aesthetics, it is interesting to note that James links beauty with photography in this scenario.

From the time of its inception in the mid-nineteenth century, photography began to invade every corner of everyday life, from fashion to surveillance, popular entertainment to industrial production.

Alexander Rodchenko, Sergei Tretyakov and their Russian colleagues engaged in lively debates over photography and its role in the everyday life of the post-revolutionary era of the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> Today, photography is available to virtually everyone to investigate everyday objects and happenings. Our technologically driven cultures worldwide offer access to making personal photographs. News media, including the internet and television, rely extensively on the photograph, as do the popular magazine industry and museum publications. Today, even most cell phones and computer screens have the potential to create and instantly distribute photographic images. Hence, the photograph has become a key means of supplying and communicating images to help bring some visual and conceptual order to an undifferentiated world, bringing it to rest for contemplation, documentation, remembrance and appreciation.

Theorists initially met photography with mixed reactions, as Walter Benjamin's 1931 essay "Little History of Photography" shows. Baudelaire's indictment of photography in his *Salon of 1857* is twofold. He fears that photography reinforces the view that "art can be nothing more than the accurate reflection of nature," while his second argument links photography to the taste of the masses: "If photography is permitted to supplement some of art's functions, they will forthwith be usurped and corrupted by it thanks to photography's natural alliance with the mob."<sup>4</sup> Quite the opposite view is rendered by Antoine Wiertz. He predicted that in the future, photography (*daguerreotype*), which already "amazes the mind and startles the eye," would assume a major role in the development of art.<sup>5</sup>

Benjamin's views on photography are mainly affirmative of its importance, in the sense that in this essay he declares that the "illiteracy of the future will be not of reading or writing but of photography." However, he observes that some uses of photography, for example in fashion and advertising, reveal nothing about the actual reality of things except their saleability. Despite any reservations, Benjamin readily affirms the possibilities of the camera to reveal the connections of all aspects of human activity, thus enhancing both the understanding and appreciation of human actions from taking a step, experiencing the first steps a child, or enjoying the steps of a dancer in motion, to the ability to gain access to the images found in Egyptian

hieroglyphics.<sup>6</sup> Atget, a master French photographer during the early twentieth century, offers intimate readings of Parisian architecture and street scenes. In a different setting, health care providers and scientists working in laboratories also make use of photography in their investigations. Benjamin subsequently finds a key to a fundamental change in the future of art in the reproducibility of photographic images. This shift would abandon aura (the unique spiritual quality that is characteristic of traditional art) in favour of art that is accessible to the masses and useful for political purposes. Benjamin's well-known thesis is developed in a later essay, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, from its beginnings in the nineteenth century, as the commentaries of Wiertz and Baudelaire indicate, photography has been of great interest to artists who see the possibilities for moving art beyond the limits of painting, drawing and printmaking. In turning to photography, the artists bring the connections between the physical world and human perception into sharper focus, forcing a re-examination of traditional mimetic understanding of the relation between image and other forms of the real.

Roland Barthes' writings on photography, "The Photographic Message" and *Camera Lucida*, offer a useful theoretical beginning for approaching the role of photography in understanding the aesthetics of everyday life. Barthes hypothesizes that photography offers a perfect analogical description of reality that is continuous with what is being depicted. This means that photography does not translate what it depicts into a symbol system like language, or a connotative system like the brush strokes of painting. In effect, its message is transmitted without a code. However, when linked with captions and other cultural devices, photography also acquires connotative meanings. For example, staging, posing and other procedures undertaken in structuring the photograph, such as trick effects, manipulation of the pose, lighting, exposure, shutter speed, variations in lens, as well as darkroom manipulations of the negative and print all contribute the connotative understanding of a photograph.

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes distinguishes two dimensions of photographic participation in everyday life: *stadium* and *punctum*.

*Stadium* refers to the context of cultural, linguistic and political interpretations that rely on a level of polite but not deeply personal engagement, based on recognizing the photographer's intentions without becoming personally engaged. The *stadium* relies on an informal social contract linking the viewer to the photographer's intentions, in part through shared cultural connotations. For example, a newspaper photograph of a sports figure draws upon the connotative frame provided by the role of athletes in a culture.<sup>8</sup> *Punctum* is the personal response to details of the photograph invoking direct interest, sympathy, curiosity and attraction in the spectator, apart from the connotative.<sup>9</sup> The lightning-like *punctum* experience engages both bodily and mindful responses in the spectator and often carries over into the aesthetic. Barthes supports his thesis concerning the *punctum* with a myriad of photographic examples throughout *Camera Lucida*. For example, A. Kertész's 1921 image of a Hungarian violinist playing in the street with an audience of two young children captures a glimpse of life in a struggling post-war East European village.<sup>10</sup> In another example, Robert Mapplethorpe's "Young Man with Arm Extended" catches the spectator's direct interest with its exacting degrees of openness and abandonment.<sup>11</sup>

My aim in citing Barthes' account of photography is to relate photography to the aesthetics of everyday life. It is not my plan to engage in a critical analysis of Barthes's position here (though this might be a fruitful option), but rather to accept the main thesis he offers as a starting point. From this point I will look to developments in the art of photography in the past century to see how these developments may or may not inform us as to the role of photography in the aesthetics of everyday life.

A brief look at some of the changes photography has undergone since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century is useful for understanding photography's role in the aesthetics of everyday life. Initially, the aesthetics of photography focused on common elements and differences between photography and painting. Later, photography emerged in two distinct forms: as autonomous art and a medium that serves practical ends. One of the current questions of interest for the aesthetics of photography is-how do these different roles function in respect to photography's role in everyday life? Our main concern here

will be on the role of autonomous art in contributing to everyday aesthetics. However, autonomous art and art that serves practical ends in advertising and commerce and other cultural roles are not inseparable.

Not all artists agreed on the status of photography as an art form at the beginning of the twentieth century. Perhaps no one has been more explicit in refusing to accept photographs into the domain of art than the early twentieth-century Futurist painter and theorist Umberto Boccioni: "We have always rejected with disgust and contempt even the most distant relationship with the photograph because it is outside the boundaries of art."<sup>12</sup> Boccioni had initially explored the time-lapse based photographic experiments of Etienne Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge, but later rejected photography as art.

In the sections that follow I will discuss various approaches to photography including pure photography, staged photographs, altered photographs, appropriated photographs, photographs as social critique, and conceptual photographs. These changes represent the main developments of the past century.

## **Pure Photography**

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, art photographers such as Francis Firth insisted on a sharp disjunction between photographs and painting. Firth argued that photography must develop its own aesthetic outside the painterly tradition, viewing photography as an art medium with its own unique properties based on the camera, lens and photo-printing processes. Such earlier developments lay the foundations for the widely diverse approaches to experimental photography now available for our consideration.

In 1932, Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and a group of like-minded American photographers formed Group f64 and became a strong nucleus for proponents of "pure photography." This group understood photography as art consisting of two-dimensional representations taken with the camera and without manipulation of the images with painterly or graphic devices. Although their individual

works cover a wide diversity of approaches, these photographers argued that manipulating or altering photographs resulted in loss of purity of tone and other unique properties of photographs. Representing the point of view of f64, Weston stated that: "a photograph should be sharply focused, clearly defined from edge to edge, from the nearest object to the most distant. It should have a smooth or glassy surface to reveal the amazing textures and details to be found only in the photograph. Its values should be clearcut, subtle or brilliant, never veiled."<sup>13</sup>

In the 1960s, John Szarkowski, curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, restated the distinctive visual and pictorial characteristics of a photographer's medium. He argued that photography is concerned with the actual, significant detail, in a particular moment of time, framed by the photograph's edge, and seen from the artist's unique vantage point. According to Szarkowski, photography provided a radically new picture-making process, which encourages new habits of seeing. This view emphasizes description and formal discoveries over narrative meaning.<sup>14</sup>

With respect to our subject, the photographers of this movement from Weston to Szarkowski exemplify the use of photography to enable its viewers to deepen and personalize their experiences of the details of the world surrounding them with the aid of the camera. Their photographs emphasize clarity of vision and appreciation of surroundings from the barn roofs of the Midwest USA to western scenic rivers and mountains. At the same time, there is agreement that the photograph is something more than what it depicts.

## **Staged, Altered and Appropriated Photographs**

In her 1987 book *Fabrications*, photography historian Anne Hoy classified the developments of contemporary photography into the categories of staged, altered and appropriated photographs.<sup>15</sup> These categories are useful in gaining a perspective on some of the important developments in the photography of the late twentieth century. The examples in each of these categories will suffice to indicate some of the main developments.



## Staged Photographs

Italian Futurist photographers such as A. G. Bragaglia, Pietro Boccardi, Amedeo Ferrolì, Vinicio Paladini, Ferruccio A. Demanini, Tato (Guglielmo Sansoni) and others, working during the period of 1911 to 1939, helped lay the groundwork for later developments in staged photography.<sup>16</sup> These artists introduced constructed sets for use in developing their photography. For example, Tato's *Le Parfait Bourgeois* (1930) is based on a meticulously constructed set. His photograph features a headless business suit seated at a table. Two hands protrude from the sleeves while grasping, respectively, a wine glass and a dining fork. Thematically, the figure projects a measure of Marxist social critique. Pacetti, another Italian Futurist, based his photograph *Freudiana* (1933) on psychoanalytical theory. This image consists of a dream-like fantasy with images of human figures acting out a scene. The photographs of these Futurists visualized and thus brought the ideas found in Marxist and Psychoanalytic theories closer to everyday experience.

Joel-Peter Witkin's *Las Meninas* (1987) offers another example of staged photography. Witkin's *Las Meninas* transforms Velázquez's painting created in 1656 into the language of twentieth century photography. Using a constructed set containing key elements of the original painting, he invites us to reflect afresh on its meanings interpreted by a twentieth century artist. Witkin's photograph retains key elements from Velázquez's masterpiece: the painter at his easel, the five-year-old princess in the foreground, the paintings on the rear wall, and the mirror image of the king and queen. He replaces the court official in the doorway of Velázquez's painting with a longhaired contemporary male in a bathing suit. Another young male figure lying on the floor at the foot of the painter's easel signifies the presence of the contemporary artist (Witkin), who is orchestrating the scene. The doll-like princess is perched on a wire construction that follows the contour of the princess' hoop skirt as it appeared in Velázquez's painting. Just to the right of the artist and his palette a camera is strategically placed on a small draped table. The camera's presence in Witkin's photograph reinforces the transformation that has taken place in the change of mediums. Perhaps it is also intended as a

commentary on the independence that photography has achieved from painting since Velasquez made his picture.

Witkins' *Las Meninas* thus recontextualizes Velasquez's painting by making the painting's images available in a medium more accessible (photography) to everyday experiences of the contemporary viewers. This picture also serves to link contemporary photography to art history through its referencing and reinterpreting an important historical painting for contemporary understanding.

## Altered Photographs

Despite the warning of the esteemed American historian of photography, Beaumont Newhall and other advocates of pure photography, some contemporary art photographers have reinstated in their practices an exploration of the affinities between photography and painting. Arguments against mixing the processes of the two media, or otherwise tampering with the photographic image, have failed to persuade artists of the coming generations.

Before looking at contemporary developments in altered photographs, it is useful to recall earlier experiments with altered photographs. For example, photographic journals of the 1890s describe various experimental techniques for altering photographs. Among the techniques used to alter photographs were the use of sprays, the air brush, the pneumatic pen, and the gum-bichromate method of introducing colors into the emulsion.<sup>17</sup> In the 1880s, Eadweard Muybridge introduced animal and human motion studies into photography. Both Muybridge's and Etienne Jules Marey's chronophotographic studies of animal and human locomotion offered new possibilities for the artistic development of photographs. These experiments also focused attention on the aesthetic features of both human and animal behaviour in everyday life.

Elsewhere in Europe and America during the 1930s, the artists Herbert Bayer, Max Ernst, Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray experimented with photomontage (a composite photograph made by joining multiple images in the process of creating the photograph), rayograms (camera-less pictures made by placing objects on light sensitive

paper), and solarized prints (made by exposing a print or negative to a flash of light resulting in both positive and negative components in the print). For example, Bayer's photomontage *Blickins Leben* (1931) depicts a nineteenth-century picture frame suspended by a cord in a landscape photograph of water and sky.<sup>18</sup> In this work, Bayer reverses the usual roles of picture frame and image by locating the frame within the boundaries of the image itself.

John Heartfield's expressionist photomontages made in the 1920s and 1930s employ photographic means to undercut realism and the painterly character of prior art photographs. At the same time, his images render a devastating social critique of Nazi Germany.<sup>19</sup>

Barbara Morgan's experiments with light drawings and photomontage in the late 1930s and 1940s further extended the development of manipulated photographs.<sup>20</sup> In Morgan's words, "Unlike painting, the negative permits the making of . . . prints of any desired size and these may be cut up, cropped, silhouetted, painted upon, and combined with other materials, and used with great flexibility."<sup>21</sup> Morgan's 1939 photomontage, "Hearst Over the People," responds to the distortion of the news found in newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst's publications. Says Morgan: "I undulated the enlarger paper for portrait distortion, made an imaginary octopus cut-out and interrelated the two images over a May Day crowd photograph I had shot from a seventh story window in New York."<sup>22</sup> The result was a photograph that addresses the concerns of newspaper readers interested in truth in their daily newspaper reading.

## Appropriated Photographs

Appropriation, which means the incorporation of images generated by other sources into one's own, has become a standard practice among certain postmodern photographers. The sources of appropriated images may include art works, photographs, commercial advertisements and logos, album sleeves, and other elements of popular culture.

Among the leading artists using appropriated images are Sherry Levine and Richard Prince. Levine bases her originals on photographs

by other art photographers such as Walker Evans (depression era poor), Eduard Weston (nudes), and Eliot Porter (landscapes).<sup>23</sup> In contrast with modernist photographers, Levine contends that originality, based on individual artistic invention, has been made irrelevant by the new industrial technological processes available for the mass production of images. Levine would argue that there is no need to limit art to originals in a world already overpopulated with images.

Levine's appropriated photographs differ from the modernists' images. Evans, Weston and Porter share certain core beliefs with modern artists working in other media. The modernists hold that the artist relies on originality as a condition for creating art, and attends to the unique qualities in the respective artistic media. For these artists, the photograph is a unique aesthetic object featuring formal, expressive or self-reflexive qualities. As such, the photographs of modern artists are meant to be studied and enjoyed for their aesthetic properties. Levine's appropriated images were presented in a retrospective in 2012 at the Whitney Museum in New York, raising again the issue of appropriation as an artistic device in photography.<sup>24</sup>

Richard Prince's appropriated photographs differ from Sherrie Levine's directly re-photographed works of earlier photographers. Unlike Levine, Prince abstracts his images from magazine advertisements. The most famous of Prince's appropriated images are his "Marlboro Series" (1980-1992), featuring a man on horseback riding through a western-style landscape.

One important aim of appropriated photographs is to get audiences to reconsider the nature of photographic images, and especially to reflect critically on their roles in contemporary culture. Both Levine and Prince challenge the commonly held view that originality is a necessary condition of creating works of fine art. Their efforts also contribute to a greater acknowledgment of the distinction between multiples as works of art and mere copies or mass reproductions found in everyday life.

However, treating appropriated photographic images as works of art raise additional questions concerning the identity of art works.

For example, is a re-photographed work a violation of intellectual property rights, and thus a question for the courts? Or is the act of recontextualizing an existing image and placing it in the context of the contemporary art world sufficient to constitute a new freestanding work of art? The related question of copyright protection affects not only the aesthetic and commercial activities of artists, but extends to the use of images in the everyday world of advertising and branding rights for commodities. For example, when does a brand name such as a brillo box or Campbell's soup can become eligible for free use by artists in the public domain?

## **Changes: Critical Theory and Photography**

In contrast to what Boccioni might have predicted at the beginning of the twentieth century, photography by the mid-1980s had in fact become a central focus of visual artistic practices encroaching upon virtually all aspects of the two dimensional visual arts. Moreover, during this era, photography commanded the attention of critics, art theorists and aestheticians alike as never before in its near two century history. The result is a significant body of writings that takes photography well beyond the shadow of painting, as well as beyond the "pure photography" of Weston and Szarkowski.<sup>25</sup>

Twentieth century art theorists and critics such as Susan Sontag, Victor Burgin, Max Kozloff, Rosalind Krauss, Alan Sekula and Jeff Walls have made photography one of the liveliest topics in contemporary visual aesthetics. By applying neo-Marxist, psychoanalytic, semiotic, post modern and culture theories to this medium, the theorists have focused unprecedented attention on photographs.<sup>26</sup>

The earlier writings of Walter Benjamin, Sigmund Freud, Roland Barthes and subsequent photography theorists had already forced us to think in new ways about art photographs. Psychoanalysis, semiotics, Marxist aesthetics, and most recently neuroscience have all contributed to rethinking the role of photography in everyday life. Now it is necessary to consider more fully the aesthetics of photography in relation to its sociopolitical functions *in* capitalist societies, as well as in post-colonial and non-Western cultures. In these contexts,

photography participates in the projection and critical examination of changing societal attitudes toward issues such as gender roles and sexuality in the contemporary world. It also contributes to the understanding of issues raised by the changing economic and political landscapes rendered by globalization.

Following upon such developments in critical theory, artist photographers began to deconstruct their own and others' images in an effort to disclose hidden social and political codes. Among the photographs most obviously motivated by conceptual or ideological themes, Louise Lawler's are of particular interest. Lawler assaults the very art institutions that sustain her own and virtually all other art photography. Her photograph of an installation with benches in the Museum of Modern Art, *Untitled 1950-51* (1987), illustrates especially well a strategy aimed at analyzing and offering up for critical assessment the habits and conventions of presenting and experiencing art in a museum setting. Lawler's *Woman with Picasso, 1912* (1986) depicts a collector at home in a typical upper class setting holding a Picasso-like object. Lawler's intent is to provide a deconstructive political analysis of the identification of art with economically privileged social settings in homes and museums.<sup>27</sup> Her art is intelligent in its sophisticated application of social critique, but is, nevertheless, confronted by certain ironies. Her own photographs are destined for display in the very types of homes and museum spaces that she supposedly "exposes" by constructing a visual economic Marxist analysis. The efforts of Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Barbara Kruger and others to incorporate certain anti-capitalist ideological concepts into their works represent different approaches of the use of photography to interpreting everyday life experiences.

## **Photo Conceptual Art and the Persistence of Depiction in Photography**

While undergoing continuing developments into the twenty-first century, photography has introduced notable changes in both its theories and practices. One of the areas drawing critical attention is art photography based on photojournalism. Photojournalism has been a practical enterprise driven by the media industries since the 1920s. It now is also of interest to contemporary art photographers.

Photojournalism represents photography as a "collaboration between a writer and a photographer." Photojournalist art presumes that "art can be created by the practice of imitating photojournalism."<sup>28</sup> This approach to art photography emphasizes reportage and is influenced by the needs of the press for capturing and recording key moments connected to the dramas of everyday life. It documents the monumental events of an era as seen by photojournalists and gives them a permanent place as a part of everyday life.<sup>29</sup>

The introduction of photojournalism into art photography thus draws attention to the persistence of depiction as a tenacious motif in art photography. Photographic depiction points in a different direction from that of abstract modernist art by emphasizing, again, the distinctive features of the camera and its focus on actions taking place in everyday life.

In its recent conceptual phase, photography nevertheless attempts to escape its connection to representation by adopting the position of selfreflexive visual commentary on the medium itself. For example, Ed Ruscha's *Twenty-Six Gas Stations (1963)* introduces amateur photographs as photographic art. Ruscha's photographs bear no perceptual differences from ordinary pictures of amateur camera users. The point of this approach is to redefine photography as a form of conceptual, idea based art where dull, descriptive documentary or journalistic photographs are employed to critically examine the technical and social processes that take place when the camera becomes an integral part of everyday life. Seemingly dull pictorial characteristics that might render the photographs boring thus function to convert the interest in these works away from their representational functions to conceptual art.

Jeff Wall, contemporary artist and theorist, argues against current theories that attempt to reduce photography to social commentary, art criticism, or conceptual art because these interests detract attention from the fact that depiction and object-making are indispensable features of photography. Unlike painting, photography cannot participate in the reductionism that the modernist art critic Clement Greenberg sought for modernist abstract paintings. Greenberg argued that, "Photographs constitute a depiction not by the

accumulation of individual marks (as in painting) but by the instantaneous operation of an integrated mechanism. All the rays permitted to pass through the lens form an image immediately, and the lens by definition creates a focused image at its correct focal length."<sup>30</sup> For Wall the kinds of images formed by the camera lens thus establish critical differences between photography and painting. One key difference is this: because photography cannot avoid depiction, the experience rendered through a photograph is closer to the way we experience the visible world in everyday experience apart from art.<sup>31</sup>

Wall's reflections on contemporary photography bring our discussion of the subject full circle back to the origins of photography. His analysis does not negate the multifarious changes in the objecthood of photography that we have witnessed since the mid-nineteenth century. On the other hand, he reminds us of the need to reflect again on the persistence of depiction as ongoing in debates concerning the nature of photography.

The works cited here suggest that photography has indeed undertaken quantum leaps throughout the century. Some might argue that these developments signal the death of photography as it has been classically understood. Gary Indiana's words aptly express these sentiments:

The importance of photography in our everyday lives ensured the doom of a hermetic "art of photography" ... A photograph that claims, on one hand, superior insight into reality, and, on the other, transcendent indifference to it, cannot compel serious attention when other photographs virtually flood the collective sensorium. In art the shift in interest from the unposed, naturalistic photograph to the elaborately staged tableau, the "defective print," and the emphatic deployment of photographs as objects, reflect a widespread disbelief in "innocent representation."<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

The role of photographs (whether original or appropriated images) is now firmly established in the cultural codes of contemporary life. It is generally agreed that a photograph, rather



than being a mere representation of something external to the medium, consists of an artistic object or event in its own right. At the same time, Walls makes a strong argument for the view that photography has not found a replacement for depiction: "It is in the physical nature of the medium to depict things."<sup>33</sup> This means more than photography as picture-making, which represents some aspect of the the world. As we have seen in the works ofRusha and Walls, for example, the medium itself has become an object for depiction in its own photographic languages. Given the radical phases of its development thus far, through the stages of painterly photographs, modernist "pure photography," photojournalism, photography as a means of social commentary, and photo-conceptualism, we may expect that photography and the changes in its objecthood will continue to develop alongside new developments in technology and the ongoing evolutions of understanding in other spheres of culture-philosophical, economic and political. Up to this point, photography has embraced and drawn new energies from all of these enterprises. There is no indication that it will soon become an obsolete medium so long as it continues to adapt to change.

Finally, let us return briefly to the question of photography's dual identity as autonomous art and functional enterprise. Do these roles continue to perform independently, or have they now arrived at a different relationship with respect to art photography? Judging from what has been shown here, photography has enjoyed its periods of autonomous art, as in the pure art modernist era of photography. At the same time, photography's successes in serving media industries in advertising, medicine, propaganda and virtually every aspect of contemporary life have become the core of our image-driven society. What has changed with respect to art photography is that some art photographers create their work with no intentional boundaries between the activities of everyday life and their works, as witnessed in this chapter. Like other art media, photography has found ways to challenge a presumed separation between art and life, as previously projected in autonomous art. Photography's roles in social commentary, photojournalism or commercial labelling, for example, offer it an expanding role in everyday life. For example, artist Dennis Adam's photo-installations "Bus Shelter," installed in Munster, New

York, Toronto and Houston, function both as an artistic statement and as a working bus stop on the street simultaneously.

Given the practices emerging in other arts, where artists move out of the studio into scientific laboratories and other social arenas to develop their art, it should be no surprise to find photography testing these boundaries while maintaining its place among the arts. Photography has long since established its status as an autonomous art. It is time to recognize that, having moved beyond its status as autonomous art, it is free to explore other ways of contributing to the aesthetics of everyday life. There is no reason to think otherwise. Thanks to digital imaging, virtually every cell phone is able to take and instantly transmit photographs on the internet, TV and social media networks across the world and into every aspect of everyday life.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Joseph Campbell's *The Flight of the Wild Gander* (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), 61 . From Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (Appleton, 1927; Dover, 1957).

<sup>2</sup>Henry James, "The Wheel of Time," *The Complete Tales of Henry James* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1961 ), Vol. 8, 457, 458, 470.

<sup>3</sup>See Christopher, Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989), 211-286.

<sup>4</sup>Walter Benjamin, "The Little History of Photography," *Selected Writings* Vol. 2, 1927-1934 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 527.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Benjamin, "The Little History of Photography," *Selected Writings* Vol. 2, 1927- 1934 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 526, 527.

<sup>6</sup>Walter Benjamin, "The Little History of Photography," *Selected Writings* Vol. 2, 1927- 1934 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 520-526.

<sup>7</sup>Walter Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility," *Selected Writings* Vol. 2 1927- 1934 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University).

<sup>8</sup>Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981 ), 27, 28.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 42- 51.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 48.

- <sup>11</sup>Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981 ), 58.
- <sup>12</sup>Umberto Boccioni, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting," 1910, quoted in Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Middlesex, England, 1974), 258. Ironically, Boccioni's Futurist colleagues substantially undercut his views on photography. Giacomo Balla's paintings reflect the influence of Muybridge and Maurey's photographic experiments, as illustrated in *Dessin* ( 1896), a satirical anti-clerical composition using serial repetition of the human figure to simulate motion. Moreover, there exists a substantial body of Italian Futurist art photography, which I will refer to later on, that runs contrary to Boccioni's attempts to exclude photography as art. See Giovanni Lista, *Photographie Futuriste Italienne 1911-1939*, exhibition catalogue (Musee D' ArtModerne de la Ville de Paris, Paris: 1981 - 1982), 6.
- <sup>13</sup>Edward Weston, *Photography /JC* (Pasadena, California: Esto Publishing Co., 1934), 12.
- <sup>14</sup>John Szarkowski, *The Photographer :s- Eye"* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 6-12.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup>Lista, *Photographie Futuriste Italiene 1911- 1939*. Illustrations cited, 89, 121 .
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid. .
- <sup>19</sup>John Heartfield, *Photomontages of the Nazi Period* (New York: Universe Books, 1977).
- <sup>20</sup>Curtis L. Carter, "Barbara Morgan: Philosopher/Poet of Visual Motion," in Curtis L. Carter, *Barbara Morgan: Prints, Drawings & Photographs* (Milwaukee: Haggerty Museum, Dobbs Ferry: Morgan & Morgan, 1988), 11 - 14.
- <sup>21</sup>Barbara Morgan, "Photomontage," in *Miniature Camera*, Willard Morgan & Henry M. Lester, eds. (New York: Morgan & Lester Publishers, 1938), 145- 147.
- <sup>22</sup>Barbara Morgan, "My Creative Experience with Photomontage," *Image 14* (5--6) (1971): 19.
- <sup>23</sup>See essays by Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Living with Contradictions: Critical Practice in the Age of Supply Side Aesthetics," and others in Carol Squiers, ed., *The Critical image: Essays on Contemporary Photography* (New York: Bay Press, 1990).
- <sup>24</sup>Sherry Levine, "Mayhem," Whitney Museum of Art, New York, November 10, 2011-January 29, 2012.
- <sup>25</sup>Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography*, revised and enlarged edition (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1964); John Szarkowski, *The Photographer s Er. 2* See for example, Victor Burgin,

ed., *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982). The winter 1986 issue of October contains a representative sampling of articles reflecting contemporary photographic theory along these lines. It includes essays by Alan Sekula, Abigail Solomon Godeau and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, applying neo-Marxist and neo-Freudian analyses to past and present photographic practice. See also Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle, Washington: Bay Press, 1987) for an analysis of these developments.

<sup>27</sup>Claudia Hart, "Louise Lawler: Museum of Modern Art," (review) *Art Scribe* (January/February 1988), 70, 71 .

<sup>28</sup>Jeff Walls, "'Marks of Indifference' : Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art," in *Reconsidering the Objects of Art, 1965- 1975*, exhibition catalogue, Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer (Los Angeles Museum of contemporary art, 1995), 249.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 248, 249.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.* , 266.

<sup>32</sup>Gary Indiana, "Imitation of Life," *The Village Voice*, April, 29,1986.

<sup>33</sup>Jeff Walls, "Marks of Indifference,"247.