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UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

SUJETS DE VISION :
RÉSISTER À LA TRANSPARENCE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE

MÉMOIRE-CRÉATION
PRÉSENTÉ
COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE
DE LA MAÎTRISE EN ARTS VISUELS ET MÉDIATIQUES

PAR
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RÉSUMÉ

Mon mémoire-crédation et l'exposition qui y est associée s'articulent principalement autour d'une notion que j'appelle la *perte photographique*. Il s'agit d'une réaction à la perception habituelle de la photographie comme étant un moyen de consigner des connaissances et des preuves factuelles, sous forme de documents « transparents ». Mon texte débute avec mes réflexions sur divers aspects de mon travail et de mes points d'intérêt particuliers, puis présente six possibilités de *perte photographique*. Ces différentes formes de *perte* sont au centre de mon travail et de ce qui m'interpelle en matière d'images et de photographie.

Je traite de ces six formes de *perte* en trois chapitres qui abordent ces éléments interconnectés de la façon la plus globale possible. J'y présente des descriptions de mon travail artistique tout en réfléchissant à la manière dont les images « opèrent » en relation avec la *perte photographique*. De manière générale, j'aborde la photographie à travers les différentes modes de regard, ainsi que dans sa relation à ce que nous considérons comme la réalité. Pour ce faire, je me penche sur la fragmentation et l'incomplétude, dans une perspective axée sur les modes participatifs du regard par opposition à la présentation d'information fermée et factuelle.

Mots-clés : opacité, paradoxe, quotidien, fragmentation, appropriation, abstraction.

SUMMARY

My primary objective in this thesis has been to orient this text and my thesis exhibition around the idea I call *Photographic loss*. This is a response to photography as it is mostly understood to be a means of documenting factual knowledge and evidence, as a transparent document. I begin with my reflections on different aspects of my work and interests, and organize them into six possibilities of *Photographic loss*. The main focus throughout the text involves ideas around these modes of *loss* as a way into a discussion of my work with, and interests in, images and photography.

I have organized these six losses into three chapters following these interwoven elements as much as possible in a holistic manner. The chapters involve both descriptions of my studio work, and discussion of how the images operate in relation to the *photographic losses*. In general, I speak about aspects of the photograph as a particular kind of seeing, and of its relationship to what we consider to be reality by discussing fragmentation and incompleteness in ways that emphasize participatory modes of seeing over presenting closed, factual information.

Keywords : opacity, paradox, quotidian, fragmentation, appropriated, abstract.

INTRODUCTION

[T]he photographic image bears witness to the enigmatic relation between death and survival, loss and life, destruction and preservation, mourning and memory” so that the image often tells us that “what dies, is lost, and mourned within the image...it is the image itself.¹

Eduardo Cadava, *Lapsus imagines: The Image in Ruins*

Over the past two years I realized that I was gravitating to images that somehow blocked or withheld the subject, playing with the assumption that the photograph is an indexical companion with reality, that it is a record of reality, that it is positioned as something to seek information from because of its innate ability to record an event or an object. I became interested in a photograph’s powerful combination of being both document and image, and directed this interest towards photographic elements that encounters those expectations. I started choosing subjects that might be considered vague in terms of their “spectacular-ness” or put into question the relationship of the image to the subject (self-reference) and its referent “out there”.

In this *mémoire-crédation* I discuss the formal and conceptual ideas that arise in my photographic practice as *photographic losses* and pursue the conceptualization of these “losses” as positive and productive ways to question how we process and understand images, and how their meaning (or lack of meaning) is formed, especially when focussed on photographic transparency. Here is a list of the ways that I have considered the word loss (literally and metaphorically) in terms of photography and how I see it arising in terms of images :

¹ This Eduardo Cadava quote is from the introduction of: Derrida, Jacques. (2010). *Copy, Archive, Signature, A Conversation On Photography*, by Gerhard Richter, Stanford California: Stanford University Press. xxx.

1. First, the loss of photographic transparency. By this I mean the ability to see clearly into or through a photograph to the referent. This can result from different things, for example, from detritus or residue on the lens or on the surfaces being photographed, such as rain or dirt, which results in a lack of clear visual representation.
2. Second, the decontextualization of the subject. Examples of this are: (1) Showing isolated parts or fragments of a subject rather than a whole. (2) The subject being abstract rather than pictorial. This could lead to a lack of certainty of the subject or of knowing what the image is.
3. Third, the failure to present an obviously interesting subject, relating to the banality of a quotidian subject considered as non- event or non-spectacle.
4. Fourth is a *feeling* of loss that might arise when looking at a photograph, feelings such as nostalgia and mourning in a personal or historical context.
5. The fifth is literally lost (and found) photographs, or appropriated images.
6. The sixth and last that I am considering is one that results from photographic *accidents*. By this I mean the failure of a photograph to be technically correct (which could arise from a variety of circumstances).

This *mémoire-crédation* discusses these various losses through a collection of reflections on my work and on photography in general. Because my studio work evolves in an interwoven process, the divisions I have made are arbitrary and always overlap. Nevertheless, I have organized them into three interrelated sections in order to temporarily tease apart aspects of my work that form, in the end, an integrated whole. The sections are : 1. *Loss of Certainty : Transparency and Decontextualization*. Here I discuss and demonstrate a shift in emphasis, process, meaning and appearance of the photographic image from one of “objectively” recording reality to one of integrating visual ambiguity and consequently the artists or viewers subjectivity. 2. *The Lost Object*. This section addresses the emotional and nostalgic impact of images, how they make us feel. 3. *The “Jouissance” of Simplicity*”. This last chapter is a discussion of how images can relate to and inquire into small events and experiences.

More generally speaking, the following discussion questions photography’s *evidence* – it’s documentary status – as (still) its most powerful meaning today. I address issues that part

with photography as a specific technical practice that mediates and directs our understanding of the visual information it discloses. My text will support the idea that to work with photographs is an encounter with inherent paradoxes in both subject matter and meaning that arises through the operation of self-referentiality in photography. As Alex Kline remarks, "Photography for all of its verisimilitude, is an adaptable, ambiguous, slippery thing... it must always be about other pictures, temporalities, and modes of representation."² On a very basic level, when I speak of "a photograph" or "an image" in this *mémoire*, it is within this slippery, subjective, and expansive intellectual context. To work with the idea of *loss*, in counterpoint to the idea of photographic *truth*, is to create a space to engage in the inevitable and rich contradictions that can be present in images.

"I lost my dog" or "I lost my way" has a very personal silence to it. It is not neutral, yet it is not shattering. The emotional resonance of the word reflects a complex relationship to what is closest to us. What does it mean to lose something? Is it gone, or is it missing? I think loss can mean both; it can be pointed, or remain ambiguous as though it is floating around or waiting.

² Alex Klein (2007). *Words Without Pictures*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, 20. Retrieved from : http://www.albany.edu/faculty/dgoodwin/shared_resources/WordsWithoutPictures.pdf

CHAPTER I

LOSS OF CERTAINTY; TRANSPARENCY AND DECONTEXTUALIZATION

1.1 Introduction

In this section I consider photography in terms of its *transparency*, that is, its innate ability to be looked at or viewed for its pictorial function like one would look through a window (in order to *see* something). I start here because my photographic work questions the *documentary* or *factual* aspect of photographs, their signifieds, or the thing that is “out there” that we consider to be “real.” The questions often arise around the subject of the image, its ambiguity, and its inherent ability to embrace elements of chance, uncertainty, loss, change, anticipation, anxiety, and destabilization (in addition to delivering information). Any shift in the coherence of photographic transparency directs attention to the subject’s information (or lack thereof), with the obvious question “how/what is it?” This line of questioning is a way to make inquiries into subjects without rationalizing them as a perceived truth.

Furthermore, my interest is to work with images that visually manifest details that we our eyes are capable of seeing, but that we often pass by or generalize. The well-known author of “Thinking in Pictures” and speaker on autism, Temple Grandin, calls this “inattentional blindness” stating that it refers to a “generalization of our sensorial processes that are uniquely individual”.³ She discusses how our bodies and nervous systems process an infinite amount of information through our senses and automatically filter a lot of things out based on what we care about, typically not focussing on minute details. I bring this up because I think photography alerts or engages with *inattentional blindness*, or what I relate to as habitual seeing. I consider this an important part of the artistic process to challenge and engage with critically. Working with a camera and with images is a way to actively see and think about

³ Temple Grandin & Catherine Johnson. (2005). *Animals in Translation*, New York : Scribner. 218.

my own blind spots. Looking up-close and or taking a distance: my work is often about getting the camera into a particular position to make contact and exchange between interior and exterior image-worlds. As such, a photograph is contradictory: the objective explicit nature of its subject as recorded by the (very) precise technology of the lens is guided by the individual way of seeing, emphasizing the subjective nature of how we see. In photography the viewer may not see the artist's hand like they would in a painting : "Painting has to do with touch... that's the *eros* specific to painting... Photography is about distance, the inability to touch, maybe."⁴ Yet, like painting, choices are made through a combination of technical and personal artistic processes and therefore can be mediated in different directions. I hope to create an unintrusive relationship with the viewer that emphasizes distance from the subject yet maintains the possibility for connection and intimacy.

1.2 Reading Realism

Photography has long been used as a technical medium of realism; with photographs we might say that reality becomes visible. The question of "reality" was historically considered to be something we could depend on as "mediated by the medium, refracted, visualized and reflected in the pictures."⁵ Something can be photographed that disrupts conventional ways of seeing and conversely our (modern) reality depends on photographs. Here is how a few theorists and artists respond to these photographic ideas. According to photographer Zoe Leonard,

Photographs play with the idea of absolute truth and when people look at photography they believe it, pictures are like proof. We know that photographs can be misrepresented, distorted, altered, and even though we know this we still cannot let go of our implicit faith in the truth of a photographic record.⁶

⁴ Jeff Wall quoted from : Michael Fried. (2008). *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, Thomas Struth's Museum Photographs, New Haven and London : Yale University Press. 124.

⁵ Bernd Stiegler. (2008). *The Meaning of Photography*, Photography as Medium of Reflection, Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (Eds.), Williamstown, Massachusetts : Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. 194.

⁶ Zoe Leonard. Interview with Laura Cottingham, *Journal of Contemporary art*. Retrieved from : <http://www.jca-online.com/leonard.html>

Photographer Uta Barth also maintains this idea of realism :

Conventionally we think about the camera as a sort of pointing device. It makes a picture of something, for the most part; therefore it is a picture about that something. Most of the history of photography is tied up in photographs making meaning this way. Subject matter, content and meaning are inseparably linked.⁷

In the essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," the film theorist and critic André Bazin also shares this line of thinking,

The photographic image is the image itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model.⁸

Rosalind Krauss, the contemporary art critic and theorist, makes a similar comment in her text "Notes on the Index" :

The readymade's parallel with the photograph is established by its process of production. It is about the physical transposition of an object from the continuum of reality into this fixed condition of the art-image by a moment of isolation, or selection. And in this process it also recalls the function of the shifter. It is a sign that is inherently 'empty,' its signification a function of only this one instance, guaranteed by the existential presence of just this object. It is the meaningless meaning that is instituted through the terms of the index.⁹

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, in *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes asserts that, unlike other art forms, the photograph can never function as an agent of transcendence because it inevitably bears the indexical trace of its lost subject. "The Photograph" he states, "is

⁷ Uta Barth quoted in : Higgs, Matthew. (2004). Uta Barth, *Matthew Higgs in conversation with Uta Barth*, New York, NY: Phaidon Press. 20.

⁸ André Bazin, (1967). *What is Cinema? Vol. 1 & 2*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 14.

⁹ Rosalind Krauss. (1987). *October, The First Decade 1976 – 1986*, A. Michelson, R. Krauss, D. Crimp, J. Copjec, (Eds.), Cambridge, Massachusetts : MIT Press. 12.

violent : not because it shows violent things, but because on each occasion it fills the sight by force, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed.”¹⁰

I cite these particular authors because they question and consider photography in a way that opens a territory for a nuanced discussion, embracing subjects such as the elusiveness of photography as a medium and its almost invisible process. Theirs (and mine) is not an argument against the image as document; it is more of an enquiry into the vast space of discovery within that document, the reality it came from, and the act of seeing itself. As the artist Michael Snow says, “There is no such thing as an ‘image’ without a specific physical existence.”¹¹ But there is a lot of room there, in the image, for “existences” that are non-specific.

1.3 Ideas of Abstraction in Photography

To my mind, non-specific “existences” could be related to the idea of abstraction in photography. Meaning that, by way of the image something is separated from the reality it is normally attached to, thereby making it less identifiable; that which appeared fixed and concrete is an isolated fragment. As such, abstraction creates a fracture – a reality of parts that no longer belong to the generalization of a reality as a solid ongoing fact. This invokes ideas about ways of looking and seeing (or about how we see), along with questioning the conception of reality as wholeness.

In *The Edge of Vision : The Rise of Abstraction in Photography*, the author Lyle Rexter discusses photography’s inherently abstract nature by presenting the abstract photograph as a “death of the subject.” He argues that abstract qualities are inherent to photography because a photograph cuts something away from the flow of visual experience. He states, “It (photography) is by its nature abstract, its elements are displaced, put in new relations to each

¹⁰ Catherine De Zegher. (Ed.). (1996). *Inside the Visible, an elliptical traverse of 20th century art in of, and from the feminine*. Cambridge, Massachusetts : MIT Press. 437.

¹¹ Michael Snow quote from : Castou Roberts. (2001). *Michael Snow almost Cover to Cover, An Intercontinental Collage*, London, UK : Black Dog Publishing Ltd. 20.

other, given prominence, put under pressure, selected and restricted to a frame."¹² These two points – the loss (death) of the subject and the photograph's inherent abstract qualities – have been crucial to reflecting on my own work, which plays with opacity (the disruption of transparency), vagueness and ambiguity. Overall I am attracted to ways of emptying things out, clearing the field so to speak, using the camera and the photograph as a way to explore displacements that can occur in the space between here and there. Yet, any fracture is not definitive, there is always (sometimes more, sometimes less) a trace or a connection to the referent. It is this space of the referent, somewhere between showing all, and showing nothing, that intrigues me, the relation between the particular experience and the universal or fully explicit one.



Figure 1.1 *untitled*, 20" x 30", 2011

The above image (Fig. 1.1) shows a pattern of diffused light, emphasizing its surface materiality and giving no specific subject; it focuses on light, colour and pattern. Instead of gazing *into* the image, the viewer is held back. Metaphorically speaking, I think of the focus on the surface as a way to consider the skin of an image, its physicality. In the same way we think of a table as being a physical object, I am interested in the potential of an image to have a physical presence outside or along with that of its imagery.

¹² Lyle Rexter. (2009). *The Edge of Vision : The Rise of Abstraction in Photography*, New York, NY : Aperture Foundation. 16.



Figure 1.2 Image from series *Grid*, 20"x 30", 2011

Images from the series *Grid 1- 11* (2011) (Fig. 1.2) also draw attention to their surface, especially by the contrast of depth and layering. The main subjects – the grid, the water underneath, and the pennies in the water – are flattened together in the way that only a camera (or a lack of depth perception) would show. This compression is an aspect of abstraction. I am attracted to the contrast between the flowing water and the fixed metal grid, and distance that is lost (through flattening) and that we are reminded of by the pennies that lay on underwater. In the final work these elements are emphasized through repetition; there are four photographs in the series.



Figure 1.3 *Untitled*, 20"x 30", 2009

The untitled image above (Fig. 1.3, *untitled*, 2009) was taken through a window, showing the residual material on its glass (or frame). In the photograph this residue sits on what appears to be the surface, and is flattening into the horizon, shifting the focus back and forth between the drops of rain, the dirt, and the reflections on the glass surface. The focus moves back and forth between these layers that we see through and into (the camera lens and the window) but which also form a barrier in terms of opacity. Finally the eye might focus on the surface detritus and the seascape blends into it.

My interest in these distractions from the subject is that this means the subject itself has shifted. Here the subject is not only the horizon line of the ocean; it is also the water drops, smears, and dirt on the surface of the window. It is also the subject of "seeing". However, my interest is not purely technical, more so it is in how this involvement of the window brings us into the picture, our seat by the window, our hands that have made the marks on it.

1.4 *Truths of reality?*

In her introduction to Moyra Davey's recent book on photography, *Long Life Cool White*, the writer and journalist Janet Malcom asks the question "What makes a photograph interesting, useful, necessary, or moving?"¹³ When I ask myself why I pursue questioning of the referent in my work, I realize it is because it brings up questions of self and of reality. My artistic endeavor is to work within my interests of perception and the self, and to explore that with the help of images. With photography one has a choice about how much one is going to be concerned with appearances or with what is considered to be reality. I use the camera and images as a way to make enquiries into uncertainties belonging to the realm of experiences of self and world. This will always have to do with appearances, but hopefully not too generalized ones. The paradox between what I see and what I think I see (or want to see) is continually provocative and can be very explicit.

Eric Rosenberg addresses this exchange in the essay "Photography Is Over, If You Want It." He argues that the meaning of photography today is that *it is over* and that "Our mistake has been to take photography as evidence of our modernity."¹⁴ According to Rosenberg, photography "is a phenomenon always at a disjunctive, perpendicular counterpoint to our actual experience, to our being"¹⁵ and, furthermore, the *real* of the photograph is an encounter with *otherness* or *rupture*. Rosenberg calls photography "the essence of doing in the face of being...putting the most extreme polarities in the space between being and doing."¹⁶ By this, in the context of a discussion of photography, he is probably referring to the question of being as outside of time or duration, which is like the photographic suspension of what was out there in front of the camera. Doing is more on the side of the person doing the photographing. It is mortal, it is action, it takes time, and it makes time happen. So, as he says, these are polarities. Between these two would suggest an in-between that is neither absolutely fixed, permanent nor absolutely ephemeral. Perhaps it is just exactly this

¹³ Helen Molesworth from the introduction in: Moyra Davey, (2008). *Long Life Cool White; Photographs and Essays by Moyra Davey*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 15.

¹⁴ E. Rosenberg, (2008). *The Meaning of Photography*, Photography is Over, If You Want It, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts : Yale University Press. 190.

¹⁵ Ibid. 191.

¹⁶ Ibid. 191.

relationship that makes photographing so compelling? We try to explain our “being” through this “doing.” Rosenberg’s discussion of the photograph as other than a transparent record – as something that, through its incongruence, finds its way back into one’s subjective (being/doing) experience – supporting my endeavor to probe the relationship between one’s objective sight of the world and one’s subjective vision. This relationship is cyclical, repetitive and open-ended.

1.5 Objective sight/ Subjective vision

I often ask myself the question, *when I see, what do I fail to see*, and I use photography as a way to re-see or to reflect on these “failures” of seeing. With this “loss” in mind I consider my photographs of places and events as glimpses (or responses) rather than records. Photography is a way for me to explore and evoke the visual world, the self, (as I’ve already mentioned) and the psychic themes that are embedded in the everyday world around us. The precision of the camera can record detail and phenomena in such a sensitive way that what might be easily overlooked can become a visual concern. Detail (or lack of detail) becomes an atmosphere. As the artist Zoe Leonard says, “There’s little to see but things leave an impression. It’s a matter of time and repetition.”¹⁷ To break down the whole effect of visual stimuli is to look closer into those layers of impressions, which are inhabited by their own intimate and descriptive worlds.

¹⁷ Wright Morris. (2007). *Analogue; Zoe Leonard*, A Continuous Signal, Wexner Centre for the Arts, The Ohio State University : MIT Press. 178.

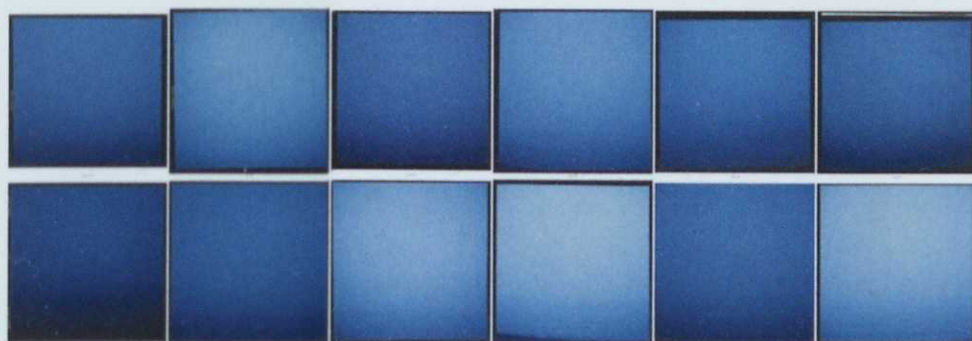


Figure 1.4 contact sheet, *Horizon 1 to 11*, each 40" x 40", 2011.

I want to privilege these worlds. For example, in the work *Horizon 1 to 11* (2011) (Fig. 1.4), a series of square blue photographs circles the gallery walls; each square is an individual image yet they are very similar. It is hard to tell one from the other, the colour blue shifts slightly in each. This repetition takes the pressure off their individuality and the series creates a trail around the room. I may have simply painted the walls of the room blue but the intriguing part is that these prints came from *out there*. The blues are photographs of the colours of dawn (almost day), and dusk (almost night). The horizon is barely visible but it is there. The horizon, the clear clean line that separates and divides the water and the sky, is dissolving; it unites the water of the sky and the water of the sea. We think of what is above a solid horizon line as infinity; below as mortality. But these lines are both appearing and disappearing; there is not a clear separation of anything, only a trace, a reminder, a fading away of something yet to be understood. What am I trying to make seen is an enquiring glimpse into this unforeseen space. These blue horizons are impressions, like a memory or trace.

To summarize this section and segue to the next, I will state in brief: the camera allows me to examine the relationship between the object (the photographed thing or photographic subject) and the "self" (the photographer or the viewer). The loss of certainty and transparency that *Horizon 1 to 11* demonstrates, as well as the abstract "skin" of light, the greatly decontextualized images of grids, the obstructed seascape, and the blue horizons, necessitates that I ask : *Our individual lived worlds are filled without uncertainty and paradox, how could I make a photograph that is not?*



Figure 1.5 *Horizon 1 to 11* (installation view Galerie B-312), each 40" x 40", 2011.

CHAPTER II

THE LOST OBJECT

I admit to being disconcerted by a grieving that has been made beautiful. Grief, absence, loss, longing, wandering, exile, homesickness...nostalgia is itself a lovely and piercing word.

Moyra Davey, quote from her video *50 minutes*.

2.1 Introduction

To talk about “feelings of loss” is to talk about nostalgia or the melancholy that arises in relation to photographs. Melancholia has colonized a place in the image by way of the “lost object or moment.”¹⁸ But what I am referring to is not only the state of being melancholic; but as well the photographic medium bearing witness to its own losses (analogue losses). It is these losses that open a space of possibility for contemporary photography. In the article “Some Things Moyra Taught Me,” George Baker calls melancholia “a form of connection... but to an object that is in fact gone...a connection staged around loss.”¹⁹ He includes a citation from Sigmund Freud’s *Mourning and Melancholia* : “melancholia was not only a fixation, but also a ‘taking flight’, a mysterious passage of the lost object into the ego, so that – just perhaps – ‘love [might] escape [...] abolition.’”²⁰ Then Baker adds, “and so it is with photography today, as well.” With this in mind, any digital photograph embeds a loss that refers to its almost (analogue) older sister. Alongside this, lays the melancholy around the lost object.

¹⁸ George Baker. (2010). Some Things Moyra Taught Me, *Frieze Magazine* (issue 130). Retrieved from : http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/some_things_moyra_taught_me/

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

In other words, if we accept photography as a visual reflection of reality – keeping in mind a reality is not only fixed and defined, but also is subjective and in process – then we also have to consider that this reality is an “abbreviation of a specific concept of reality.”²¹ Photographs can ignite an earnestness with which we desire to understand something, to see more clearly, and to remember what has been. A contemporary photographic practice, therefore, necessitates an engagement with the past as it is filtered through our memories, bodies and emotions, as well as the “here and now.”

2.2 A Carnal Medium

Barthes' inquiry into the photograph in *Camera Lucida* discusses representation as inherently different in photography. He states, “in Photography I can never deny that the thing has been there. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past.”²² He continues :

For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts : the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to Reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past the photograph suggests that it is already dead.²³

What Barthes calls a “perverse confusion” of the conceptual elements in photography is also another way of saying that, in photography, we can rely on the fact that someone “has seen it.”

Barthes' discussion of representation in images makes me think of the blink of one's eye, of the body as inherent to seeing, and of the camera as mechanically externalizing and “fixing” this bodily movement and “seen-ness.” We are always looking, and there are many eyes looking, and many different ways those eyes see. Barthes (who is specifically referring to a

²¹ Bernd Stiegler. (2008). *The Meaning of Photography*, Photography as Medium of Reflection, Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (Eds.), Williamstown, Massachusetts : Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. 194.

²² Roland Barthes. (1981). *Camera Lucida*, (Richard Howard, Trans.), New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux. 76.

²³ Ibid. 79.

photograph of his dead mother) goes on to talk about the photograph as “literally an emanation of the referent” coming from a body that was really there and is, “proceeding radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here.”²⁴ He then discusses Susan Sontag, who describes the phenomenon similarly : “it will touch me like the delayed rays of a star... a sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, thought impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.”²⁵

Phenomenological philosophy holds that perception is our principal way of relating with the world; Heidegger calls this *being-in-the-world*.²⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the “flesh” is helpful in understanding what is meant by “materiality” with regard to the photographic image. For example, his explanation of vision encompasses the entire dynamic relationship of the biological organ (the person/the eyes) with that of the visible world. His is a sense of materiality as we live it in our interactions and as an aspect of our body’s *corporeality*. In this light, what we call illusion would not be deception as often considered, but rather a yet-unfulfilled perception, or an unconfirmed perception that would be confirmed or not, within the ongoing perceptual process.²⁷ The nuances of the phenomenological process, being one of feeling and of affect, largely adds to this sense of uncertainty and the seeking of materiality, something that is a memory of the body we experience with. Considering Barthes, Sontag and Merleau-Ponty together, it becomes clear that a photograph does not independently produce one meaning; rather, a photograph implies the extended process behind looking at an image.

²⁴ Roland Barthes, (1981). *Camera Lucida*, (Richard Howard, Trans.), New York : Farrar Straus and Giroux. 80.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 81.

²⁶ A phrase initiated by Heidegger in his first major work, *Being and Time*, to describe his thought that one does not exist before having a world.

²⁷ I’ve paraphrased here from Merleau Ponty who discusses his notion of the flesh in his last book, *The Visible and the Invisible*.

2.3 Reflection / Seeing

This leads me to something I find perplexing about images and perception: how much of an image is made up of one particular truth or record and how much is made up of the subjectivity of the person who views it? According to Bernd Stiegler, photographs “construct forms of reality by means of a medium, thereby representing a will to see reality.”²⁸ To my mind, this *will to see* affects how and what we see, and possibly reveals the limit of our (habitual) way of looking at things. For example, if we do not actively engage the will to see what is there, we simply don’t look, and surely there are many who see very little while moving through their daily lives. Speaking of our *seeing*, Wittgenstein states:

That it doesn’t strike us at all when we look around us, move about it space, feel our bodies, etc., etc., shows how natural these things are to us. We do not notice that we see space perspectively or that our visual field is in some sense blurred toward its edges. It doesn’t strike us and never can strike us because it is the way we perceive. We never give it a thought and it’s impossible we should, since there is nothing that contrasts with the form of our world.²⁹

In other words, this particular form of “blindness” is attributed to the fact that, when we are observing a place, we already inhabit it.

The world in which we live, perceive and move, as described by Wittgenstein, is the world that provokes the search to really *see*, and to embrace this as part and parcel of the failure of being able to see clearly. It is a search or a pilgrimage of types that prolongs our relationship with the seductiveness and nostalgia of images and photography. On the other hand, artist Zoe Leonard states, “In critical circles nostalgia has a negative, even decadent connotation, in the dictionary there is a 3rd definition, ‘unsatisfied desire’, that is what the word has always meant to me, unconsummated desire kept alive by forays into the cultural spaces of memory.”³⁰ This might sound like a process of recognition of one’s self or one’s subjectivity through the act of photographing; however, it is more of an act of imagination and curiosity.

²⁸ Bernd Stiegler. (2008). *The Meaning of Photography*, Photography as Medium of Reflection, Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (Eds.), Williamstown, Massachusetts : Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. 194.

²⁹ Michael Fried. (2008). *Why Photography Matters as art as never before*, New Haven and London : Yale University Press. 122.

³⁰ Wright Morris. (2007). *Analogue; Zoe Leonard*, A Continuous Signal, Wexner Centre for the Arts, The Ohio State University : MIT Press. 178.

The *lived world* can only be discovered through living, and through photography the act of living involves attempts to see or re-see what is there and to reflect on “how it is?” – to see it again.



Figure 2.1 *untitled*, 4"x10", 2011

Take for example the untitled image above (Fig. 2.1, *untitled*, 2011), which shows a reflection in a puddle. It is an incomplete reflection, dissolving where the puddle ends, of the artist Laurence Weiner's work (*Placé*) *Sur un point fixe (pris) depuis un point fixe*, 2000. I am interested in subjects such as this that are already photographic, a framed “image” because of its positioning in its environment. Often I take pictures through another frame, such as a window or hole that creates a frame, and often I take pictures of reflections. What is interesting in this particular image is the play between text and its site, the puddle becomes a reflection of the text, which becomes an (fixed) image. The subject of reflection that Weiner brings up could be an observation about photography and also a good example of ‘accident’: there is Weiner's text on the wall, climate, water, and my arrival with a camera. Could Weiner have speculated that his text would be reflected in a puddle and then become a photograph?



Figure 2.2 Laurence Weiner, “(Put) on a fixed point, (Taken) from a fixed point”, (2000).

2.4 Paradoxical Screens; Between Document and Image

Do photographic images reflect reality or do they screen it from our sight? The communication theorist Vilém Flusser suggests that “images are meant to be maps but they become screens,”³¹ putting themselves in place of the world to the extent that we now live as a function of the images we have produced. We no longer decipher our images but project them back onto the world “out there” without deciphering them. The world becomes an image, a context of scenes and situations. Omnipresent technical images have begun to magically restructure “reality” into an image-like scenario.

Flusser’s idea of passive visual participation is shared in part by Urs Stahel in his article “Well, What is Photography?” Here Stahel expands the idea to include photography’s medium as that which draws its representational power from its paradoxical dual nature.³² He states that, on the one side, photography allows an *elevated* point of view; “the photographic gaze makes us believe we can know and own the world without ever having been in it.”³³ Yet

³¹ Vilém Flusser. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, London : Reaktion Books, 2000. 10.

³² Urs Stahel. (2004) *Well, What is Photography?* Fotomuseum Winterthur : Scalo. 12.

³³ *Ibid.* 12.

on the other side, he calls this view only slightly coded; therefore it will be open to a viewers' projections because it is, "after all, only a mere segment taken out of the world's spatial and temporal continuity" and as such, "it is at once clear and opaque – an amalgamation of understanding and wondering... endowing photography with modern-day magical properties."³⁴ In Stahel's comparative formulation, one view is open for interpretation and one is closed.

I find Stahel's speculation of this duality particularly useful when discussing my work. While I would at first say that I hope to place my work in the latter position, one of the viewer's projection, this would be a confining statement. What I would say instead is that I hope to create work that lies between the two, between what Stahel refers to as "the powerful combination of document and image."³⁵ I am interested in the possibility of images that play with both distance and intimacy in a way that loosens these terms from their common definitions and make them relational instead. This is what I mean by the title of this section, "Image loss (feelings of loss) :” the side of seeing an image that is about how it makes you feel, not what it is or what it looks like, its document. I relate this to what Walter Benjamin called the "aura". I am referring specifically to the "feeling" side of images, how we individually respond to them and how this influences or directs their meaning. If the image is somewhat elusive and withholds its factual information and documentary value, some of the process of formulating and identifying the objective world is relieved. What opens in its wake is the space for one to break from the ongoing pre-determined world to the openness of the unforeseeable.

³⁴ Ibid. 12.

³⁵ Ibid. 12.

CHAPTER III

THE “JOUISSANCE” OF SIMPLICITY

“il mestiere de vivre” – the metier, or profession of living.

Cesare Pavese

3.1 Introduction

Yet another way that an image can be thought to be “lost” is through an overwhelming banality. To work with images is to work within the context of a medium that, as Christopher Bedford states, “is unique in that pretty much everybody does it or has done it and photographs are read and interpreted in terms of personal experience, what you see is what you get – along with the flaws.”³⁶ In other words, photography is a medium that can take one idea – banality – in two directions : it is fairly accessible as a medium, both in terms of many people making images and in many people being exposed to them. Also, it can record events of a quotidian nature: it is a medium that can make a lot out of nothing.

This “nothing” is what is of interest in this section. Photographs are thought to have a purpose and an authority much like spoken language, which gives form to what might otherwise be considered a void. A lack of words amounts to a silence. The failure to convey an identifiable subject creates a similar kind of emptiness. Our perceptions of the ongoing event of our daily lives may necessarily be unreflected. We await big events or excitement in order to have something to question or to talk reflectively about yet, individually, we live in the silent nothingness of the daily non-event. To share this “nothingness” through images is

³⁶ Christopher Bedford. (2007). *Words Without Pictures*, Qualifying Photography as Art, or, Is Photography all it can be? Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California. 6. Retrieved from : http://www.albany.edu/faculty/dgoodwin/shared_resources/WordsWithoutPictures.pdf

to contradict the spectacle. A photograph of a quotidian subject is one of daily living and of observation.

3.2 “Don’t Hide your Best Pictures;” Repeat them



Figure 3.1 *Family slide, circa 1970.*

I read this caption on an old slide box full of family slides. It refers to how certain snapshots (or slides) often get put away in a box, a photo album, or a variety of other storage devices; very few are placed where they will be seen. Sometimes I think images are just too overwhelming to have around. They can cause a disruption or a sort of visual chaos. They sit, waiting in our attics or basements or drawers, for someone to re-collect them. Are these pictures filled with presence or absence? Kierkegaard called repetition and recollection the same movement only in different directions. He says repetition is recollected forward; recollection is repeated backward; they move in opposite directions. He also says that repetition makes a person happy – it has the blissful security of the moment (whereas

recollection makes her unhappy).³⁷ In my practice I use repetition as an emphasis on subtleties or shifts that happen quickly in terms of seeing and to take pressure off a single precious image. A repeated image lessens the focus on the single image; it is less literal, less rational. As such, repetition (as used by certain Fluxus artists) is a way for me to breakdown the hierarchy of subjects and engage with the everyday : a series of repeated images can open the idea behind the images into one that moves about or opens in different directions, diffusing information.

3.3 The “Snapshot” aesthetic and Performative process

My use of the camera can be associated with a “snapshot” aesthetic in that I emphasize the camera’s ability to record a casual instance letting-go the control and mastery of the technical apparatus. This choice is one way in which to introduce the feeling of immediacy and elements of chance. A snapshot refers to the quotidian use of photography and to memory. It has been known to be used by artists as a way not “to reform life but to know it.”³⁸ Although it is not a style I wholeheartedly embrace or use deliberately as a method to capture the everyday, I have made the choice to use a camera like a tourist, but pointing it at different, unlikely subjects.

That being said, the precision photography can offer is still central to my interest in working with it as an artistic medium. My work is low-tech but not anti-formalist, and photography’s technological and formal precision is still key. At its most basic, the camera offers a framing device – the *viewfinder*. Although we are deeply and habitually used to images in our culture, to stop and think about photography’s precision is to marvel in its capacity to depict these found views.

³⁷ Kierkegaard quote from : M., Langford (2001). *Michael Snow almost Cover to Cover*, Michael Snow and the Act of Memory, London, UK : Black Dog Publishing Ltd. 39.

³⁸ A general definition of the term snapshot photography to which I am referring.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snapshot_aesthetic.

Where I depart from the snapshot aesthetic and its inverse, technical mastery, is in my emphasis on performative process – on the *doing* rather than on the object as product. My working process evolves over many phases that distance me from my initial intentions when taking the photograph. I usually work with images for a long time. Sometimes I take many pictures of a given subject and then take months or years to edit them down, eventually finding the picture or series of pictures that I want to explore. Similarly, when I work with photographs from my collection, I re-contextualize them into a “reading” rather than a “looking” process. This process is a translation of one form of experience into another. One thing is for certain: it shifts the relationship I have with the photographs from an object-situation to a process-situation, which gives me freedom from the pressure of trying to find or “capture” something and puts emphasis, instead, on this kind of reading-looking. The photograph now has some distance from what was photographed; it is almost new material. This editorial stage is an opportunity for me to mute some of my predetermination and have some distance from my initial desire or intention. I do not want to recognize myself too easily in the final images, just as I do not want to categorize the subject either.

3.4 Noting Fragments

*It is a kind of mute tale that starts and stops, suggests and offers, only to fall
silent again, leaving the results open.*

Urs Stahel, from *Well, What is Photography?*

How we read images habitually follows a rational explanation: *what you see is what you see*; it is recognizable and categorical. Yet often what is seen is a blur of ideas about the thing that is seen, not “as it is.” Photography is intrinsically about observation, about being present, about having a certain perspective on the world, and about responding to that reality. When I think of “reality” as a basic state, I think of the everyday and the moment in time where we are, the present/past/future. Some might say that *now* is all there is. But I also think of one’s experiences and one’s history – all the bits and pieces that make up the large sum of our lives and how they play out in the present, and this opens up that “now” to a multiplicity.

As an artist I am drawn to bits and pieces; I like to look at fragments of things, which sometimes do not look like the thing itself. I think of my images as an interview rather than a story in the sense that they embody a collection and noting of glimpses, rather than a synthesis of facts. This is also the reason I am attracted to using found or appropriated images: they already make up a part of the ongoing *interview*. Susan Sontag expresses the opinion that “A photograph could also be described as a quotation, making a book of photographs like a book of quotations.”³⁹ Similarly, Roland Barthes speculated that the “haiku and the photograph have the same noeme, the same essence.”⁴⁰ Rosalind Krauss “recast photography as a form of automatism or automatic writing.”⁴¹ All three authors address the relationship between words and pictures and illuminate that which falls by the wayside, the interconnections. Instead, they punctuate between events opening the space between language and meaning.

When it comes to photographing such “between-events” as a subject matter, I tend to magnify in rather than out. In this way, the vastness of a landscape might be reduced to just one small area or a simple trace of light. Such acts of isolating, fragmenting, and decontextualizing turn photography against itself, or against how we conventionally think of a photograph as a document of a world already there. I want to resist my assumptions about the visual world I live in. Fragmenting a subject is a way for me to frame a subject and minimizes the stimulating effect of how it can look. I am interested in the sense of ambiguity that can arise when the subject is in question and also in how far this can go : how much can I minimize, reduce or fragment the subject and still have a subject? When the obvious aspect of the subject is reduced, what fills up the space of meaning for the viewer?

³⁹ Susan Sontag quoted in : Moyra Davey. (2008). *Long Life Cool White; Photographs and Essays by Moyra Davey*, New Haven and London : Yale University Press. 89.

⁴⁰ Roland Barthes quoted in : Davey, Moyra. (2008). *Long Life Cool White; Photographs and Essays by Moyra Davey*, New Haven and London : Yale University Press. 89.

⁴¹ Rosalind Krauss quoted : *Ibid.* 90.

3.5 The "Punctum"

A way to look at these questions is to use Barthes' vocabulary that he developed to get at a photograph's essence or what he called *noeme* (which I mentioned earlier in this text). Barthes said he wanted to "attempt to account for the fundamental roles of subjectivity and emotion in the experience of and accounting for photography".⁴² Barthes concluded his text *Camera Lucida* with what he calls the "the two ways of the photograph," the duality of the *punctum* and the *studium*. The *studium*, at its most basic, is what is obvious to everyone, it is coded meaning which comes easily and at a glance. It is what is ordered and comprehensible. I think of this as what is stable and fixed. Whereas the *punctum* is the less rational side of things, thought of as the private and subjective meaning. It is the emotional, experiential part of looking at an image. The *punctum* is not communicated through using language and is thought of as that which attacks (wounds) and attracts the viewer. If I fit my questions/reflections of photographic *loss* into these dualities, then I would say that what I am calling *losses* are given expression at the level of *punctum*, and on the other end, the preserved subject or document is in the territory of the *studium*.



Figure 3.2 *Untitled*, diptych, 20" x 30" each, 2011.

⁴² Kasia Houlihan. (2004). Annotation of *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. University of Chicago, theories of Media. Retrieved from: <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/barthescamera.htm>

In this untitled diptych of a puddle, (Fig. 3.2, *Untitled*, 2011), I was interested in the way it might draw attention to the lost moment between the puddle being full and empty, between presence and absence of water and reflection. It is not the same puddle, but two different ones at the same time in different states. I was also thinking of the difference between feelings: feeling full, buoyant, reflective contrasted by feeling, flat, empty and drained. The tone and texture of the soil/sand give it a touchable surface. In general this work brings less attention to photographic transparency than the *Horizon* series or the *Grid* series, yet they share the subject of water, which is a thread through a lot of my work. I don't want to impose my own reading too assertively, which is why I attempt to work with keeping things simple, suggestive and open-ended. Sometimes I think what I want to do is make an image that suggests a photograph, but not give a complete or completed photograph.

3.6 Lost or Found

Similar to the way fragments allow in-betweens and the over-looked to become new perceptual events, and how a photograph's *punctum* can trigger a subjective meaning for the individual viewer, I work towards making images that are open to affective transformation by not taking them with the intention of recording anything explicit. Instead, as Wolfgang Tillmans remarks,

I try to be a vulnerable conduit...the photograph might always lie about what is in front of the camera but never lies about what's behind the camera. It creates this bridge between subject and object. This really resonates for me; to me photography is a really psychological medium.⁴³

The act of seeing involves our own subjectivity and all of our sensory perception; what we see has not been *flattened*. Marcel Proust describes photographs that fail to relate to both the internal reality of the photographer and his or her full sensorial experience as having lost their charm. He states, "How paradoxical is it to seek in reality the pictures that are stored in one's memory, which must inevitably lose the charm that comes to them from memory itself and

⁴³ Wolfgang Tillmans quote retrieved from : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhDUbEt-pGg&feature=related>

from their not being apprehended by the senses."⁴⁴ When we look through a camera, the world is not framed into a perfected or necessarily interesting view. The artist's embodied subjectivity is as necessary as the object "out there." This makes me wonder, what is between the visual and the tactile?



Figure 3.3 *Périphérique*, (installation view Galerie B-312) each 30" x 40", 2011

When I used the *found* snapshot to make (Fig.3.3) *Périphérique* (2010), I felt that the reproduction of the damaged snapshot was a way to integrate something textural and non-image like into a photograph. It (the found image) also seemed to be suggestive of our desire to capture a perfect moment but to have missed that, and the potential of a "good" photograph. By enlarging the rejected snapshot I wanted to draw attention to these *losses* and hoped this would create a viewing space in which the reading of it was open, left to be interpreted by the viewer. By enlarging it, the rips, tears and punctures became a flattened part of the image and revealed the traces of its 'lived' history in the world. Presenting the image recto/verso as a diptych also emphasized the 'skin' or surface on the reverse that brought attention to the object-ness of the photograph. Both sides could be related to the

⁴⁴ Marcel Proust quoted in : Wright Morris. (2007). *Analogue; Zoe Leonard*, A Continuous Signal, Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University : MIT Press. 178.

punctum's prick in a literal way. The subject and meaning of this work was mitigated through its distortions and its background (history).

In the words of photographer Uta Barth,

The inescapable choice one always has to deal with, as a photographer is what to point the camera at, and the meaning that this subject matter might suggest. Well, if you are not interested in this type of meaning, if you are not invested in pointing at things in the world but instead are interested in the act of pointing (or looking) itself, you have a big problem. What interests me the most is so visually familiar that it becomes almost invisible.⁴⁵

As Barth speaks of here, I am also interested in looking rather than finding things in the world to “point at”. Just as words written on a page can have an underlying meaning making them less literal, photographs can communicate the invisible within the visible. Light is silent, can the photograph be?

3.7 Duchamp’s “found” and the “ready-made”

I like to think of everything as having potential for an image, yet I do not want to draw attention to a photograph’s authorial purpose. I prefer to try to find tensions that rest between a traditional or “connoisseurial” process of seeing and shooting with one that is connected to discovering *how* we see things. By intuitively resisting (my own) pre-meditated decisions about subject matter, a certain amount is left to chance and spontaneity. This allows me to have some freedom from control and of the paralysis I experience if try to choose something to photograph. This is paradoxical because it is always a *decisive* action to hit the button on the camera, even if it is spontaneous because with photography you always have to choose. I compare my process (sometimes) to that of making a “blind contour drawing”.

As a result, the *photographic moment* is one where I often feel that I have *found* an image that already exists, in the Duchampian sense of the word *found*, meaning something that is

⁴⁵ Uta Barth quoted in : Matthew Higgs. (2004). Uta Barth, *Matthew Higgs in conversation with Uta Barth*, New York, NY : Phaidon Press. 20.

already made or in existence (in Duchamp's case usually an industrial object) which is then removed from its context and conceptualized as an artwork. Duchamp described this *readymade* "to be a 'snapshot' to which there was attached a tremendous arbitrariness with regard to meaning, a breakdown of the relatedness of the linguistic sign."⁴⁶ Duchamp inquires into language and meaning, and pursued artistic ideas about authorship and appropriation. To quote Janet Malcolm, author of *Diana and Nikon: Essays on Photography*, "The dullest, most inept and inconsequential snapshot, when isolated, framed, (on a wall or by the margins of a book), and paid attention to, takes on all the uncanny significance, fascination, and beauty of R. Mutt's fountain."⁴⁷ The question of authorship is relevant to my interest and questions about an image as a document, being that authorship implies power and the transfer of information. I try to work in a way that does not emphasize or glorify this outcome but is oriented instead to a process.

3.8 Imperfections, Chance

*[Chance] is a perfect encapsulation of my own desire for contingency within a structure.*⁴⁸

Moyra Davey

Mistakes, errors, accidents and chance are important to my artistic process. I do not set out to take a photograph that is an accident, but it occurs (sometimes) and I have become more drawn to the images that result from it. If I were to think about what went wrong, I could call these accidents technical errors, but I prefer the word accident because it emphasizes chance and is less polarizing between good and bad or right and wrong. An accident is something that sometimes just happens; it is unavoidable in any context. An error is something that has been done incorrectly. When I began to notice the "accidents" in my photographs my interest in them grew when I looked at the pictures and saw there was a whole world of accidents

⁴⁶ Duchamp quote taken from : Rosalind Krauss. (1987). *October, The First Decade 1976–1986*, A. Michelson, R. Krauss, D. Crimp, J. Copjec, (Eds.), Cambridge, Massachusetts : MIT Press. 11.

⁴⁷ Moyra Davey (2008). *Long Life Cool White: Photographs and Essays by Moyra Davey*. New Haven and London : Yale University Press. 93.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 86.

there that I had been avoiding. Imperfections always arise in photography and stand out against its technical virtuosity. Letting them in discreetly is a different game of chance, one that exposes failure and vulnerability as its subject. I consider these elements of *loss* as positive, as a way to work with a medium's strengths and failures without assuming what is and what isn't. Photography is the ideal medium to do this with because it itself can be chosen based on its affective value against the assertions of any subject matter that are put forward.



Figure 3.4 *Peripheries*, (installation view Galerie B-312), 2011

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I would like to revisit the word *loss*, and again consider why I used this as a starting point to discuss transparency in images. The word *loss* conjures thoughts about photography, most personally, probably from childhood when looking through family albums, seeing great-grandparents and others who were already dead, and trying to understand how they fit into my world, but where were they, are they gone, and if so what is this absence? Also, seeing pictures of my immediate family (who at that time all living), and trying to remember the events and scenarios in the pictures, now over. This relationship with photographs began early in life and these were the pictures that we lived by and that recorded our lives and celebrations. I remember special evenings where my father would set up the slide projector and would show us hours of images. This relationship of seeing family photographs was the first way I created a place to reflect, and therefore separate myself from the steady stream of family life. This was in the 70's and 80's before digital photography and it was a very different, slowed down version of what we have today. (I refer back to this slowness with images when I make my studio work.)

But why *loss*, what does it assert? When I started taking photographs, the first thing I realized was that nothing I could do would be unique or more technically successful than what so many others could do. I wanted to find my own relationship with it. In doing this I took a lot of photographs without intention for them, which in effect allowed me to explore things a lot more. After doing this for several years, I realized that this was the way I was taking pictures and that I could call this my work. I realized what I was practicing during this "un-reflective" time, was resistance to what I typically saw in the kinds of photographs that present a relatively objective meaning, failing to recognize the ambiguity inherent in photographic images.

I have described aspects of my photographs that stress the use of accidental and chance operations at one or another stage of my process. For example, a technical mistake may

disrupt the formation of a “correct” image and then this can enter the process, being incorporated into a work, or initiating an entirely new procedure. The aspect of the accidental is a constituent of what I am calling “photographic loss.” Most obviously what is lost in the work I am presenting is transparency; the photograph as a means of documenting factual knowledge as truth. But this mode of loss results in greater attention being given to photography as a medium.

My relationship to photography has involved rendering the medium more opaque than is the case on documentary or descriptive photography. This may be said to involve abstraction in the sense that it is a bringing of the medium to self-reflection. Even so, I would admit that photographs do maintain a connection with aesthetic realism and that the photograph in its realism gives us factual document.

For me, photography’s impact on time and place, the displacements that occur in the relationships of the here to the now, the then and the there, is an important part of my relationship with it. With photography, re-arrangements of place and time are cyclical, the movement towards the past and the future can go around in a circle. It is not as contrary as linear time (mortality). This is hopeful, and everything about it is anticipatory, therefore never finished.

I have described above how I am involved with the unresolved and incomplete elements in photography, and by that, to communicate that contact intersubjectively, to have it be shareable. It means trying to resist the satisfaction of bringing absolute closure to my images and instead letting the process fold back and forth over itself. In this way what I have called *loss*, is in fact its opposite.

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