

New Turnings of a Networked Age:  
Reconsidering Photographic Actions in Light of Curatorial Practice

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## **Abstract**

We are approaching the end of an age dominated by the lens—that is, by ways of knowing informed by the lens—and entering a new age informed by distributed network architectures. A result of this transition is the culture-wide shift away from the certainties of our past seven or eight centuries, and a movement toward more fluid and immanent ways of knowing and acting. One characteristic of this change is the gradual disappearance of the ossified single-point perspective and its replacement by a more multi-dimensional and immersive point of view, which is marked by participation and real-time talk-back, among other things. Photographic practice is evolving in response to these changes. In fact, the word *photography* no longer means what it once did. To put it more strongly, looked at historically, the notion of photography that we all grew up with is proving so ephemeral that we might argue that photography itself never really existed; rather, as a set of culturally determined actions, it marked a fuzzy slide through the final two centuries of one way of knowing (dominated by the lens), and a turning toward a far older way of knowing (dominated by networks of human relations). This paper considers these redefinitions of photography in the light of curatorial practice, a way of knowing and making that has deep cultural affinities with traditional notions of photographic practice.

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Recently I was invited to consider the relationship of photography to curating. From my perspective as a photographer and occasional curator, the question is timely; today, art museums routinely house photography collections, curators are celebrated as among the art world's brightest stars, and Google returns nearly two million hits on "photographer and curator." Clearly each practice is integrated into art, visual culture, and commerce. And especially in the age of digital networks, each is widely understood as a necessary literacy—the first thing you do on Facebook is take a profile picture; the second, start collecting friends. More philosophically, both practices share similar attitudes about the world. For example, photographers and curators know that their practices are comprised of two interwoven modes of working: on the one hand, study and solitude, and on the other, a probing exploration of the world. In fact, both of these aspects of practice recursively influence the other—an act of production requires an act of reflection, which leads to the next act of production, and so on. Indeed, in light of this recursivity, curating and photography appear as two interdependent parts of an integrated practice—that is, each implies, accentuates, and clarifies the other.

Does this mean that the act of curating is more strongly connected to the act of photography than it is to the act of painting, or sculpting, or for that matter, movie-making, music-making, or dancing? And if it is, what does that mean for how photographers and curators work today? For example, photographers suspect that the easy ubiquity of today's apps is eroding the value of their skills. After all, if everyone is a photographer, does the practice, or

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even the word itself, meaning anything today? Curators worry the same thing; since the advent of Pinterest, the value of curating as an expertise has diminished, because everyone's a curator, too.

Positioning photographic and curatorial practice in relation to digital networks broadens the terms of the inquiry. That is, do the changes that digital networks bring to visual culture change photography and curating? From the curatorial side of the equation, curators Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook (2010) insist that they have. In their analysis, new media network protocols require a total rethink of curatorial practice. The networked age requires a similar rethink of photographic practice, too, because it leads us to question the social and cultural biases at the core of photographic expertise. Ordinarily, when I say *photography* you think *camera*, whether or not Sontag's *On Photography* (1977) is at the top or bottom of your favorite books list. But this narrow focus on particular tools no longer makes sense. When Graham and Cook say *curating*, the conversation turns immediately to history, politics, and philosophy, because curators don't rely on specific tool sets or technologies. Rather, curators explore culture and practice as a frame of mind—as a kind of politics, or action—with any tools necessary. Following their lead, looking at photography through the lens of curating means that anyone who calls themselves a photographer is challenged to ask about the philosophy and politics of the tools they use; in fact, digging more deeply into photography's interconnections with curating might reveal new ways of thinking about picture making and prompt a re-evaluation of our responsibilities as photographic citizens.

To curate: the word itself has roots in the notion of care, to care for. The Oxford English Dictionary establishes its modern foundations in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Church's idea of caring for the soul—an idea that has evolved these past seven hundred years to become central to today's curatorial practice of selecting and caring for the souls of objects. Prior to that, stretching back to

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the Romans, more ancient meanings refer to someone appointed to oversee the affairs of those who could not take care of themselves, such as unaccompanied minors, or the insane. Does this archeology of meaning matter to photographers? Or, more precisely, how do these ancient meanings resurface in current practices? For instance, we might be following a path that our ancestors would recognize; on the other hand, we might be at the threshold of some new and unprecedented way of knowing and working.

The obvious response is: Everything is different today—we're on the precipice! In the age of the networked spectacle every photograph finds a place in the vast cloud of pictures that cloaks us like a second skin. It's easy to conclude that the foundations of photography are changing. And, since photographs affect our sense of self, these redefinitions herald new relationships of self to community, and new cultural sensibilities. Clearly, these are momentous times.

But before leaping breathlessly into the everything-is-different mosh pit, let's remember that we've stood here before. In 1857 Oliver Wendell Holmes (as reprinted in Goldberg, 1981, p. 112) worried that the material world teetered on the verge of irrelevance because everything worth remembering would soon be collected in vast photographic libraries; he fretted—with wonder and anxiety—that the very nature of human experience would be irrevocably altered as a consequence. Generations later, Susan Sontag (1977) focused on photography as a social activity that ironically decreased participation even as it produced evidence of presence; awareness of that contradiction, she argued, fundamentally separated the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century from the age of Holmes. Sontag concluded *In Plato's Cave* with the prediction that, soon enough, books would be irrelevant because modern visual culture had decreed that everything was destined to become a photograph.

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Ironically both Holmes and Sontag worried about the same thing—that photographs would replace authentic human experience, including the reading of books. And similarly, neither could see what was happening beyond their own frames of reference. For example, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, Holmes critiqued the stereograph and its radically new visual technology without realizing that visual culture itself was on the cusp of an even more revolutionary technology—namely, the cheap reproductions of photographs in ink, a development that led to the wide and efficient distribution of photographs, and, as Richard Benson (2008, p. 254) has argued, saved photography from cultural irrelevance. Similarly, in the 1970s, Sontag discussed the ways in which society had been affected by photographic practices, including by the cheap photographic reproductions that Holmes didn't see coming, but she failed to see that in less than a generation the computer and the Internet would fundamentally uproot the core meanings she was describing. Today, when we ask about the boundaries between photographic and curatorial practices, we need to keep Holmes's and Sontag's myopias in mind in order to side step our own blind spots.

One such blind spot results from our tendency to separate production from reflection so that each appears completely distinct from the other. This fragmentation effectively prohibits producers from engaging in a reflective practice, a structural conceit that we can see at the foundation of our modern economies—e.g., assembly lines leave no room for thinking. From the perspective of organizational and technological change, analyzing and charting a way around this fragmentation was a focus of learning theorist Donald Schön's (1984, 1990) notion of *reflection-in-action*, though artists don't seem to be aware of that tradition. And yet this fragmentation affects visual culture too. For instance, we see the artist as someone who responds to the world by making (the picture-maker, the sculpture-maker): this is the artist as producer. Similarly, the

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curator responds to the world by collecting pictures and artifacts, and then putting them into new relationships: the exhibition-maker. This suggests that each practice responds to the world in a similar way—by making new artifacts. We can borrow philosopher John Searle's (1998) distinction between *making* and *describing* to probe this commonality and perhaps reveal an aspect of their practices that is being overlooked. That is, when we focus on photographers and curators as producers, we see their work directed at *making* a world, but in doing so we minimize and might overlook an equally essential part of their practice, that which is directed at *describing* a world. Importantly, photographers and curators think about, interpret, and reflect on the world as they are making it anew—reprising, in effect, Schön's (1984) reflection-in-action. These ways of working—making and describing—are entangled with each other and in fact emerge from the same place; that is, both artist and curator respond to and seek to make sense of a *system* of the world. This presumes, in fact, that the world is, at root, *sensible*: literally, able to be sensed. Which begs the question—and highlights our blind spot—sensed by whom, or by what?

Skepticisms about the sensible and about representing it have found great traction in Modernism, of course, at least since Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and more recently in the work of Hansen (2004, 2005) and Hayles (1999, 2012), to name just two of the many writers who have engaged digital phenomenology and posthumanism. My goal here is not to revisit these debates, which would no doubt derail this short essay onto looping tangents and down endless rabbit holes, but merely to gesture toward a commonality that a critique of the sensible shares with the ancient ideology of positivism—which indeed might be the weak heel of many of these powerful arguments. That is, critiquing the sensible as an exteriority relies on a notion of truth as discrete and separate from the one who discovers or knows it. This way of thinking became prominent during the Enlightenment, of course, and found its most famous

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expression in Cartesian dualism, which underlies the machinery of Industrialism's past three century's of progress. But recognizing it, ironically, at the roots of two of our most cherished cultural practices—photography and curating—strikes a sour note. Today we would rather focus on relational and democratic modes of cultural emancipation (Atkinson, 2011; Bishop, 2012; Ranciere, 1991, 2004), and, thus enlightened, we sometimes presume that we have left (or are leaving) the brutalities of Descartes's mind-body split behind us. But these old divisions remain intractably relevant to any number of contemporary practices, including photography and curating. Speaking plainly, I wish it could be different, but it's difficult to imagine a shared world outside an assumption of empiricism, without which there simply wouldn't be anything to point a camera at, to collect, or to reflect upon.

Perhaps we can draw this out from a different direction. That is, maybe we can unpack the making/describing, or productive/reflective dynamic by looking at what photographers and curators actually *do*. For example, the photographer positions herself and her camera in the world to capture images from it, as Lauren Greenfield (1997, 2002) does with youth culture in Southern California and elsewhere, or as Lisa Robinson (2007) does with her photographs of snow drifts and distant winter shorelines. Each pays close attention to the world and then responds with the click of her shutter. Then each artist retreats to her studio to reflect on what she has learned, to study her contact sheets (or digital catalogs), and to decide which images to publish. Even the photographer who self-consciously directs his lens at a contraption of his own making, or at himself—for example, Thomas Demand (2012) or Samuel Fosso (Njami, 2011)—points at a world, or objects from a world, and then selects from among the pictures he has made. Similarly, as curator Emily Zilber reminds us in relation to her work with the exhibition *The New Blue and White* at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (personal communication, September 21, 2012),

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exhibition-makers pay special attention to their experiences of objects, events, and histories, and draw from their impressions of those experiences that reflect, narrate, or interpret the world. This back-and-forth movement, from making to describing, from experience to reflection, creates a friction between producing and interpreting that is at the foundation of both the photographer's and the curator's imaginative practices.

Yet another way to describe this dynamic is as a turning outward juxtaposed against a turning inward. This is how photographic and curatorial practice mirror each other: each practitioner looks at the world and then at her impressions of the world, and then looks back again at the world in order to test those impressions. Photographs and exhibitions emerge as a consequence of this recursion, informed by each turning and each response to that turning. The work continues in this way, and there is no resolution, no still point to this spiraled dialectic, unless both production and reflection cease, or until there is no more world to turn toward or away from.

For photographers, this is the first way in which know ourselves as curators: when we point our lenses at what we love, we make objects that we care for. As we work, new pictures fold into our practice, informing yet more new pictures, and our ability to care more deeply and to be more aware of that caring, increases. We achieve this ratcheting acceleration of awareness by adjusting and balancing the technical operation of our tools (shutter speeds, apertures, camera positions) against the significance of our experience in the world (*why* we've chosen to stand where we've stood). In this way, meaning accrues as we connect ourselves to a narrative built from our experience of the back-and-forth turnings inherent in our interactions with the world. That is, by standing at the intersection of a pragmatic, outwardly directed mode of working (the photographer in the world), and a reflective, inwardly directed mode of working (the

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photographer in the studio), photographers recognize that their independent ability to work *as* photographers is compromised by the interdependencies of their practice itself. That is, photographs, as objects, do not come into being without both the outward turning *and* the inward turning.

The second way in which we know ourselves as curators comes from photographic tradition, but not from the tradition of the romanticized street photographer, which introductory photography students enjoy, or from Baudelaire's celebrated *flaneur*, that unaligned wanderer who regarded the world from the safety of the middle distance (Benjamin, 1969). Those images do not correspond to photographic desire, because connecting inward and outward turning requires passion and commitment. For example think of Atget, the curator, who combed the streets and alleys of Paris collecting and assembling fragments from the passing world that he dearly loved. Or of Talbot, also a curator, who collected views of his beloved Lacock Abby by pointing a rudimentary lens-box at the furniture and marble busts from his family's history; neither of these pioneers were *flaneurs*. In our own time, closer to us politically and culturally, Susan Meiselas's *Kurdistan* (2008), Tacita Dean's *Floh* (2001), and Elinor Carucci's *Closer* (2002) resonate as examples that emerge from the friction that entangling inward and outward turnings creates. That is, each of these artists is motivated by attachments to the shared world; they collect objects directly from experience, study them, and then present them anew. The salient characteristic of these practices, and of thousands of others that we might examine, is attachment, and the desire to be attached—not the isolation of the wanderer, the one who stands apart.

But here we need to remember that our point of view, embedded in our own contingent time and place, might be limited. Continuities in practice might link contemporary photography

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to one part of the tradition, but then again, the balance might be changing. In fact, maybe the question itself—whether and how photography is connected to curating—might illuminate those changes and speak to the differences between our generation and those of Sontag and Holmes. Maybe the question is not whether photography retains the turning that connects to curating, but whether photography today, as an idea, is relevant as a practice at all.

In the *Engine of Visualization*, Patrick Maynard (1997), a philosopher of representation, defined photography as a technology for making marks on surfaces, in particular by amplifying the effects of light on photosensitive materials—a rather arcane description of a technical process that Maynard argues has had enormous cognitive and practical effects, which he calls *imagining seeing*. But the making of pictures is just one among many applications of that technology (others include, for example, the manufacture of micro chips). With regard to photographs, i.e., *pictures* made with photography, a hugely diverse global culture of practice has emerged based on seeing what we imagine, touching art, industry, analysis, politics, and torture. In fact, today, nearly two centuries since the chemical-optical foundations of photographic picture-making were systematized, photographic practice has become central to the ongoing construction and critique of our imaginations, including the social costs and benefits of empiricism and positivism (as seen in writing from Roland Barthes (1981), John Burger (1980), and Deborah Bright (1985), to Brian Wallis (2004) and W.J.T. Mitchell (2005); and in the photography of Hank Willis Thomas (2008) and Trevor Paglen (2010), among many others). This is due in part to the way photographic pictures have reified the connection between experience and ideology. In other words, although as enlightened practitioners we say we understand that photographic realism is merely a convention of visual culture, we continue to act as if photographic pictures were

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irreducible facts from the shared world. This is simply to state the obvious, of course: we take photographs and pictures that look like photographs as proof of our own existence.

Not so obvious, not as often acknowledged, is that the core of the photographic practice has less to do with the chemistry announced in 1839 than with the optics introduced (or re-introduced) in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. As A.D. Coleman (1998) has argued, lens technology changed the world; in fact, lenses *made* the world. That is, as lens technology amplified human vision, unlocking cell interiors and mapping the circulation of the planets, it launched the Enlightenment, brought catastrophe to the Roman Catholic Church, and fundamentally re-shaped European history. Along the way, as David Hockney (2006) has observed, lenses brought a new kind of picture into being, one based on the single point perspective of Brunelleschi and the chiaroscuro of Caravaggio. In a recursive process of amplification, these new pictures first visualized and then reified the empirical, positivist world that we still live in today. In fact, in terms of the technologies that have exerted the most influence on the course of the past eight centuries, Coleman's arguments and Hockney's observations imply that *photographic* practices have been just a blip, or a bubble, in the vastly more complex sweep of lens-based practices and their effects.

This interrogation of history is important because too often photography is uncritically anchored to a simplistic association with chemical photography, even today in the digital age. For example, standard histories (e.g., Rosenblum, 2008) still maintain that photography was invented in 1839, and most devote only a few pages, if that, to the spread of ink reproduction technologies. But that historical gloss minimizes and elides the inconvenient subtleties that define our practice, burying the hope of elevating our awareness, effectiveness, and love for what we do. In this case, focusing on the lens, an otherwise invisible technology, enables us to trace

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the ideology of positivism across the broader history of picture-making. In fact, as we come to terms with the ways in which the history of our culture is derived from the history of lenses, for better *and* for worse, we recognize that photography itself, as an independent visual practice, never really existed.

Scholars and philosophers have described the transformations that preliterate, oral societies have endured as they have morphed into cultures of the book, from Plato's *Phaedrus* to John Foley's much more recent *Oral Tradition and the Internet* (2012), prompting us to recognize that we are living through another great restructuring of human consciousness. That is, from the talk circles of kindergarten to the literate rows of desks in grade school, the shape of knowing is transitioning again, this time to the remix ethos of the network, or the mesh. Of the many challenges emerging from this new cultural arrangement, most of which are not yet visible or even imaginable, one thing is clear: the single point perspective of the lens, and the implications of a privileged viewer who occupies a vantage point removed from the world, disconnected and aloof, is vanishing. In its place a new kind of picture, a new kind of cultural artifact, is appearing, one that privileges multiple points of view, immersion, and a robust participation that goes beyond collaboration. The vanguard of these new forms can be found, of course, in the ubiquitous social networks of our digital age, crowd-sourcing, multi-player gaming, 3D rapid prototyping, and in the ceaseless commentary and vibrant talk-back that our newly renewed DIY culture presumes to be its birthright.

How does this (r)evolution affect photography? As artists, how do we make a place for ourselves in this rapidly changing landscape?

First, we should recognize that we might have been misled. Photography was not a radical break in visual culture. When Sontag put the mysteries of photography into the trauma of

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the cave we might have been persuaded to see our practice as a break with tradition. But it wasn't. Hannah Arendt (2006) names Plato's allegory as one of the most radical turnings in ancient philosophy, a reconceptualization that upended the Greek's sense of humanity's relationship to the world. But photography was not that kind of disruption. Instead, seen from the vantage point of history, photography was a continuation of certain ideologies—positivism—that had evolved organically out of technologies and practices that had begun to emerge many centuries before—the making of lens pictures. Perhaps photography accelerated the spread of those ideologies, but it certainly did not overturn them.

Second, we should remember that the *distribution* of pictures has historically been as important to visual culture as the chemical-optical, or electronic-optical, fabrication of photographs, if not more so. That is, today we recognize that the effective differences between Goya's viscerally horrifying etchings from the Spanish Civil War of 1808, and Robert Capa's or Eddie Adams's photographs from their own wars more than six generations later, was not in the mark-making technologies used to create them, but rather in the scale of distribution that each artist tapped into. Similarly, the main difference between contemporary photographers and the legions of wannabes with cell phones is that digital networks have amplified distribution potential in a way that is unprecedented.

The full effects of this amplification have yet to be adequately theorized, but a preliminary observation can be made: the turning outward and then inward that once opened a space for practice has been neutralized by the speed of the network, leading to a radical revision in how photography and curating are *done*. For example, since pictures can be published the instant they are produced, there is no longer the time-linked imperative to pour over contact sheets or download files into a computer to be edited, sorted, or printed. But in the absence of the

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recursive turnings that once defined the practice of photography, can the billion cell phone snapshots flying above us and through us truly be called photographs? Which begs the question—what do we mean by *photograph*. With trillions of pictures flooding the planet, regardless of whether anyone looks through a lens, or when a machine triggers a shutter, is anyone actually making anything? That is, can these pictures be considered as *either* making or describing a shared world?

These questions might feel uncharitable and even reactionary, but upon consideration the answer must be no—these are not photographs, not objects of consciousness; at least, not in the way that word was once used. This is not because of changes in the tools of picture making—the lens remains the same, after all—but rather because the ancient pattern of outward turnings juxtaposed against inward turnings has been disrupted to the point of disappearance.

Consequently these artifacts, whatever we might call them, have been cut loose from tradition and, as such, cannot be contextualized within the practices that constitute the values of our culture. They must be rejected as aberrations, or perversions, as something other than photographs, something as yet without a name.

But technology in itself does not automatically or necessarily predict this breakdown. An example from the pre-digital age illustrates a prior rupture in practice, for a similar reason, though at a much more individualized scale. In fact, recognizing photography as a practice that depends on outward turnings juxtaposed against inward turnings helps explain why the celebration of Garry Winogrand's hundred thousand negatives—left undeveloped when he died in 1984—was so misguided. The problem is that Winogrand never turned inward to reflect on his exposures, and perhaps he never had the intention to do so, either. But without the turning inward, these artifacts lose their grip on the shared world. That is, there can be no proof, despite

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the evidence of that undeveloped film, that Winogrand ever turned outward, either. After all, simply activating a shutter release does not indicate awareness.

A far more important and horrifying example of this breakdown is the Abu Ghraib prison snapshots, which were created in 2003 and partially released to the public in 2004. Curator Brian Wallis (2004) wrote that the Abu Ghraib pictures ruptured photographic tradition because they abandoned their responsibility to unveil the evils of war. On the other hand, the images stayed true to the tradition of propaganda, and to the desire to commit racial and cultural terrorism, a tradition Sontag (2004) illustrated with the example of lynching postcards in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. But while establishing these antecedents and cultural breaks is important, recognition and analysis of the role of distribution in the creation and use of these pictures is missing from both Wallis's and Sontag's reactions to Abu Ghraib. That is, from the point of view of the digital network, the value of these pictures as weapons was enhanced and perhaps even created by the unprecedented power of our new tools of distribution. That is, prior to our networked age, the time constraints of turning inward (processing, editing, printing) insured that lynching photographs, as horrible as they were, couldn't directly threaten the victims—at least, not in nearly the same proportion as the lynching itself. Simply, victims knew that danger did not come from the man holding the camera, but rather from the mob holding the ropes. But by 2003, even before the advent of Facebook, much less Twitter, the relationship of image to distribution had turned this equation upside down. At Abu Ghraib the knowledge that the pictures would be distributed on the Internet, and that the entire experience had been orchestrated to accelerate that distribution, means that the victims were tortured by the act of photography itself. That is, victims knew that even if they escaped injury from the physical humiliations happening inside the prison, they would not escape the reprisals that would occur outside the prison as a result of

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those photographs. In fact, this sense of the power to inflict injury by merely pointing a lens must have pervaded the prison, affecting both the prisoners and the guards. Judging by what we know about how the perception of power affects both the powerful and the powerless (think especially of the Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney, et al., 1973)), the military policemen and women at Abu Ghraib must have felt like they were holding killer ray guns. In 1977 Sontag called the camera a weapon, but she spoke at the level of metaphor. In the age of digital networks, that metaphor has become actualized. In the years following Abu Ghraib, tragically, as we've seen repeatedly—recently and notoriously in the Rutgers bullying case (Schwartz, 2010)—the weaponization of lens-pictures continues to evolve beyond our ability to understand much less control it.

Triangulating these re-evaluations of photography with curating is an important task. To revise our original question we might ask about the *responsibility* of the photographer towards care taking. This is where we glimpse the unique connection between photography and curating that is anchored in the recursive turnings of practice. For example, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, while painters and writers turned inward, toward essentialism and abstraction (for example, Mark Rothko and D.H. Lawrence), photographers kept turning outward, reflecting their inner impressions by pointing to objects from the shared world. We see this in Alfred Stieglitz's *Equivalent Series* (mid-1920s), and then later in John Szarkowski's rustic country studies (early 1940s to late 1950s). As paradigm cases, these two artists (Stieglitz and Szarkowski are among Modernism's most influential curator-photographers) externalize their private metaphors by pointing their lenses at objects in the world that we share with them. Following their lead, and the lead of countless other lens-artists, prompts us to ask about what we are doing when we render our own metaphors externally. That is, given the history of our practice, and our position

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on the front lines of visual culture—i.e., as experts in the ways that lens-pictures reify the ideology of our shared world—how much responsibility do we bear for making a world worth sharing?

In response we might speculate that since the emerging logic of the mesh is different from, if not opposed to, the logic of lenses, the time for outward turning juxtaposed against inward turning has passed, and with it our responsibility to act. Now is the time for new forms of participation to emerge, e.g., the selfie, the selfie with a friend, and the selfie on a stick. After all, the *I* of the networked age is unlike any previous *individual* in human history—paradoxically both more and less autonomous than ever before—and the performance of a relational *we* takes center stage in our theories of social action. But does this lead to a rejection of recursive practice altogether, both photography and curating, and to a renunciation of both making *and* describing a shared world? And—might that be a good thing? After all, doesn't insisting on a shared world lock us into positivism and cycles of solipsism and selfish individualism?

These difficult and complex interconnections prompt me toward skepticism of my prior skepticisms. For one thing, even though the many-to-many logic inherent to digital networks upturns the one-to-many organization of lens cultures, the network is no panacea for the ills of positivism. After all, the danger and the promise of networks originate from the same place; that is, the nodes that must be open for the network to function can be corrupted, exploited, and turned against themselves because of that openness (Castells, 2004; Galloway & Thacker, 2007). This is what we saw at Abu Ghraib and Rutgers. For photographers, especially because of our dual roles as artifact makers and artifact aggregators, network dynamics speed up the shared world and make it newly contradictory, both more receptive to what we are making, and less

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conducive to the process of making it. This changes our image of ourselves, but we can't pretend that we know what to make of that picture.

The ideology that will govern these new relationships is being written now. A new ethos of human consciousness might be emerging, but such speculation might be premature, or even Pollyannaish. On the other hand, as the density of the network increases, the relationship of each individual to each other individual must evolve, because in the mesh I can sense the twitching of your limbs as if they were my own. That image doesn't come from a lens, and in fact it might be antithetical to lens-picturing.

Perhaps photography will continue, though perhaps by another name, because pointing one's awareness at the world can still connote an act of care and devotion. But there is work to be done to retrieve and to rehabilitate these notions from the increasing mechanization of attention. I find hope and pleasure in thinking that such work is still worth doing; and that reframing the world can help us share it, in spite of so many contradictions. Curators Graham and Cook (2010) suggest that curating has changed because new media art and digital networks abhor pragmatic and philosophical laziness, because categories and practices are still in flux, and because there's suddenly so much more to learn. I would argue that the same is true for all of us who used to call ourselves photographers.

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