



THE DAY WILL COME WHEN PHOTOGRAPHY REVISES, Kunstverein Hamburg & Triennale der Fotografie Hamburg 2015

The practice of photography now reaches all corners of our everyday reality. "Reality" is conveyed by media and composed image by image to a new world. Alan Sekula contended that photography always deals with realism as an ideology, and Ai Wei Wei is convinced that photography can no longer be defined as a means to record reality, since it already is "reality itself". (1) The photographic impulse becomes an everyday gesture, a placeholder for the event itself, and demonstrates that the allegedly real is permanently overwritten and updated by new images.

The flood of images "sweeps away the dams of memory", signaling a dilemma of the photographic that Siegfried Kracauer already discerned in 1927: "the blizzard of photographs betrays an indifference toward what the things mean." (2) The speed and scope of the development of photography are currently so huge that it appears difficult to do justice to present-day image politics. On the one hand, photography is determined by mechanisms of meaning and reception, rigid inscriptions, indexicality and its deictic nature. On the other, it is the excessiveness of the photographic images themselves that strips away precisely these

qualities. Photography deceives itself and us with suggestive means, no matter if it appears informed or beguiling, causes dismay, plays with thrills or is abstract. When taking a look at current political events and the way they are prepared by the media, discomfort is inscribed in the images: How do we deal with this multitude of pictures, how do we show them and how do we speak about them? The question as to how they are treated and the forms in which they manifest themselves is also raised in our everyday use of images: "Accompanied by a new magazine and book culture, the borders are blurred to such an extent and the contacts and exchanges across countries and cultures are so expansive that the art discourse can hardly grasp these phenomena of a technological and communicative acceleration of images." (3) The history of photography already reveals itself as a continuous decomposing and recomposing of images that convey reality and then immediately distance themselves from it again. When considering and discussing the future of photography, how can these different manifestations and shifts of the photographic and its perception in the 21st century be outlined? What do they imply? And, above all, what do they imply for artistic practices?

Instead of thinking "about" photography, contemporary artistic-photographic practice reveals itself as thinking "with" photography about the photographic itself. "To revise" is the leitmotif of the exhibition at the Kunstverein in Hamburg, meaning a type of action that regards photographic thought as the starting point of a process of reflecting on images and their photographic nature, whatever form they may take on. These processes are outlined by six exhibition chapters meant to provide spaces of potentiality to check and possibly reformulate one's own thoughts on the photographic.

Chapter I presents the thinking of the photographic as a form of possibility: How do images articulate themselves as events? What occurs prior to the actual photograph, while looking at it, and afterwards? When does the photographic commence and when does "the image", the materialization, intervene?

Chapter II deals with materialization in photography: Are there signs of the photographic separating itself from its own materiality, the photograph itself? Is it evading it? Can one

speak of an absence of the photograph and a presence of the photographic?

Questions related to "materiality" are inevitably confronted with the image floods of digital and virtual spaces and the "right to one's image". In this sense, chapter III is concerned with how image ideologies are generated by analogue and digital flows of images. Who can maintain an overview and who has the right to the image? Who censors? With which new forms of public and private do we have to engage with?

Chapter IV inquires after the spaces in which the photographic manifests itself: Which spaces can photography still access? Through which dispositifs is it read? To what extent is photography a medium of closeness and of distancing?

New contexts of meaning emerge in the way photography is treated today: Chapter V delves into the forms of knowledge and scientificity generated by new image practices. What role does the reputed indexicality play in the process? How can a new digital understanding of the image be derived from this?

Photographic images narrate (hi)stories in a different way and influence historical perception: In chapter VI we therefore ask whether images and their history can be conceived and read synchronously. Do photographic images perhaps write a new history? Or can images be read as texts and vice versa?

The individual chapters outline the relevance of the photographic within contemporary image discourses and thus point to the present-day relevance and the future of photography. Kracauer's dictum on the "indifference" toward

what is shown is juxtaposed with a critical alertness by the individual questions and artistic positions. In both artistic engagement and everyday actions, it is the images themselves that reveals their fragility and changes in their readability. This inherence makes it possible to depart from accustomed linear and discreet modes of perception and to revise and alter one's own "reading" of the photographic image.

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(1) **Stiegler, Bernd:** "Der zwanglose Zwang der Fotografie zum Manifest." In: Museum Folkwang / Fotomuseum Winterthur (ed.): Manifeste! Eine andere Geschichte der Fotografie. Göttingen: Steidl, 2014, 74.

(2) **Kracauer, Siegfried:** "Photography" (1927). In: Critical Inquiry, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), 421-436, here: 432.

(3) **Kuhn, Thomas:** "Entgrenzung." In: Museum Folkwang / Fotomuseum Winterthur (ed.): Manifeste! Eine andere Geschichte der Fotografie. Göttingen: Steidl, 2014, 376.



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