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Impure vision : American staged art photography of the 1970s

Goysdotter, Moa

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IMPURE VISION

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American staged photography of the 1970s

Moa Goysdotter

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Introduction

In 1976, photo critic A. D. Coleman wrote an article in which he defined a group of photographers who he argued worked in 'the directorial mode'. Coleman characterized their work as 'falsified "documents" ' that had been 'manipulated as much as desired prior to the exposure of the negative'.[1] Though not forming a school or working collaboratively, these four photographers—Duane Michals, Les Krims, Arthur Tress, and Lucas Samaras—who will be the main characters in this present investigation, have ever since Coleman's article been mentioned in the same breath. Yet the work of the four photographers often showed notable discrepancies when it came to visual style and technique, as just two examples serve to demonstrate: Duane Michals's *There are things here not seen in this photograph* (Fig. 1) is a solemn, contemplative, black-and-white gelatine silver print showing the interior of an empty bar, and an inscription, written on the photo paper underneath the photograph, tells of all the sensory impressions that are not communicated by the image alone and so are missing from the visual representation of the room; while, bursting with action, there is Les Krims's manually altered, colour SX-70 Polaroid, *G.I. Joe Wounded and in Flames Fleeing the Giant Nude Monster* (Fig. 2), which shows a naked woman in a bath-tub, rays emanating from her eyes directed at a small rubber boat that is going up in flames.

These two staged, 'falsified documents' can be read as critique of the traditional view of photography as a super-eye that could communicate and explain what reality consisted of, which had been the dominant idea within American art photography during the Fifties and Sixties. A belief in the visual purity of photography structured the American modernist photography movement, where

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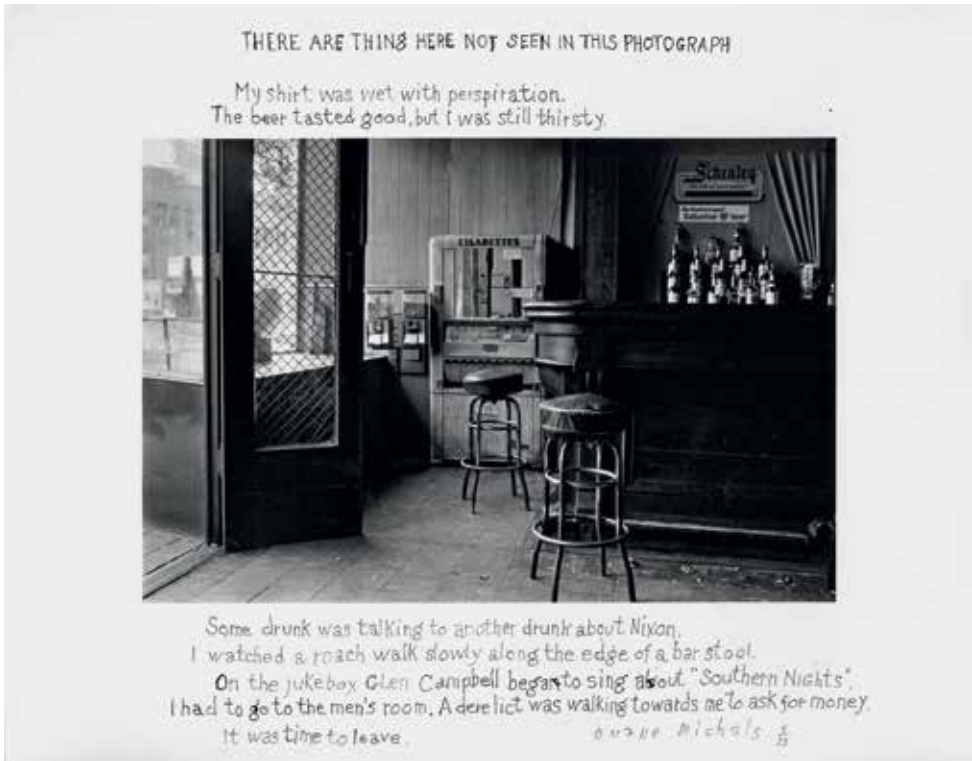
FIGURE 1 *There are things here not seen in this photograph, 1977*. Photograph by Duane Michals.

photography was supposed only to rely on certain elements that without exception can be termed visual qualities. This purity was rejected by the staged art photographers during the 1970s. The contrast between the photographic image and the textual account of what photography cannot capture in Michals's image points at the limitations of photography as a mediator of life experience, as well as to how photographs are reductive and reliant upon contextual factors if they are used as visual documentation of the world. If Michals's image states that 'photography is reductionist', Krims's image is an experimental answer to the question 'What can we do about it?' Krims's image is a violation of the purist ideal in several ways. By manually violating the surface of the Polaroid, Krims not only destroys the mechanical reproducibility of the photograph

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Figure 2 *G.I. Joe Wounded and in Flames Fleeing the Giant Nude Monster*, 1974. Photograph by Les Krims.

and makes it into an autonomous pictorial object, he also forces a haptic and multisensuous dimension onto the photograph that contradicts the traditional view of the photograph as purely visual. Both Michals's and Krims's images are making their audience aware of the relation between technology, the world, and our experience of it. This 'making aware' is grounded in the 'falsified documents' that Coleman saw, but, I will argue, moves on from there into an

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investigation of the borders of photographic technology, embodiment, and reality.

Impure vision in a photo-historical perspective

Staged art photography in America during the 1970s has not before been researched as break with the idea of visual purity that had dominated American modernist art photography. This thesis is an investigation into precisely that. In what follows, I argue that the abandonment of the idea of visual purity meant a reformulation of the concept of photographic vision. Mieke Bal has suggested how each visual impression and experience, rather that being thought of as 'pure' in a visual sense, should be thought of as 'impure' because of the synaesthetic effects it really evokes in the onlooker.[2] Visual impressions, according to Bal, do not stop as visual imprints, but trigger other sensory reactions to make a whole body experience of the seen. To my mind, the staged photography of the 1970s is an experiment in impurifying the image, rendering its synaesthetic qualities, and points at the reductionism inherent in treating the image as purely visual.

The history of art photography suggests that there has been an oscillation between a more synaesthetic method of producing and interpreting photographs and a more optic stance, where an approach closer to the scientific has been the norm for how photo art has been made and interpreted. The 1970s, it is argued here, was a period in photographic history that saw a shift from an optic to a multisensory paradigm. American art photography from the period 1910 to 1960 is usually labelled 'pure photography' or 'straight photography'. The equivalent terms were developed in contrast to the soft focus, painterly images of the pictorialist photographers who were active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In accordance with the modernist ideal of pure art forms that was launched by art critic Clement Greenberg in the 1940s (and was duly transplanted onto photography by John Szarkowski, the director of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art in the 1960s), the photographers practicing straight or pure photography had ambitions to create a new, autonomous style of

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photography that was independent of other art forms, and that refined the qualities and special characteristics of photography. These special characteristics were found in photography's ability to act as a refined, optically sophisticated eye, retrieving reliable visual information from objects with pureness, directness, clearness, sharpness, and truthfulness to form and detail; something which in many ways resembles the characteristics of a photographic scientific instrument. The main trope of this optically informed approach to photography was objectivity. Objectivity was considered to be the inherent quality of photography that distinguished it from other art forms.[3] This tendency to equate optical vision with purity is evident in Szarkowski's *The Photographer's Eye* of 1966, where, as the title indicates, photography is thought of as, by extension, the super-eye of the photographer, whose mechanics prevent extensive intervention from the manipulative, unwanted hand.[4]

Ideas of straight or pure photography, and its reliance on the objective qualities of the photographic medium, became institutionalized as an ideal in the 1920s when a group of West Coast photographers dedicated to straight photography gathered around Ansel Adams and Edward Weston to form Group f.64. The group's manifesto, in which they announced the group's name, f.64 (taken from a small aperture used with lenses for large-format cameras), signalled the 'clearness and definition' that were sought by the movement.[5] This small diaphragm, or f-stop, allows for richness in detail, for with a long exposure it renders a photograph with a great depth of field. In contrast to the painterly aesthetics of the pictorialists, who with their photographs manipulated to look like paintings had dominated the American art photography scene from the last decades of the nineteenth century, the straight photographers emphasized a technique that involved unmanipulated silver prints of high contrast and sharp focus, an aversion to cropping, and an aesthetic attention to geometric, formal elements of the photographed objects.[6]

The photographic ideal of visual purity in modernist, straight photography must be understood against the development of the photographic vision formed by the scientific use of photography during the nineteenth century. In his study *The Techniques of the Observer*, Jonathan Crary points out how touch and vision were

in the eighteenth century perceived as two co-joint entities that complemented each other in the gathering of knowledge, and how touch was decisive in the concept of vision.[7] Crary also notes how this synaesthetic combination was ruptured during the early nineteenth century as man became the site of analysis and vision, and touch—as well as the other senses—become separated as the objects of physiological research.[8]

For photography, the element of touch was equally crucial to the idea of photographic vision during the nineteenth century. One of the earliest texts written about the new invention by one of its inventors, Henry Fox Talbot, was 'Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing, or, to the Process by Which Natural Objects May Be Made to Delineate Themselves without the Aid of the Artist's Pencil' (1839). The idea of the natural objects touching the photographic plates, present in Talbot's formulation, linked photography early to the concept of indexicality. According to Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, the mechanical aspect of the camera as a technological device that minimized human interpretation of collected visual information meant it sat well with the nineteenth-century scientific ideal of objectivity, where the desire to suppress the will and make visible worlds emerge without human interpretation was constitutive for the research.[9] Thus, for Daston and Galison, it is the indexical quality in a visual, mechanical sense that was crucial to the pre-eminence of photography as the main scientific tool of the nineteenth century. No element of touch is present in the concept of vision as it is treated by Daston and Galison, yet to me it is apparent that the nineteenth-century concept of the indexical transfer of reality onto photographic images goes beyond mere vision and the visual. There is also a moment of touch to the process that guarantees a presence—a connection between the image and a true material reality that, in my understanding, compares to the concept of vision as a combination of touch and vision that Crary argues was left behind as early as the nineteenth century. To me, both vision and touch make up photographic vision, and in doing so are dependent upon each other. Geoffrey Batchen has shown how uncertainty over whether Nature was passively produced, or whether it was actively the producer of photographic images, can be

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seen in the early nomenclature of the photographic invention. Was its name going to signal that the photographic process and product were representations of Nature or imprints of it?[10]

Transferred from Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to photography, indexicality is the physical connection between the photograph and the object so exposed. There are different interpretations of Peirce's concept and how it should be understood applied to photography.[11] Here it will be understood as a purely material relation that leaves intellectual interpretation to one side. In my understanding, indexicality shares the function and mechanism of a trace, and is not a sign of anything other than a presence before the camera that, through the reflected light and the formation of the components of the light-sensitive area within the camera, has made its imprint. This mechanical revealment of presence was crucial to the concept of photography as it was formed during the first half of the nineteenth century. Following Batchen, I contend that both an idea of photography as representation and an idea of it as a trace of the presence of the objects depicted were present in the nineteenth-century conception of photography. I further argue that these two parallel notions have always been present in the conception of photographic vision, but that the traces of presence and multi-sensory approach were repressed successively during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries following technological developments of photographic technique.

The combination of touch and vision in the concept of photographic indexicality, which gradually unravelled during the nineteenth century, was due largely to an anthropomorphization of the camera. The notion of the camera as an extended, more accurate, scientific eye became very common in the closing years of the nineteenth century, as the photographic technique gradually came to replace the human eye as a data collector. The new hierarchy of eyes is seen in the statement by the president of the Royal Astronomical Society, William de Wiveslie Abney, in 1895 that really anthropomorphizes the camera:

> this year the eye has to hold a subordinate place, giving way to the photographic plate as a recorder. … for a study of the heavens its

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retina is capable of receiving more accurate impressions than that sensitive surface which lines the eye, and which transmits impressions to the brain, more or less tainted with preconceived notions.[12]

The human eye was often accused of concealing information about the world and hindering the scientist from being scientific. The contrast between the 'naked eye' and the eye equipped with a photographic aid was frequently stressed, always to the detriment of the naked eye, which was degraded to an eye of the second order, suitable for second-hand reading of information. Pure vision was now found in the mechanical camera eye, whose optical super-qualities also came to be equated with the concept of vision.

The straight photography of American modernism displays a scientific relation to the camera that reflects much the same ideals present in the scientific, nineteenth-century paradigm of mechanical objectivity and the objects of the world it depicted. It should be explained here that a general understanding of modernism in art not is completely applicable to the modernism of photographic art. If modernism in general is characterized by a break from realism, this break never happened in modernist American art photography, where, instead, the reality and objectivity of photographic representation were stressed over the role of the creative mind. On a general level, the straight photographical approach to photography was characterized by a view where the surface of the print is seen as a clear glass pane or window onto reality. This non-interventionalist approach rejected handwork or optical and chemical alterations that were considered to ruin the objective functions of the photograph. Furthermore, the depicted scenes or objects were to be found in Nature, and not altered compositionally by the photographer.[13] Truth—what was to be communicated through the straight photographic images—was supposed to be reliant on the objective features of the camera and photograph, and everything was rejected as dilettanti 'others' that did not fit such optic, scientific qualities of the production or the interpretation of art photography as closeness, presence, synaesthesia, blur, or manual alteration. The 1960s and 1970s saw a counter-reaction against the domination of the visual as general explanatory model, described by Constance Cla-

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seen as 'Western visualism'.[14] The prevailing visualism was opposed from different disciplines such as post-structuralism, feminism, and anthropology. Within art, this can be seen in the attempts to blend other senses into the concept of vision. Feminist art, body art, and conceptual art explored the hegemony of the institutionalized gaze, all taking on different forms, but all constructed on the model of scientific opticality. The multisensory shift in photography in the 1970s can also be seen as part of a larger postmodern approach to the concept of reality, redefined under the impact of visual media of different kinds. As one of the main texts diagnosing the state of epistemology during postmodernism stands Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* from 1979. Lyotard had observed epistemological changes in the developed countries; these he identified as symptoms of a postmodern condition. In this specific condition, grand narratives—stories which had guided and framed modernism's data-gathering and knowledge formation—were proven to be arbitrary fabulations, and 'postmodern' was that which showed an 'incredulity towards metanarratives'.[15] The metanarrative that was incredulously approached within Seventies' American staged photography consisted of several interlinked hypotheses concerning the different interrelations of reality, truth, vision, and photography that had been produced within a Western epistemological tradition informed by science, and transferred to straight photographic theory and practice. The staged art photographers in America during the 1970s can be seen as a part of this larger movement, opposing straight photography's epistemological claims about reality and photography, and the relation between the two. By taking pictures that asked questions about what photographic vision really was and what it can say about the world, their work suggests how the world, as well as our visual impressions of it, should be thought of as impure in a synaesthetic sense.

Purpose and research objectives

This thesis aims to explore how American staged art photography of the 1970s, represented by Michals, Samaras, Krims, and Tress, accentuated and problematized a traditional, visualist approach to the

photograph as a mediator or interface between human subject and reality present in straight photography. In each of the three chapters of the book, I identify and research a pair of opposites around which tension formed, and the three identified areas together constitute the problematization of the straight photographic ideals. Chapter 2 is a study of how staged photography problematizes the relation between the eye and the camera, and of the tendency within straight photography to see a unruptured continuity between them. Chapter 3 examines the tension between self-exploration and self-expression within the staged photography of the Seventies, and photography's ability to communicate this inner life to the beholder. Chapter 4 concentrates on the relation between embodied, corporeal vision on the one hand, and optical, disembodied visuality on the other, and on how the staged art photographers tried to break free from the purely optical notion of photographic vision by introducing haptics into the photographic process.

As noted, photography was produced within the directorial mode of 'falsified 'documents' that had been 'manipulated as much as desired prior to the exposure of the negative' when the term was first introduced to a public.[16] Included in my understanding of the concepts 'staged art photographers' and 'staged photography' is also a possible manipulation of the print during or after development. The universality and transparency that characterizes straight photography's faithful approach to the objects of Nature was in this process dimmed by subjectivism. Where straight photographers saw a manifest correspondence between the inner and the outer world, in the works of Samaras, Michals, Krims, and Tress an outer 'real world' could not be separated from an inner world of dreams, visions, and hallucinations. It is important to stress that their introspective art not was self-expressive, but rather self-exploratory, and that my aim with this thesis is to see how the four photographers used their art-making as a tool in a post-phenomenological investigation into the relationship between photography, reality, mind, and body. The present study is thus written from the perspective of the photographers as part of this relationship, and not primarily from the viewpoint of the beholder of the images.

The abandonment of the outer world and the technical, controlled

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processes of the camera also implied a turn away from the communicative aspects of photography. The viewer of the photographs produced within the tradition of the directorial mode is thus not led into a psychoanalytical dimension of emotional responses by the objective and truthful depiction of reality, as was argued in Minor White's photographic philosophy relying on the straight photographic ideal. The directorial mode seems instead to be the expression of a desire to reformulate photography's relation to what traditionally is meant by 'the real world' at as many levels as possible, and it is in this light I will research their art and writings from the 1970s.

The literature

If one looks to the general literature, Krims and Michals are the two most commonly mentioned in encyclopaedias of photographic history. The two photographers are most often treated as forerunners of later artistic developments, or as a bridge between modernist photography and postmodern photography. For example, in Michel Frizot's survey *A new history of photography* of 1996, which has become a standard reference for photographic research, Krims and Michals are mentioned in the chapter 'Beyond Reality' written by Shelley Rice, with Michals described as a photographer who pioneered the idea that photography should be used to make conceptual images and not to document, an idea current in art photography circles in the 1980s.[17] Krims, meanwhile, is characterized as an artist who created his work on the borders of fact and fiction or pop culture and Old Master photography, and Rice contends that the tensions evident in his work make him a forerunner of postmodern photographers such as Joel-Peter Witkin.[18]

The same idea appears in the sparse existing research on American staged art photography of the Seventies. I have found three works that consider the movement in any depth, all written during the late Eighties and early Nineties, and all attempts to take stock of the postmodern photography of the Eighties: thus here too the staged photography movement of the Seventies is used as a historical backdrop, or is seen as a 'heroic stage'[19] that made later postmodern staged photography possible.

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Thus in *Fabrications. Staged, Altered, and Appropriated Photographs*, Anne Hoy collected works by 58 photographers who she argued were working with staged photography. Hoy calls Krims, Tress and Michals late modernist photographers and postmodernist forerunners, and files them under the heading 'Narrative Tableaux' where their storytelling is examined. The narrative element of their imagery is seen by Hoy as an important break with modernism, where 'allusions to continuities of time and sequences of cause and effect had been taboo'.[20] Their adoption of other art forms is seen as crucial to the postmodern movement, where handwork was changing the photograph into a one-of-a-kind unique art object, as the narrow, fine arts base of modernist photography was broadened into theatrical expressions.[21] Samaras also appears in the book under the heading 'Portraits and Self portraits', and is considered a more fully developed postmodern artist than the other three. The importance of the narrative that Hoy finds in the staged photography of the 1970s and the integration of art forms into the theatrical expressions of the staged art photographers' work have been an inspiration for my investigation.

In *Det iscensatte Fotografi. Fem amerikanske fotografer: Duane Michals, Les Krims, Joel-Peter Witkin, Cindy Sherman, and Eileen Cowin*, Mette Sandbye set out to elucidate staged photography as a genre.[22] She examines Michals's and Krims's creative methods in a historical perspective, and sees their work as a retreat to a strategy of creating images practiced before the hegemony of modernist straight photography.[23] This flight to pictorialist methods and the concomitant break with straight photography, Sandbye argues, later paved the way for photographers such as Joel-Peter Witkin, Cindy Sherman, and Eileen Cowin. Michals and Krims are thus treated primarily as forerunners of later photographers.[24] Sandbye analyses Michals's work from a psychoanalytic and surrealist angle, and especially in terms of the uncanny, as Michals's work to a large extent deals with dreams and other versions of reality; Krims's work, meanwhile, is interpreted from a semiotic approach as allegories full of signs pointing out from the images. Both Michals's and Krims's work are interpreted by Sandbye as expressions of a representational critique, as they suggest that every norm and expression that surrounds us

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is infiltrated by surrogates of the experience that mass culture imbues us with.[25] To show this, Sandbye writes, they use the strange, the grotesque, the exaggerated, the humorous to show that life is a stage, and that we are steered by representations: through their art they show how art exists in relation to a society, and not by itself.

The essays 'Analysis and simulation—Strategies for the Instrumentalization of Reality' by Andreas Vowinkel and 'Arranged, Constructed and Staged—from Taking to Making Pictures' by Michael Köhler were both written for the exhibition catalogue *Constructed Realities. The Art of Staged Photography*. In these texts too, the photographers of the staged photography movement of the 1970s are viewed as forerunners of the postmodern constructed photography of the 1980s, and as such are treated as pioneers who started to create false documents mocking the truth claim of photography.[26] Such a break is declared to have been crucial to later postmodern photographers who made photographs into autonomous pictorial objects.[27] Köhler relates this transition—from documents to autonomous pictorial objects—to Jean Baudrillard's idea of how the postmodern world has entered the stage of simulacra. Köhler's text thus stands in contrast to Sandbye's, as she interprets the postmodern art photograph in terms of a growing dependence on its context and relations to causes it refers to outside of itself, while Köhler sees postmodernism as the growing autonomy of pictorial objects freeing themselves from contextual factors. This tension within the concept of postmodernism is interesting and has come through also in my investigation, and indeed was touched on in my opening discussion of Michals's and Krims's two images.

In addition to these three works, a considerable number of newspaper and magazine articles have been written about Duane Michals and Lucas Samaras. I have consulted a large amount of these, but found few that have been relevant for my investigation. Similarly, essays published in exhibition catalogues have been of limited interest. Among the few exceptions are the catalogue *Lucas Samaras: Objects and Subjects 1969–1986*, published for a travelling retrospective exhibit of Samaras's work in 1988, and containing the essay 'Samaras: Master of the Uncanny' by Donald Kuspit, which is a psychoanalytical analysis of Samara's auto-Polaroids. Two monographs have been

written on Samaras's work: *Lucas Samaras* (1975) by Kim Levin, which is mostly limited to Samaras's work in the Sixties; and the Aperture publication *Samaras. The Photographs of Lucas Samaras* (1987), which concentrates on Samaras's photographical work from the late Sixties to the late Eighties, and contains an essay by Ben Lifson that discusses Samaras's relation to the Polaroid technique, which has been valuable to me.

As early as 1975 a book on Michals's photography was published by Ronald H. Bailey entitled *The Photographic Illusion: Duane Michals*. The book is structured around a conversation with Michals about his photographic work—both commercial and artistic—and gives a good insight into Michals's thoughts on photography, and how these thoughts were realized in his photographs. *The Photographic Illusion* also contains a technical section where Michals's equipment and photographic techniques are presented. The next monograph on Michals, *The Essential Duane Michals* (1997), was edited by Marco Livingstone and contains a large proportion of Michals's images, grouped into themes and with short introductory texts. Duane Michals's own *Photographs/Sequences/Texts 1958–1984* was published as a part of an exhibition touring Britain in 1984. The catalogue ends with an interview conducted by Livingstone in 1984 that has been useful for my investigation.

There is no published monograph on Tress, but two exhibition catalogues have been useful as introductions to his work: *Fantastic Voyage. Photographs 1956–2000*, produced in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition at Corcoran Gallery of Art in 2001; and *Talisman*, edited by Marco Livingstone in 1984, which followed the exhibition 'Arthur Tress: Talisman' in Oxford, and includes a selection of Tress's work from the Sixties to the Eighties. *Talisman* ends with a collection of statements made by Tress about his photographic work at various times in his career that have been crucial to my investigation.

There is almost no secondary material on Krims's work, but I have corresponded with him about his oeuvre in the Seventies, and have occasionally used this to nuance the understanding of his attitudes towards his work and photography in general.

The sparse literature on the four photographers and their work

in the period covered by my project has made primary sources particularly important to my investigation. I have used television and magazine interviews, art criticism, and essays written by writers, and art critics to supplement the photographic images as published in photo books, and, above all, the writings of the photographers themselves. Samaras and Michals wrote and published extensively on their work during the 1970s; Tress less so, but he has provided me with unpublished texts from the Seventies.

Both the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographic discourse, which I occasionally use as a parallel or contrast to the developments seen in art photography in the 1970s, and the discourse formed around straight photographer Minor White are sketched with the help of photographic images and the remarks of artists, inventors, and writers on photography published in books, magazines, and newspapers. As sources for the four photographers' photographic work, I have used photo books published by them between 1970–1980. The books that were published then did not always match the qualities of the original prints. Krims's sepia toned Kodaliths, for example, were for financial reasons printed in black and white. In the thesis, they are reproduced from the originals and not scanned from books, since they have been directly retrieved from the artists or the relevant galleries. Works that were shown at exhibitions but not printed in books have only occasionally been used.

The narration and integration of other art forms that Hoy points to, and the parallels to simulacra that Köhler sees in the work of the staged art photographers, have been inspirational in my investigation. Köhler's hypothesis will be tested in Chapters 3 and 4. I am largely in agreement with Sandbye's representationally critical approach, which she finds formative of the staged photography movement, but I start from a slightly different understanding of representation: to Sandbye, representation is anchored in culture and society, and points outside the image; to me, photographic representation is more an existential, philosophical matter that dwells on the borders of technology and existence that are present within the image. In following Sandbye's interpretation of Michals's photography in terms of the uncanny, I develop the concept to fit my interpretation of representational critique. Instead of treating the uncanny

in a classical psychoanalytical manner, as Sandbye does, I use it to describe the implications of camera technology for the experience of the world presented in staged photography. Also, importantly, in this thesis I will not treat the movement in terms of its implications for the later postmodern photographers such as Cindy Sherman or Joel Peter Witkin, but let it speak for itself against the backdrop of straight photography. The most important aspect of this thesis, and one not mirrored by prior research, is that I will understand staged photography in the 1970s as a critique of the visualism that then dominated American straight photography, and as a movement away from an ideal of photography as optical, mechanical, and reproducible towards a more multisensory approach, where the boundaries between body, reality, mind, and photography are questioned through transgression.

Theoretical points of departure
Embodied mind—the phenomenological turn

In order to study staged photography as a movement which questioned the optical ideal so dear to straight photography and transgressed the borders of technology, mind, body, and reality, I have taken two perspectives as my theoretical starting-points: phenomenology and post-phenomenology, and a turn of visual theory that takes the visual as part of a broader holistic understanding of the embodied effect of sensory impressions. In my investigation, the alignment between the haptic and the optic will be central. Phenomenological philosophy, as developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, can roughly be said to adopt an approach to reality in which the mind is embodied and our experience of the world is inseparable from our bodily sensations of it. The post-phenomenological approach, developed by Don Ihde, adds technology to the traditional phenomenological triangle of mind, reality, and body.

In pace with the increasing interest in photography during the Seventies, several different projects intent on forming a coherent photographic theory on sociological and semiotic ground were initiated in Europe and America in the late Seventies and Eighties.

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Wolfgang Kemp and Mark Taschenberg gathered theoretic essays on photography in chronological volumes.[28] Victor Burgin edited *Thinking Photography* in 1982, a collection of essays written during the Seventies, together with some older ones, that all worked towards a new, convergent theory where photography was to be interpreted as a catalyst in a discursive formation, and as lacking any identity of its own beyond its discursive use. In the introduction, Burgin called for a theoretically consistent line on photo theory that would emanate from a semiotic understanding of images and society. Structured around a semiotic, Marxist-informed discussion that defined photography as a catalyst in a process of intellectual interpretation and creation of meaning, analysed on a sociological, political, and ideological discursive level, photography was believed to have no independent identity outside its discursive context, and was seen as a currency invested in by different powers inside these discursive formations, and used by them to exert power.[29] The American magazine *October* had published a special issue on photography in 1976, and both its articles and the contributions to *Thinking Photography* made clear that the new photographic theory was weary of the essentialist discussions of the photographic that had dominated the previous photographic paradigm, and which, in Burgin's view, not dealt with theory but with criticism.[30]

The social anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards has argued that these semiotic and linguistic approaches continue to dominate photography theory today, to the detriment of multisensory approaches.[31] Similarly, Barbara Maria Stafford maintains that a linguistic approach to visual material usurps the full potential of objects that are traditionally defined as 'visual', as it imposes the notion that the objects are structured by an invisible, controlling, inborn écriture that is linguistically interpretable.[32] Following Edwards and Stafford, I find that semiotic and linguist approaches falls short if applied to art photography, since they cannot say enough about the important dimension of the existential, affective, and epistemological factors that photography carries with it.

Amelia Jones has interpreted Maurice Merleau-Ponty's approach to the relation between mind and body as one where the lived body is not separated from the mind 'as a vessel', but rather as the 'expres-

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sive' space through which we experience the world.[33] This parallel has proved useful in considering the mind as it is viewed within staged photography, as it seems to contain the kernel of their critique of photography's traditionalist visualism. The attitude is formulated in a text by Jerry Uelsmann, a photographer sometimes referred to as a forerunner to the staged art photographers, who wrote that the late Sixties should be seen as a break with the former modernist criteria for art defined by the visual world. Uelsmann stresses the importance of aligning photography with the development of a broader art movement by turning away from the emphasis on the eyes and vision, to the mind.[34] Uelsmann's words are redolent of a phenomenological stance towards the relation between mind (here understood as an umbrella term for both emotions and thoughts) and body; a stance I find he shared with the staged art photographers of the 1970s. With the same epistemological outlook, Michals agitatedly shouted 'We are not eyeballs, we are minds!' in an interview broadcast on television in 1980 as part of an argument against traditionalist documentary photographers.[35] Michals's definition of the mind is not more concerned with the eyes and vision than any other sense, and he repeatedly stressed how photographers ought to turn to their creative minds instead of their registering eyes.

The polarization between the eye and the mind can be seen as an effect of the process in science, described earlier, where the eye had been partly disembodied and made equal to mechanical photographic apparatus, and thus a tool for science. 'Eye' thus signals a scientific approach to vision and photography that was embraced by straight photography practitioners and supporters. The investigations of the borders between mind, photography, reality, and body that were constitutive of the staged art photographers of the 1970s bear a likeness to the post-phenomenological theories of Don Ihde. Ihde holds that technology always behaves like a prosthesis, in that it constantly reminds the user of its presence, even as the user wishes for 'transparency'; thus, the user is forced to relate to the technology in his experience of the world, and to recognize how the experience partly belongs to the technological apparatus.[36] The undisrupted continuity of camera and eye that prevailed in modernist, straight photography is in a post-phenomenological way investigated by

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the photographers using staged photography. Within staged photography, camera technology is instead identified as what Ihde calls a 'quasi-other', preventing the body from coming in direct contact with the reality depicted.[37]

The turn during the Seventies to a phenomenological view on photographic art experience and production had been anticipated in the 1960s in writings on art in general, where ideas on bodily immanence in favour of intellectualized interpretation were frequent. Amelia Jones has shown how in the Sixties and Seventies a perceived body–mind split in modernist art encouraged artists to explore themes of embodied subjectivity in their art.[38] In 'Against interpretation' from 1964, Susan Sontag had appealed for a new methodological approach to artworks that paid greater attention to descriptions of the form and sensuous appearance of art than to hermeneutic interpretations that, by overemphasizing the role of an intellectual understanding of the works' content, tamed the artwork in a process she calls a 'hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability'.[39] There was a notable interest in dethroning the visual by reintroducing the other senses to the explanatory models of culture. Within cultural theory, a critique of visualism sprang up in diverse academic disciplines, informed by theories emerging in psychoanalysis and feminism. A multisensory approach that rejected literary and intellectual interpretations grounded in the dominance of the visual, and represented by theorists like Walter Ong and Marshal McLuhan, started to inquire into the balance between the senses in the Western world in a historical perspective, and found the printing technique crucial to the emergence of a culture where visualism reigned and the oral and auditory had been repressed. McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) and Ong's *The Presence of the word* (1966) are investigations into the formation of Western culture interpreted in terms of the repression of all senses other than the visual.[40]

Today we see a recent interest in what could best be called synaesthetics, growing out of the discussions of the 1960s. Some of this interest has probably been prompted by the development of 'visual studies' as an academic discipline. While investigating and

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criticizing its hegemony, these studies' vast amount of research on Western visualism seems to face a problem as it contributes to the reproduction of the very Western visualism it is criticizing. Classen sees all of the academic energy that has been concentrated on describing and analysing this Western visualism in terms of the 'gaze', the 'scopic regime', and so on, as just another expression of the same Western visualism, and calls for research that goes beyond the 'visual mould' and into a more sensorily holistic approach.[41] In the same spirit, Mieke Bal has criticized the use of the term 'visual culture' as being a product of a 'visual essentialism' that presupposes that there is a visual purity of images, and for the same reasons W. J. T. Mitchell has singled out the term 'visual media' as highly misleading.[42] Both Bal and Mitchell have argued for a synaesthetic approach to images, with the visual impression to be seen as a triggering factor that causes a chain of 'braided' sensual reactions in the onlooker's body.[43]

Following Sontag, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has recently elaborated on an aesthetical methodology that starts from Merleau-Ponty's 'return to the site' in addressing the presence, the tangibility, and the impact had on our senses and bodies by phenomena studied using hermeneutics.[44] Within visual anthropology, these methodological ideas have been translated to photography studies by Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Pinney. Pinney's research into the photographic discourse in India is informed by a theory of a Western numbness of the senses in relation to images as a part of the colonial project. Pinney's term 'corpothetics' is a critique of Kant's concept of aesthetics that rejects the body in the aesthetic experience. Pinney advocates an 'embodied, corporeal aesthetics—as opposed to "disinterested" representation, which over-cerebralizes and textualizes the image.'[45] In my research, I have adopted the theoretical and methodological landscape sketched above. By interpreting American staged art photography of the 1970s against a phenomenological horizon, I wish to contribute to a phenomenological turn in photography theory and historiography that I believe must challenge or complement the semiotic and sociological approach in order not to usurp the meaning of photographs as artworks.

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Optics and haptics

In her investigations into how audio-visual film evokes multisensory experiences, Laura Marks, inspired by Merleau-Ponty, has suggested that it is possible to distinguish—but not separate—an optical vision from a haptic vision when talking about image reception. Optical vision, according to Marks, is dependent on a distance between the viewing subject and the object searching for form, focus, and representation, whereas haptic vision is structured around closeness and eye movement over the surface in seeking out texture and presence.[46] These concepts have proved useful to the present study since their distinctions explain the split between the two types of photographic vision that, as already seen, occurred as an effect of developments in scientific photography. The emphasis was on the optical qualities that gave photography high status as it attached itself to objective truth, and the more subjective haptic vision was thus repressed.

The binary pair of haptic and optic vision thus should not be understood as being formulated by Alois Riegl in the late 1800s. Riegl held that the development of art history can be interpreted as the passing from a haptic epistemology into an optic epistemology, where the haptic era is characterized by an objective view of objects (as in the three-dimensional sculptural paintings of Egyptian art) and the optic is signified by a two-dimensional subjective conception of the world (as in Impressionism).[47] Margaret Iversen has shown how Riegl's scheme was turned upside down by Walter Benjamin, who saw the decay of the aura of the artwork as an effect of a new modern mode of haptic perception that sought to overcome the distance Riegl had ascribed to haptic vision. This Benjamin contrasted to optical perception which, unlike Riegl's optical vision diminishing distance, paid respect to the aura by keeping a distance to the art object.[48] My use of the binary pairing of haptic and optic vision lies close to Benjamin's distinction when it comes to perceiving an image; however, my understanding of the concept of pair also stretches onto the level of the production of images—to the realm of the photographer.

In perceiving an image, the distance crucial to optic vision is kept by reading the image as a source of information from which to draw

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intellectual conclusions as if the rest of the spectator's body, or the body of the photograph, were neither involved in nor affected by the interpretation process. Optical vision active on the production level would mean that a photographer would do all he could not to intervene in the process, relying on the mechanical qualities of the camera. Haptic vision, on the other hand, is here taken to mean—on the level of production—that a photographic image is made by touching, by intervening in the process of recording, before, during, or after exposure. The most obvious example is the staged art photographers' practice of manually altering images during or after the development process by smudging, cutting, or writing on the photographic surfaces. The hand-worked images of the staged art photographers in the 1970s that transformed mechanically reproducible photographs into unique art objects can therefore be interpreted as a movement away from optics, in Benjamin's sense, towards haptics in terms of the photographic. To perceive an image haptically means, in this case, to engage with the materiality of the image, or to see the photograph as multisensuous and belonging to the body. This latter aspect of seeing lies close to Merleau-Ponty's notion of seeing as a multisensuous opening up of the body towards the world.[49]

Martin Jay has rightly suggested that the interrogations of visuality and sight that he finds dominating twentieth-century French thought, as for example in Merleau-Ponty's, Roland Barthes's and Jean Baudrillard's writings, date right back to the scepticism that greeted the invention of photography in the 1830s. He maintains that the authority of the eyes, which traditionally has been fundamental to Western epistemology, was undermined by doubts that arose within the realist paradigm about the relation between truth and seeing as an effect of the camera.[50] I would argue that these 'doubts' over the authority of the eyes that Jay identifies are less doubts over vision in general than over the reign of the optical eye, and amount to a protest against the neglect of the haptic within vision. Photography was born into a time of synaesthesia, when the concept of objectivity was dependent on both vision and touch, but the optical distance offered by the photographic image undermined the haptic qualities of both science and photography, and pushed it outside the concept of objectivity. Phrased in Freudian terms, the subsequent repression

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of the haptics of vision has in my view been crucial in tying the concept of the uncanny to photography. An epistemological consensus on photography as a realist technology has repressed experiences of reality retrieved through other sensory modalities than the visual as being less real and, crucially, less important. Thus, the uncanny within photography can be interpreted as an effect of the return of the repressed sensory modalities that are not represented by photography, in an experience of the optically visual static photograph. I will argue that this repression was also opposed by the staged art photographers of the 1970s. The limitation of photography to one sense is in their work treated with sarcasm, and the uncanny effects of such a limitation are highlighted, pointing out the absurd visualist ideal of straight photography.

Approaching American staged art photography— materials and method

The purpose of this investigation is not to give a comprehensive account of American modernist art photography history. Instead, it is written as a contribution to the sparse research on the staged photography movement in America during the 1970s, and should be read as a comment on the research on the broader photographic traditions that the discussion touches on. When collecting, selecting, and limiting the material that forms the basis of this investigation, I began by placing myself in the position of the four photographers in question. Thus modernist American art photography history is here sketched in outline using the traces of it found in the discourse of staged photography. These traces are often statements made by the staged art photographers themselves, where they point out what should be rejected within straight photography. As such, these statements are often crucial to the staged art photographers' own definition of themselves and their art. One such statement that has been important to my take on staged photography, made by Michals in 1976, reveals the names of five photographers who Michals thought the photographers of the Seventies should stop idolizing: 'Get Weston off your back, forget Arbus, Frank, Adams, White, don't look at photographs. Kill the Buddha.'[51]

The five Buddhas listed by Michals represented two different schools of photography, which shared many features but differed somewhat in intent and choice of motifs. Edward Weston and Ansel Adams were the ones who in the Twenties founded the straight photographic group f.64, and they with their apprentice, Minor White, belonged with photographers such as Aaron Siskind and Wynn Bullock to a group who in the Fifties and Sixties expanded the group f.64 programme in ways that fitted their personal creative minds.[52] Robert Frank and Diane Arbus belonged to a branch of American post-war photography christened 'The New York School of Photography' by Jane Livingston, and, driven by a passion for humanist values, set out to explore society, often the inhabitants of New York, in the style of documentary journalism.[53] Arbus started to document people on the social margins of society in a documentation of the dark side of New York City and American society, and Frank, driven by similar desires and influenced by beatnik literature, set out on a road trip across the country that resulted in his most well-known book, *The Americans*, published in 1958. Similarities can be found between Arbus's and Frank's photography and the works of Tress and Michals when it comes to aesthetic style and presentation, but the documentary approach to be found in the work of Arbus and Frank has been obliterated in the work of the staged art photographers. Instead, it has been substituted by an investigation into the borders of the medium; something lacking in Frank and Arbus. Frank and Arbus will not be used as comparative material in my investigation.

The other school, to which Weston, Adams, and White belonged, is usually known as straight photography. Until the 1970s this approach dominated the American photographic art scene when it came to methods and photographic technique, although the purpose of the image-making shifted somewhat from a more documentarist approach before the Second World War to a more psychoanalytical, subjective, and philosophical one in the Fifties and Sixties. The Second World War is usually used as a demarcation line in photographic history writing, after which American art photography ceased to be guided by a documentary naturalism and turned to an imagery of existentialist themes using psychoanalytical metaphors.[54]

Yet the ideal of optical technicality followed into the documents of the inner landscapes. Many American art photographers in the Fifties and Sixties became interested in photographing forms and patterns found in nature that served as expression of inner visions. The fifth Buddha, Minor White, inspired by Eastern religion and Zen Buddhism, undertook psychoanalytical investigations into the emotional register of the self through straight photographic imagery. Michals's choice of words—'Kill the Buddhas'—seems to be aimed directly at White. From the 1940s on, White's impact on American art photography as an intellectual and spiritual guru was 'formid-able' according to Shelley Rice.[55] White, as a disciple of the straight photographers Weston and Adams, and as a photographer with great impact on art photographic development in America, has thus been selected here as the main figure the staged art photographers will be contrasted and compared to in the investigation that follows.

Both the statements and the images made by the staged photogra-phers have been analysed against the background of the straight photographic discourse and with the help of theoretical concepts taken from various disciplines and theorists. The investigation thus takes an eclectic approach to photography; a theoretical eclecticism that mirrors the diversity and multi-identity of the photograph, but also reflects the paucity of phenomenological theory and method-ology in current staged photography studies.

The photographers—short biographies and works, 1970–80

When I first started this project, I set out to find expressions in Seventies' art photography that were visually linked to the occult and spirit photography of the late nineteenth century. After having decided on the work of Michals and Samaras I soon found that they had been linked in photo critic A. D. Coleman's seminal ar-ticle 'The Directorial Mode: Notes Toward a Definition' of 1976. In this article both Samaras and Michals, together with a total of twenty-two photographers, are classified as working within the directorial mode: Michals and Krims are hailed as pioneers of the movement and as 'reference points' for the younger generation of

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photographers working in this mode.[56] As my interest for the staged tradition deepened, I also included Krims because of his appointed role in pioneering the movement. The fourth photographer, Tress, I chose because I found that his photography connected to the three others to a greater extent than the other photographers listed in Coleman's article. I soon realized what this connection consisted of: a post-phenomenological stance towards photography technology and reality.

A certain amount of temporal and geographic data connects these four photographers. They were all born in the period 1932–42, they are all white men, and they have been practicing photography in or around New York for most of their lives. Les (Leslie) Krims was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1942. Within two years of receiving a Master of Fine Arts at the Pratt Institute in 1967 he had become a teaching professor of photography at the State University of New York College in Buffalo (a position he still holds). Early on, as he puts it, he set out to 'drive a stake through the heart of the liberal vampire that was socially concerned photography', which with its documentary images had 'grown into a sebaceous cyst in the 1960s'.[57] Krims has from the start used his image-making to express a satirical critique of the hypocrisy of political correctness that he finds in 'conventions of taste, the hypocritical pieties of politicized feminism, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society legislation and the vast social engineering projects it supported, and the left's culture war'.[58] In terms of art, he wages a similar battle on a multiple fronts, as his imagery is produced both as a parody of conceptual art and traditional photography.[59]

Between 1970 and 1980 Les Krims published five photo books: *The Deerslayers*, *The Incredible Case of the Stack O'Wheats Murders*, *The Little People of America 1971*, and *Making Chicken Soup* all came in 1972, and *Fictcryptokrimsographs* in 1975. In these years Krims also put together the portfolios *Porsche Rainbows* (1973), *Piss Portraits* (1974) and *Idiosyncratic pictures* (1980). *The Deerslayers* and *The Little People of America* consist of candid pictures taken at a deer hunt and at a convention of short people respectively. *The Incredible Case of the Stack O'Wheat Murders* was a collection of staged forensic photographs where naked women lie murdered, bathed

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in blood-like syrup, with pancakes in piles beside them. *Making Chicken Soup* is a faux cookery book where Krims's topless mother guides the reader through the making of chicken soup. All these books mimic and mock a tradition of non-staged documentary photography where the photographic image was supposed to have the status of evidence. *Porsche Rainbows* consists of colour plates of rainbow phenomena made by pouring water over a yellow car, and *Piss Portraits* caricatures portraits of photo-notables using urine and flour. The content of both of these portfolios is playful and offensive. With *Fictcryptokrimsographs*, Krims combined a critical approach to the documentary function of photography, his cheerfully kitsch style, and colour photography in a creative new approach using manual manipulations of the light-sensitive surface of SX-70 Polaroid pictures in garish colours, showing distorted, naked, often female, bodies interacting with objects such as bubblegum, icicles, or fruit. *Idiosyncratic Pictures* is a set of black-and-white images of staged scenes containing a myriad of details arranged in compositions that, together with long and rebus-like titles, hint at a complicated, multilayered satire of American culture and politics. Krims's images were exhibited at several galleries throughout America during the Seventies, and his exhibition record also shows a considerable European interest in his images; indeed, Krims's work was exhibited in both one-man exhibitions and group exhibitions presenting American photography to a European audience.

Duane Michals was born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, in 1932. After studies at the Parsons School of Design in the mid Fifties, he worked as an art director and designer at *Dance Magazine* and Time Inc. It was not until 1958 that Michals started to take photographs during a trip to Russia. He soon had his first group exhibition in New York, at the Image Gallery. Since 1960 Michals has earned a living as a commercial photographer working for magazines such as *Vogue*, the *New York Times*, and *Scientific American*. The commercial work, says Michals, gives him the financial security to pursue his artistic work.[60] Between 1970 and 1980 Michals's photographic work was published in the following books: *Sequences* (1970); *The Journey of the Spirit after Death* (1972); *Things are Queer* (1973); *Chance Meeting* (1973); *Paradise Regained* (1973); *Take One and*

see Mr. Fujiyama (1977); *Real Dreams* (1977); *Merveilles d'Egypte* (1978); and *Homage to Cavafy* (1978). Michals demonstrably knew how to take glamorous shots, but his artistic work was characterized by a certain shoddiness;[61] meanwhile, his photographic style was more homogenous than Krims's, and maintained a rather consistent style throughout the decade. Michals's images are always black and white, often presented in sequences, and are often accompanied by handwritten inscriptions underneath the images. The sequences, as well as the single images, are solemn, charming, cool, and contemplative, in contrast to Krims's loud, intense grotesques. Michals's images often concentrate on large philosophical questions such as what happens after death, or the nature of the human condition. The more metaphysical themes he often investigates photographically by using double exposures or motion blur that give the images a ghost-like or spiritual character. The theme of the images is often love, with meditations on being a homosexual recurring in Michals's imagery. His work was recognized and widely exhibited in and outside America during the Seventies.

Lucas Samaras was born in Kastoria in Macedonia in 1936 and moved with his family to New York in 1948. In the late Fifties and early Sixties Samaras studied acting and art history, and participated in happenings at the Reuben Gallery in New York with the likes of Claes Oldenburg and Allan Kaprow. During the Sixties he worked with several different techniques such as filming, installations, and assemblage, into which he fitted photographic self-portraits. The other three photographers insist that they are photographers—Samaras's broad artistic practice does not support such a definition. Instead, he should be seen as an artist who has worked with photography. In 1973 he was handed a Polaroid camera by the Polaroid Corporation to use in his work. During the mid Seventies, Samaras concentrated much of his art-making on Polaroid photographs of himself, but he also incorporated people he knew in the pictures at the end of the decade in a series of so-called 'sittings'. Samaras's work between 1970 and 1980 shows a diversity of used media, from sculptural installations with chairs and boxes at the beginning of the decade, to paintings, painted plaster pieces, pastels, and Polaroid images mid decade, to works containing fabrics and clay at the end. The works

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used in the present study are mostly taken from the mid Seventies, when Samaras produced a large number of 'auto-Polaroids'—that is, Polaroid images of himself—under the general title 'Photo-transformations'. Just like Krims's images in *Fictcryptokrimsographs*, Samaras's photo-transformations are manually manipulated Polaroid images in loud colours showing Samaras's distorted body or body parts. Some of the images are montages in which he has duplicated his body. Samaras's work was widely exhibited in America during the 1970s.

Arthur Tress was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1940. After graduating from Bard College in 1962, Tress moved to Paris to study film. From 1962 to 1968 Tress lived and travelled abroad, making ethnographic photo journeys to different corners of the world, and he spent a year in Sweden where he worked as photographer for the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm. In 1968 he returned to New York, committed to becoming a professional photographer, and worked as a documentary photographer for the *VISTA* (Volunteers in Serivce of America) magazine until 1970. During the Seventies, Tress's work underwent a transformation from the documentary to the staged, but kept the documentary presentation style. The photo books published by Tress in the period 1970–1980 include *The Dream Collector* (1972); *Shadow* (1975); *Theater of the Mind* (1976); *Rèves* (1979); and *Facing Up* (1980). Tress's interest in ethnography and Jungian psychology spawned *The Dream Collector* series and the photographs of *Theater of the Mind*, both the result of projects where Tress approached the inner dreams, desires, and emotions of his photographed subjects by interviewing them, and then asking them to stage the dream, desire, or emotion for the camera. *Shadow* is a series of pictures of Tress's shadow at different places. Just like Michals, a part of Tress's imagery deals with homosexual issues: *Facing up* is devoted to this, and shows naked male bodies in industrial surroundings. Tress's work also lies close to Michals's when it comes to aesthetic style. Again like Michals, Tress's images are always black and white, and mostly contemplative and solemn, but they differ from Michals's in that they express a certain claustrophobic feeling. Not only do the scenes in his images suck the spectator into their vortex as an effect of the wide-angle lens, but they often picture people who seem to be short of breath,

with plastic over their faces, half buried in sand or water, or encapsulated in narrow spaces. Thus a feeling of anxiety or entrapment, one that is also found in Samaras's images, comes through in Tress's images. Tress's work was exhibited a number of times during the Seventies, although not to the same extent as Michals's, Samaras's, and Krims's works were.

Even if the four photographers have been mentioned in the same breath ever since A. D. Coleman's article appeared in the mid Seventies, their artworks clearly differed from one another on several points. However, their work was also interrelated in several ways. These differences and similarities will be further examined in the following chapters, but one important factor that holds them together is the fact that their images, as well as their approach to photography, reveal a certain shared epistemological outlook on the photographic medium—an outlook that united them in the face of modernist, straight photography. By pointing their cameras into the homes and private lives of their own circle, and into their own minds and dreams, the undistorted compositions of objects found in nature, so important for straight photography, are substituted by private, staged, inner worlds that point to the uncanny qualities of the photographic representational reality, as well as to the instability of reality as a concept. The personal and biographical contexts of the four photographers, which presumably directed their imagery to some extent, have only briefly been touched upon, for while their intentions are crucial to the investigation, it is more at the level where a relation to the medium is expressed than at the level of individual motifs. The focus of my thesis is an epistemological approach to life through art, which is not necessarily dependent upon how that particular life is constituted.

Disposition

Following this introductory chapter, the thesis is divided into three parts that each highlights one aspect of the photograph as mediator or interface between human subject and reality present in staged photography. Chapter 2, 'Dethroning optical vision', is an investigation of the staged art photographers' rejection of the technological

dependence of photography that dominated image-making in the straight photography of the Forties, Fifties, and Sixties, and that continued a long tradition of viewing photography and the camera as a natural extension of the eye. The break with straight photographic ideals is also paralleled by the epistemological displacement that took place during the late nineteenth century, when photographic optical reality was described (in a manner similar to that of the 1970s) as unknown to the seeing body. This epistemological displacement, prompted by a scientific, optical approach to vision and reality and reinforced by camera technology, is investigated here by relating it to Don Ihde's theory of prosthetic technology, Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny, and Berthold Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*.

Chapter 3, 'Communicating inner life', examines the tension between self-exploration and self-expression evident in the staged photography of the Seventies, and notions of whether the contents of the mind—the emotions and thoughts—could be communicated. Staged photography's approach to photographical representations of emotion as being empty and communicatively meaningless visual illusions is considered in the light of both Victor Burgin's semiotic theory of the late Seventies and Barthes's subjective phenomeno-logical theory in *Camera Lucida*, in which he seeks the essence of objects through photography. The self-investigations of the staged art photographers are seen against a background of Don Ihde's post-phenomenological theory of how reality is encountered through technology. Chapter 4, 'Haptic vision', is a study of how staged pho-tography moves beyond optical, disembodied photographic visuality by re-incorporating haptics into the concept of photography. I argue that this was a retreat to a more embodied concept of vision that had existed before scientific epistemology separated optics and haptics in the concept of vision, and how a such vision–touch concept is constitutive for Barthes's concept of punctum, and to the concept of indexicality. The reintroduction of haptics into vision in Seventies' staged photography is shown to have led to a break with straight photography that was based on a concept in which photographic vision was considered optically pure. The strategies of the staged art photographers are seen against the theoretical background of Roland Barthes's phenomenological theory in *Camera Lucida*, their

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synaesthetic photographic experiments resulting in a magic approach to photography similarly related to the analysis of magic principles developed by James Frazer. The thesis concludes with a summary of the results of the investigation.

Dethroning optical vision

The protests at straight photography's emphasis on optical, visual qualities and attendant fetishistic dependence on technology, and the attention drawn to the limitations of such optical, visual qualities in communicating the experience of life and reality, are in my opinion essential to the work of the American artists producing staged photography in the 1970s. Here I consider how straight photography's technological dependence was opposed by different means and methods by the staged art photographers of the Seventies. The first part of the chapter deals with how the straight photographers' passion for technology and techniques was rejected by the staged art photographers, and how Seventies' staged photography instead treated photography as a prosthetic technology as defined by Don Ihde. The second part considers the effect such a break from objective, purist, and optically visual ideas of photography had on the work of the Seventies' photographers, and how it privileged the uncanniness (interpreted in Freudian terms) of the photographic medium. In the third and last part of the chapter I deal with how the Seventies' photographers, instead of hiding their equipment and their role as photographers in the photographic process, underscored the fact that their images are constructed fabrications. This accentuation of the construction of photographs is something I relate to Berthold Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. I also look at how the staged art photographers experimented with combining text and images in order to highlight the absurdity of taking photography to be more true and independent than other forms of representation of reality.

Epistemological redefinitions and investigations

The dominant methodological and theoretical foundation for modernist American art photography was always photography's objective visual quality. This objectivity was considered to be an inherent quality of photography, and one that distinguished photography from other art forms.[1] The camera, if skilfully handled by the photographer, was believed to work in the same way a good scientific eye, objectively retrieving reliable visual information about objects in a manner notable for its pureness, directness, clearness, sharpness, and truthfulness to form and detail. Another important and much-lauded aspect was control. The photographer should be able to control the outcome of the image from the moment of seeing it in the view-finder. Within straight photography, Ansel Adams and Edward Weston had during the 1920s and 1930s introduced and advocated the method of pre-visualization, by which the photographer technically accomplished the photograph before the shutter was fired. This method became very important to American modernist photography as it was seen as an ideal means to gain technical control over the outcome of the exposure. According to pre-visualization, the ideal image is seen in its perfected state before the shutter is fired, for the outcome can be calculated according to a zone system where the effects of exposure and development can be visualized in advance.[2] Adams used the method to make dramatic, high-contrast landscape views; for example, his many famous photographs of the mountains of Yosemite National Park in California.

When lecturing on photography at the California School of Fine Arts in the 1940s and early 1950s, Minor White made much of Adams's zone system as a technique.[3] White drew a distinction between 'using the camera-as-extension-of-vision' and 'using the camera-as-brush' to instruct his pupils, where the former encapsulated his own, straight photographically informed attitude towards image-making, and the latter described an unwanted pictorialist approach to photography. White's table gives a good notion of the terms in which straight photography defined itself.[4]

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Clues to the camera-as-extension-of-vision concept:	Clues to the camera-as-brush concept:
Surface of print considered as clear glass.	Surface of print included.
Omission of handwork, optical and chemical alterations.	Handwork on negative and/or print; optical and chemical alterations of negative and/or print.
Composition determined by nature of subject.	Rules of composition deduced from academic painting imposed on photograph.
Reality accepted as the whole working field and penetrated.	Reality altered considerably by any means.
Creative activity terminated by exposure.	Creativeness continuing through printing.

The stress on mastering photographic technology as a means of accessing reality, which can be seen in the teachings of the straight photographers such as White, came under attach during the Seventies. The camera, which to the straight photographers had symbolized a technological super-eye, was in staged photography treated as a toy. The modernist search for the soul of the objects of the world was replaced by playful experiments with the borders of the medium, including creative handwork and manipulations of negatives and prints. The boundaries between photographer, reality, and photographic technology that the arch-modernists had held up as sacred and clearly defined, were increasingly blurred during the 1970s, replaced by an idea of camera and photographer as a form of hybrid of human and technology where both components were supposed to be active in the shaping of an epistemological outlook. The view of the relations between human, photography, and reality common in the American staged art photography of the Seventies will here be related to the concept of prosthesis as posited by Don Ihde.

In his philosophy of science—one that he labels 'post-phenomenology'—Don Ihde extends the phenomenological study of the relation between mind, body, and reality by integrating technology into the phenomenological triangle. Technology that behaves like a prosthetic is 'non-transparent', thus constantly reminding the user/onlooker that it is present in order for the experience to be

realized, forcing the user/onlooker to relate to it and confess how the experience also partly belongs to the technological device.[5] The analogous prosthetic function of the camera, and indeed photography as a whole, is crucial to my understanding of the approach to reality through camera technology that can be found in the staged photography of the 1970s. Ihde's concept shows great affinity with Christopher Pinney's operationalization of Latour's hybridity concept of photography. Pinney suggests that photography is one of those practices that are neither culture nor technology, but instead a hybrid zone comprising an experimental 'collective actant' of camera and operator, folded into each other in an unremitting revising/devising process.[6] In a similar vein, Vilém Flusser has suggested that the photographer is entwined in the camera. In Flusser's theoretical model, the photographer and the camera make up a 'unity', but the combination is always a game: the photographer always plays against the camera, knowing he will never see through the black box of the camera.[7]

The intermediate zone between human embodied mind, photographic technology, and reality is a place where the boundaries between the three are constantly redefined and transgressed in a game-like process of give and take. I would argue that these transgressions and redefinitions lie at the heart of the work of the American staged art photographers of the Seventies. The straight photographic idea of photography's relation to reality relied on the belief that the photograph could and should be compared to a clear, transparent window; with this objective relationship to nature, the photograph, if it was any good, could become a mirror held up to the audience, connecting them to their inner feelings. In staged photography of the Seventies, the supposed camera window is constantly stressed as being opaque. The long-since repressed qualities of photography related to other sensory experiences were revived, and the experience of reality through photography—as long as it was viewed by optical visually means—was said to estrange us uncannily from that reality, instead of bringing us closer to it.

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Redefining photographic vision—an anti-Adams wave

As part of the critique of the dependence upon outer reality, and the belief in photography's ability to access and communicate this reality to its onlookers that dominated the practice of the straight photographers, straight photography's attitude towards camera technology was duly attacked by the staged art photographers in the Seventies. Technology and reality had for the American photographic modernists become intimately related issues, since straight photography cherished a camera technique that optimized the camera's ability to display reality visually as a scientific super-eye would see it. This meant that everything else that it was possible to do with a camera—blurs, deliberate mis-focus, double exposures, and so on—was considered an expression of technical dilettantism, and thus less real. At the end of the Sixties, a new 'anti-Adams' wave of American photography started rolling. Adams became the symbol of straight photographic methods, and his name repeatedly surfaces in remarks made by the staged art photographers about what new photography should *not* do. As Michals wrote in 1976, 'Photographers tell me what I already know. … You would have to be a refrigerator not to be moved by the beauty of Yosemite. The problem is to deal with one's total experience, emotionally as well as visually. Photographers should tell me what I don't know.'[8] At the end of the 1960s, Adam's ideal of technical equilibrium was loudly rejected by the American photographer Jerry Uelsmann, sometimes seen as a forerunner of the staged art photographers because he challenged the purist ideal with his surreal photomontages. The move towards inward introspection had already been started by Minor White, who in the Fifties and Sixties photographed objects in nature, often in close-up to make them appear as abstract patterns. White wanted his images to function like mirrors in which the beholder could access his own inner emotions. White's documentations of inner landscapes by means of straight photographic principles will be further dealt with in Chapter 3. What is important here, however, is that White thought that optical, technological precision was the right method to open up these emotional channels.

Uelsmann's plea for a turn towards the mind, away from the

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Figure 3 *Oak tree, Sunset City, Sierra Foothills, CA, 1962.* Photograph by Ansel Adams. ©2012 The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust.

primacy of the eye and vision in photographic art-making, was a rejection of the epistemological premises of the straight photographers, who were largely reliant on the camera and photography as an elongation of the eye as an organ of perception. Uelsmann's advocated turn was thus also a rejection of the techniques used by the straight photographers—techniques that reflected their epistemological starting-points. In rejecting Adams's credo, Uelsmann advocated 'post-visualization', and encouraged photographers to embrace 'the willingness on the part of the photographer to revisualize the final image at any point in the entire photographic process'.[9]

The difference between Adams's and Uelsmann's outlook on photography is seen in a juxtaposition of images (Figs. 3 and 4). Adams's tree, firmly rooted in nature, whose exact appearance in the finalized print was calibrated at the point of exposure thanks to the calibrated zone system method, contrasts to Uelsmann's floating and 'unreal'

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FIGURE 4 *Untitled, 1969*. Photograph by Jerry Uelsmann.

tree produced in the darkroom using a montage technique where five different images have been combined and re-photographed. The photographers working with staged photography in the Seventies shared Uelsmann's conviction that the photographic image could be made at any time in the photographic process, not only as the straight photographers would say at a carefully calibrated moment of exposure. Duane Michals, Lucas Samaras, and Les Krims composed much of their Seventies' imagery long after the moment of exposure. Samaras and Krims manually retouched the emulsion of the Polaroid images they had taken, and Michals did dark-room cropping, superimpositions, and inscriptions on the photographic paper. That said, the images were not only created after the exposure, but also, perhaps more importantly, before the photograph

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was taken. As ideas waiting to be staged, the images existed in storyboards and as conceptions in the minds of the photographers, sometimes long before the actual shooting took place.[10] The idea was the photograph, and this idea did not depend on the choice of camera lens, tonal scales, or focal depth.

Samaras, Krims, Michals and Tress expressed no or little interest in their camera equipment in a purist, modernist sense. With their technical disregard, their images are statements of how photography should be concerned with other dimensions of reality than the optically visual. Michals's images are grainy, often underexposed, blurry with movement, and sometimes out of focus. Krims's photographs were either printed on Kodalith paper, which gives them a grainy, high-contrast, sepia-toned effect that makes them resemble daguerreotypes, or they are loud Polaroid images, manually manipulated, in which the proportions of naked bodies have been loosened up by stretching them or distorting them in other ways. Samaras also remodelled his photographed body by pressing, squeezing, and melting the emulsion of his colour-saturated Polaroid images. Tress is the photographer whose images most look like the straight photographers', but, as we shall see, this visual affinity acts as an important part of the resistance found in his work to straight photography.

The emphasis on freeing photography from the technological ideals of straight photography did not necessarily mean that the images were not crafted with serious attention, however. Rather, the technical skills to make a picture look unskilled, in the right way, sometimes proved hard to practice. Les Krims often used Kodalith paper to print his photographs during the Seventies. Kodalith paper is often used in graphic arts and gives a high contrast print, which becomes brown or yellow if overexposed or given a short development time.[11] Les Krims remembers the Kodalith experience as a difficult, anti-Ansel Adams performance:

> The out-of-control development rendered the shadows, tones and textures of each print different, unique. This gesture was really a parody of what was then considered ultimate, perfectly repeatable, contemporary fine art printing, e.g., Ansel Adams prints. These

prints were gritty and harsh, on super thin, fragile, paper base …
The tones and color of the prints were all wrong, given what most
photographers and critics considered to be right. Additionally, the
shadow areas resembled Daguerreotypes, in that the angle of light
had to be just right to see them. … However, I never originally
made many, because these were impossibly difficult to print. …
Nine out of ten prints turned black before the radically accelerated
developing process caused by overexposure could be stopped and
fixed. … This was printing as performance.[12]

The Polaroid camera had been launched in 1948, and even though
Adams was greatly involved with its development from 1949 (he
was the Polaroid Corporation's special consultant on questions of
technique and aesthetics), Polaroid techniques would be used as part
of the critique of straight photography's technological ideals. The fact
that the Polaroid Corporation saw their product as a device for objec-
tivity concerned straight photographers, as the technique was able to
'remove most of the manipulative barriers between photographer and
the photograph'.[13] Its inventors launched it as the perfect marriage
of science and art—one where the concept of photographic art was
equated to straight photography. Far removed from the objectivist
intentions of the Polaroid developers and Ansel Adams, the Polaroid
colour camera SX-70 became a widely used tool in artistic circles that
formed and lived on the borders of performance, painting, sculpture,
and photography. The malleability of the Polaroid emulsion became
significant for the convergence of different art spheres that had been
held apart by modernist art theory. Lucas Samaras, who was trained
as both an actor and a painter, and had been involved in the New
York performance scene during the Sixties, stretched the definitions
of both photography and sculpting by treating the photo emulsion
as clay in order to resculpt photographed bodies and objects. Les
Krims used the SX-70 in a very similar, purist-mocking way when
he altered his motifs by manipulating the emulsion manually. The
SX-70 came with loud colours, a bright contrast to the black-and-
white images of straight photography. In Adams's autobiography,
one short sentence is written on the SX-70 in the lengthy chapter
on Polaroid photography, where he declares that it was a 'quality

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instant process for the millions' producing 'handsome color prints' that made Polaroid into a 'household word'.[14]

The evident uninterest in traditional technical skills on the part of the American photographers working with staged photography during the Seventies was a way of showing photography to be the opposite of the crystal-clear window on the world that was associated with straight and documentary photography. Within the technical range of photography lay a diversity of techniques and methods that presented reality in totally different ways than straight photography's optical ideal allowed: superimpositions, cropping, double exposures, motion blur, and all. By reviving those repressed techniques with the camera after the long hegemony of unmanipulated sharp silver prints, staged photography marked out a path where the photography's relation to visuality and reality was complicated rather than straightforward. The repressed qualities of photography, which had not had a place in straight photography, also redefined the concept of reality: no longer visually accessible, but synaesthetically approachable. As the straight photographic method of displaying optical vision met with competition from technical methods that evoked other senses as part of the visual experience, the modernist metanarrative, where reality, vision, and photography were entwined with truth, was incredulously approached and branded uncanny and estranging.

The estranging effects of optical vision

In the catalogue for the 1978 exhibition 'Mirrors and Windows', the photography curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1962–91, John Szarkowski, makes a division between mirrors and windows as metaphors for photographs: the photograph should either be viewed and used as a window, a medium to watch and explore the world through, or as a mirror, a reflection of the photographer who took the picture and thus a medium of self-expression. Szarkowski explains how the pendulum that swung back and forth between these two poles during the Seventies had stopped closer to the subjective mirror pole.[15] To extend Szarkowski's reasoning further, it could be argued that the photographers working with staged photography during the Seventies saw photography as
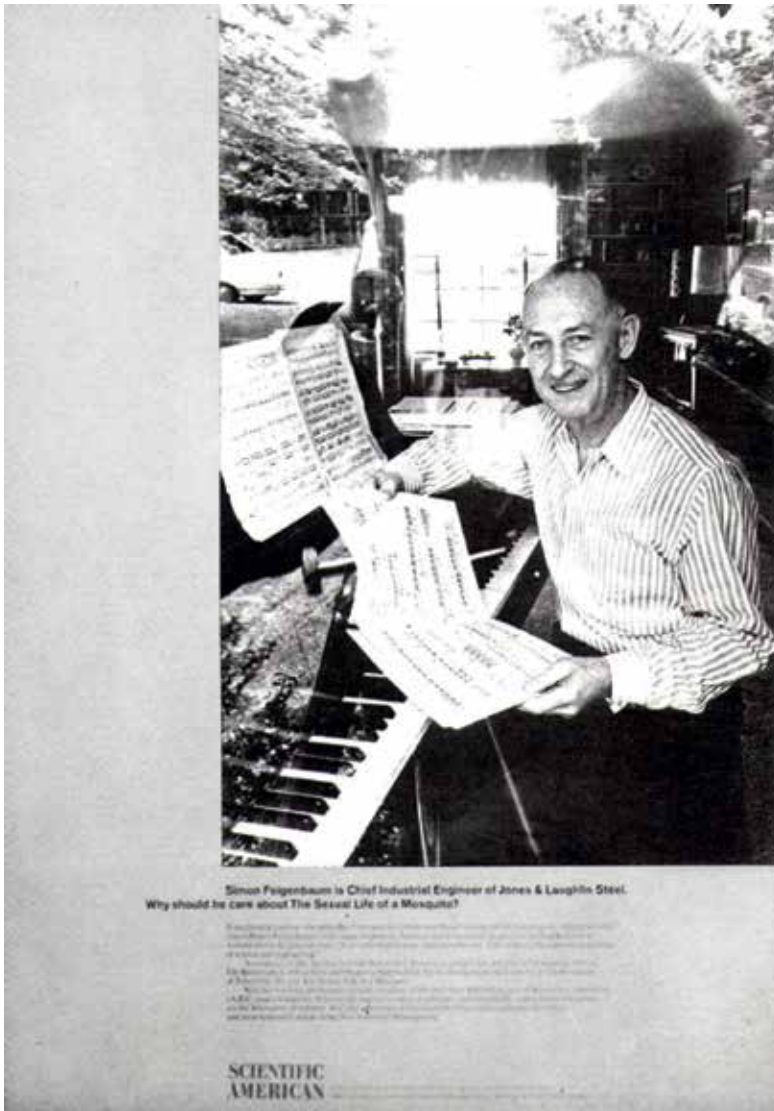
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FIGURE 5 *Portrait of Simon Feigenbaum*, *Scientific American*, year unknown. Photograph by Duane Michals.

a window *and* a mirror, instead of either/or. Anyone who has stood by a window looking out has experienced how non-transparent the pane really is. The window first perceived as transparent will sooner

or later remind you of its existence through stains, imperfections in the glass, marks from your own breath, or your reflection standing there wishing for transparency. There is no total optical transparency; the window is always also a mirror; and photography will never wholly relinquish its position as a technological mediator separating us from the world.

The concept of photography as a window is juxtaposed with its function as a mirror in a simple but effective way in a portrait Michals was commissioned to do for *Scientific American* in the early 1970s (Fig. 5). Instead of taking a plain, standard portrait of Simon Feigenbaum, the vice president of a steel company, Michals chose to take the picture through a window, letting his own reflection and the reflection of his camera on a tripod show on the window pane. Here the reflective quality of the window is highlighted, and the non-withdrawing window is identified as an obstacle between the photographer and his desired approach to the 'real' world. This makes the observant magazine reader aware of the fabricated, 'non-transparent' nature of the image—or, indeed, of any image—as it brings up the question of who this visual representation belongs to.

This kind of uncovering of technological dependence to gain truth about the world is as old as photography itself. Ever since it was launched in 1839, a simultaneous determination to extend the visual realm of the body and a sense of non-transparency attached to the experience can be found in written reflections on photography. Photography was presented as a tool that provided access to increased ontological knowledge of the world, anticipating its future significance for science. In France, Louis Daguerre's patent was bought by the French government, and in the Bill presented to the Chamber of Deputies, the minister of the interior stressed the invention's importance for the development of science.[16] It did not take long for this importance to be confirmed. Photography, for example, had an enormous impact on biology when it came to reproductions of microscopic findings, and the same was true of telescopic photography in astronomy.[17] The essential role that photography came to play in scientific developments during the nineteenth century corroborated its status as a 'truth teller', and there was a belief that the scientific camera eye stood in direct contact with an ontological dimension

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where objects revealed their 'true' selves and where knowledge about them could be accessed.

In the late 1870s, the American photographer Eadweard Muybridge successfully captured instantaneous motion in a series of plates: the motion of a galloping horse, never seen before, was presented step by step. The camera appeared to be able to freeze time. Muybridge's images became a symbol for the anthropomorphist optimism about a camera super-eye that could map parts of the world that the human eye could not, yet this was paralleled by a sense of negative embodiment that brought with it epistemological doubts about the relation of technology, eye, and truth. Disillusioning scientific experiences were reported from microbiological studies of micrographs, and from astronomy, where the photographically enlarged reproductions of the moon were found not to match the details seen by the eye in the telescope.[18] The limitations were also noticed outside science, by artists of different kinds. The question of who was to dictate the truth—the human eye or the camera eye—was asked, sometimes in a slightly sarcastic way as in the short story 'Photography and philosophy' by the Swedish author August Strindberg. The main character of the story can be read as a man who dwells on the confusing philosophical implications of photography's truth claim:

> Once upon a time there was a photographer. He photographed a great deal; in profile and full face, three-quarter-length and full-length portraits; and he could develop and fix, gold-tone, and copy. He was quite a fellow! But he was never satisfied, for he was a philosopher, a great philosopher and an inventor. You see, he considered that the world was the wrong way round. One could see that from the plate, as it lay in the developer. The right side of a person was here made left; what was dark became light, the shadows became light, blue became white, and silver buttons became as dark as iron. Yes, the wrong way round.[19]

Nor did the new, true ontological dimension that had been revealed by the camera eye appeal to the likes of John Ruskin who found photographs to be lifeless reproductions. Ruskin, who was

to become a determined opponent of photography, dismissed them as 'popularly supposed to be "true", and, at the worst, they are so, in the sense in which an echo is true to a conversation of which it omits the most important syllables and reduplicates the rest.'[20] Perhaps Ruskin condemned photography for the same reason that Walt Whitman found it peculiar to be surrounded by portraits: 'Phantom concourse—speechless and motionless, but yet realities. You are indeed in a new world—a peopled world, though mute as the grave.'[21] Charles Baudelaire was early in pointing out that the new image technique should be viewed as a servant of the arts and the sciences, but not as a science or art in its own right.[22] The true ontological image of reality did not match the lived experience of the world, and was not accessible and uncontrollable without guidance from the technology itself. The camera had created an epistemological disorientation by dint of its rivalry with the human naked eye. The human body had been made unmodern in its new surroundings of better-equipped body functions. The locking in of photography into an epistemology centred around visuality was a fact. In this process, the vision referred to here as haptic vision was repressed. Merleau-Ponty reflects in 'Eye and Mind' from 1961 on Muybridge's instantaneous photographs of galloping horses and declares them to be 'mendacious' since they are not known to the body.[23] This can be extended to include all 'visual' representations of reality from which the other senses entangled with vision are excluded; hence the American staged photography of the 1970s, where they are identified as untruthful.

The written historical statements speak of an epistemological paradox. On the one hand, there are the expectations of the camera's ability to show the human eye more information about the world than it can see in its naked state, and the belief in its ability to extend access to the world; on the other, there is the reduction experienced when photography proves to be anything but an experienced reality, because an experience of reality involves so many more sensory dimensions. It is technology that behaves in this way that has been called prosthetic technology by Don Ihde, and it is characterized by exactly this paradox between an urge for extension and a feeling of reduction, as if my interaction with the world does not fully belong

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to me and my body. To clarify Ihde's argument, we might also need to look at some different notions of technology as prosthesis. Vilém Flusser describes the relation between mankind and technology—in terms of prosthetics—as something that in an unproblematic way grasps the world and confers more knowledge and information on the person, or culture, wearing it:

> Machines are simulated organs of the human body. The lever for example, is an extended arm.[24] … tools, machines and robots can be regarded as simulations of hands which extend one's hands rather like prostheses and therefore enlarge the pool of inherited information by means of acquired, cultural information.[25]

However, as a description of the relation between human being and world as mediated through technology, the fairly simplistic, Flusserian way might just not be sufficient. If compared, for example, to the historical account of the developing relationship between camera and human, this theory appears to be an oversimplification; rather, it appears as if the camera never belonged to the human body, and it certainly did not 'enlarge the pool of inherited information by means of acquired, cultural information' in the harmonious way Flusser describes. The straight photographic approach to photography that White called 'camera-as-extension-of-vision' is reliant on an idea of the camera as an extension of the eye—something echoed in Flusser's harmonic elongation. The idea of the camera as an extended eye does not reveal any friction inherent in the process of representation. On the contrary, Ihde's notion of technology as prosthesis is structured around an experience of friction. The prosthesis is for Ihde not simply a harmonic elongation or extension; it is simultaneously a constant reminder of its own unnaturalness or artificiality, creating a certain ambivalence in the act of sensing or experiencing through technology.

Ihde's point is that there is prosthetic technology that has proved to be well suited to embodiment, such as spectacles. This kind of technology can 'withdraw' to transparency when used.[26] There are moments when the spectacle-wearer does not think of himself as a spectacle-wearer. But then, on the other hand, this wish for trans-

parency and withdrawal does not work equally well for other types of technology:

> There is also a deeper desire which can arise from the experience of embodiment relations. It is the doubled desire that, on one side, is a wish for total transparency, total embodiment, for the technology to truly 'become me'. … The other side is the desire to have power, the transformation that the technology makes available. … The desire is, at best, contradictory. I want the transformation that the technology allows, but I want it in such a way that I am basically unaware of its presence.[27]

The frustrating tension between the aspiration for power and the aspiration for transparency in Ihde's account of this relationship can also be found in Freud's description from 1929 of how mankind was coping with its new technological gadgets:

> Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent, but these organs have not grown onto him and they still give him much trouble at times.[28]

The ambivalent characteristics of the prosthesis, never really attached to the limb as Freud describes it, also underlies Ihde's concept of technology. Ihde identified the frustration caused by quasi-transparency, and a feeling of ambiguity that makes certain types of technology into quasi-others or to others to which I relate'.[29] This, in turn, resembles Freud's concept of the uncanny, where the experience of something well known is suddenly altered, which provokes a feeling of creeping, partial alienation: the experience of the world is partly mine, but it also belongs to an 'other' to which I relate, and as such is not totally mine to control and recognize as my own. The desired extension is a totally embodied one, which falls short when camera fails to embody more than one sense.

The focus on a single, visual sense as the basis for understanding of photography is also what is highlighted as absurd in the work of Krims, Samaras, Tress, and Michals. To be able to say something

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about the world, and the experience of it, photography has to be interpreted in a broader sense than the optically visual, straight photographic approach permits. By attacking and questioning the quality of the reality that by tradition is attached to photographic technology, the four photographers repeatedly showed just how vain was the belief that photography can depict and communicate a universally experienced outer reality. The prosthetic paradox of a feeling of simultaneous reduction and extension through camera technology, the limitations of photography in conveying life experiences, and the reduced version of the world yielded by a purely visual approach, are all themes that were developed in Seventies staged photography. One dominating effect that these themes had on the photographic work of the day is that the version of reality presented through the photographs appears estranged, uncanny, displaced, and other to us.

Uncanny revelations

Due to a long tradition of viewing photography as having access to an ontological reality, and a long history of photography being acclaimed as an objective witness to the truth, photography can be effectively used to present fabrications and manipulations as if they were faithful representations of reality. This power has often been described in terms of the uncanny in writings on photography. The uncanny notion of photography has a long history. Tom Gunning has described how the uncanny effect of photography was used in occult and spirit photography at the turn of the last century.[30] With their ability to create a parallel world of phantasmatic, autonomous doubles—often ethereal, blurred doubles made by double-exposing plates—photographs were used to destabilize the border between life and death. Gunning stresses that the fact that photography both belonged to the positivist scientific paradigm, where it was used as proof for materialist explanations, and could undermine the identity of the objects of the world by producing spectre-like doubles from them, gave photography an uncanny quality.[31] During the 1970s, photographers, weary of photography's truth claim, took advantage of the border-blurring characteristics of the photographic medium

and created visual violations of the ordering of the so-called natural world. Inspired by Gunning, I will here consider the uncanny as an effect of the implications for the experience of the world that camera technology has for staged photography, to see how this aspect complements the more traditional approach to the uncanny on the level of motif that, in the case of the staged art photographers, has for example been investigated by Sandbye.[32]

When the critic A. D. Coleman was first confronted with the earliest work of the staged art photographers, he found himself

> disturbed and left uneasy by encounters with certain photographs— not because they were unpleasant on a purely sensory level, but because some relationship between style, technique, form, subject matter, content, cultural context and the medium itself generated emotional and intellectual stress. These images aroused discomfiture, anxiety, anger—feelings I did not associate with what was generally called 'creative' photography.[33]

The 'emotional and intellectual stress' these images made Coleman feel later led him to collect this imagery under the label of 'the grotesque' by virtue of being 'hallucinatory, visionary images that violate common knowledge of the workings of the natural world'.[34] The grotesque mode, I find, has a strong resemblance to the concept of the uncanny as it is known from Freud's theory. Freud's uncanniness is a feeling that belongs to the realm of fear, and as such is not described explicitly as containing positive elements. But when Freud sets out to lay bare the 'affective nucleus' of it,[35] he reaches the conclusion that the uncanny is an ambiguous phenomena that lives on the border of the positive and the negative. A semantic investigation of the word leaves Freud with a double meaning of *unheimlich*, where *heimlich* means both (*i*) known and familiar, and (*ii*) secret, veiled.[36] The antonym *unheimlich* combines the two meanings in one, and points at the nucleus of the feeling that Freud had set out to describe: the uncanny is nothing new or strange, but something familiar that has been repressed and was not meant to come into the open.[37] This means the spectrum of the uncanny effect includes a range of diverse but related feelings, held together by the common

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denominator of estranging experience. If applied to the works of the staged art photographers of the Seventies, it is important to distinguish between the uncanny effect that is related to the existential and epistemological impact of camera technology, and that which is evoked in the content of individual photographs, and is traceable to and observable at a motif level. These two levels are not separable but complementary, and appear most often together.

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The uncanny at a motif level—
the unhomely homes of Krims and Tress

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In staged photography of the 1970s, an uncanny effect is evoked by the absurd compositions and motifs. Common motifs are naked bodies doing surprising things in surroundings that are recognized as private; thus inner lives, fantasies, and dreams acted out in the private sphere, normally concealed, are revealed in the photographs. The settings are far from the postcard views of Adams's landscapes or White's close-ups of found, unidentified, natural objects. In the staged photography of the 1970s, the *heimlich*, interpreted as private, comes out in the open to become *unheimlich*. Les Krims's imagery has been called 'a middle-class family album' that reveals 'the hallucinatory absurdity of normalcy',[38] a formulation that points to the simultaneous recognition and estrangement characteristic of the uncanny experience. Frequently, the impression given by the photographs is absurdly humorous, an aspect of the concept of the uncanny that Nicholas Royle argues is often close at hand.[39] Apart from bringing a disturbing sense of crumbling borders, the uncanny often fulfils an emancipatory, creative, and revealing function in the work of Tress, Samaras, and Krims. This emancipatory power of the uncanny is present in the works of all four photographers and is used to break away from a modernist hegemony of photographic vision.

The hallucinatory and absurd family album that Coleman saw in Krims's images is also useful when describing Tress's images. Tress's Seventies' work is filled with people who are portrayed as ordinary people in ordinary places, but who use this ordinariness to create something extraordinary. Tress is conscious of the emancipatory potential of the uncanny, and uses it in a manner closely related to

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the concept of imagination. For Tress, reality is a fabricated contrivance, containing different layers of fiction and non-fiction that can be scrambled up with aid of photography.[40] The documentary quality of photography—or as Tress puts it, its 'heavy texture of dirt and decay'—can display objects as if they were real when we know they are not, because of photography's apparent detachment from these objects.[41] This simultaneous familiarity and unfamiliarity gives Tress the ability to fulfil his intention with photography: 'I believe it is the photographer's function to reveal that what is concealed, even if it be repugnant to the majority, not merely record what we see around us.'[42]

In the photographs published in *Theater of the Mind* from 1976, Tress set out to reveal that which was concealed in ordinary visual representations of family constellations, using the following method:

> The photographer asks the individuals how they feel towards one another and gets them to act out that relationship in a physical way so that it can be caught by camera. … The photographic frame is no longer being used as a documentary window into undisturbed private lives, but as a stage on which the subjects consciously direct themselves to bring forward hidden information that is not usually displayed on the surface. The photographer hopes not only to show us what families look like, which we already know, but to penetrate deeper into their thoughts and emotions.[43]

Tress thus aimed to draw out the emotional relationships that remain hidden in traditional visual representation of families. He does so by making his photographed subjects translate their emotional relationships into visual representations by staging them through symbolic gestures and the use of suitable props. Tress's method brings to mind the imagery of a dream, where vernacular objects found in our 'natural' habitat can assume symbolic power and become parts of an emotional experience. The emotional relationships divulged in this way are seldom tender, nearly always violent or tinged with aggression. As a result, Tress's imagery is both nightmarish and humorous at one and the same time.

In *Ed Berman and his Mother, Brooklyn, New York, 1975* (Fig. 6)

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FIGURE 6 *Ed Berman and his Mother, Brooklyn, New York, 1975*. Photograph by Arthur Tress.

there are several factors on the motif level that add force to an interpretation of the picture as uncanny. The title disrupts the humorous first impression of the absurd scene. The two figures' relationship as mother and son is symbolized by the act of the son ironing his mother's hand. There is violation here, in a number of respects. The factors signalling home—the homely environment, the woman dressed in a housecoat, and the iron as a tool used at home before going out in public—are overwhelmed by the un-

Figures 7–10 The four images exhibited in 1972 that led to the kidnapping of a fourteen-year-old boy in Memphis, Tennessee. (Light Gallery subsequently published an original print portfolio entitled 'The Only Photographs in the World to Ever Cause a Kidnapping' containing the four photographs on view together with two more.) From left to right,

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FIGURE 7 *Human Being as a Piece of Sculpture (Screaming Man Fiction), Buffalo, NY, 1970*; FIGURE 8 *Nude with Cardboard Lightning Bolt, 1970*; FIGURE 9 *Les Krims Performing Aerosol Fiction with Leslie Krims, Fargo Avenue, Buffalo, NY, 1969*; FIGURE 10 *Pussy and Crime Scene Fiction with visible Tampon String, 1969*. Photographs by Les Krims.

homely gesture of the man ironing the old lady's hand as it rests on the battered ironing board. The unhomely passivity of the old woman—she lets him do it as if it was a natural thing to do—adds to an uncanny impression. The darkness of the man wielding the iron, staring out from the picture, is in contrast to the padded, soft, white features of the old woman, who has let her chin drop to her chest. Outside the filthy window we glimpse the ordinary, indifferent world. The homely scene is transforming into an unhomely nightmare before our eyes.

A similarly uncanny displacement of the homely is seen in Krims's imagery. Where the transformation from homely to unhomely in Tress's images was characterized by a certain stillness and slowness, the same displacement in Krims's images is direct and brutal. Just as in Tress's images, absurd scenes are here acted out in private homes. The world reflected through Krims's photographs is filled with nudity, violence, kitsch, signifiers of 'American-ness', cynical humour, and political allusions. The stagings appear to be carefully calculated, and the brown sepia tone of the Kodalith images seems rationally conscious of its task. The visual appearance of the images is sharp, although the message communicated through them is unpleasantly ambiguous and avoids being pinned down into one single meaning. The juxtapositions found in Krims's images undeniably create a surreal effect, but they go further than that, for they are often composed of several formal elements, absurd in themselves, even before they are put in conjunction with one another. The result is a meta-absurd, grotesque tableau that provokes the order of things and life on many levels of meaning, at the same time as it creates a humorous effect by means of its aggressive absurdity. The 'intellectual stress' and 'discomfiture, anxiety, and anger' that Coleman experienced when he saw the staged art photographers' early works was felt by others who saw Krims's early images. In 1971, Krims participated in a group show at a local college in Memphis. His photographs triggered the kidnapping of a fourteen-year-old boy, and the ransom demanded for his return was the removal of Les Krims's four photographs (Figs. 7–10) from the exhibition. The pictures were removed, and no one was harmed. The only reason ever given was that the kidnapper

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wanted to make sure that his children and grandchildren would never have to see the pictures.[44]

Of those four photographs, *Human Being as a Piece of Sculpture (Screaming Man Fiction), Buffalo, NY, 1970* shows a dark-skinned man, holding fast to the edges of a pedestal on which his legless body is balanced. Except for the man and the pedestal, the part of the room that we see is empty. A stained-glass window gives a religious air to the room. The man's mouth is open as if he is screaming out in agony. His scream seems to be directed out at the world. It seems as if the man has been placed on a pedestal which he cannot get down from, in a room which he cannot get out of. I find it brings to mind the 'freak-photography' of photographers such as Diane Arbus in the late Sixties. Krims's image seems to be a comment on 'freak-photography', emphasizing the entrapment of putting exotic bodies on a pedestal to cherish them, and then leaving them alone. In *Nude with Cardboard Lightning Bolt, 1970* we see a young, naked woman standing beside a neatly made bed. Her body bears the traces of sunbathing. Her hands are placed behind her back, her eyes are closed, and her head turned away from a large, stylized lightning bolt that levitates in the air over the bed. The sun that comes in from a supposed window situated behind the onlooker creates a square pool of sunlight on the bed. The sunlight is also reflected in the lightning that points in the direction of the woman. On the wall hangs a poster of a deer enclosed in a hunter's view-finder. The bed is placed before both of the closed doors to the room. The homely, made bed thus bars her way out, and she seems trapped in her home, hunted down into her bedroom. *Les Krims Performing Aerosol Fiction with Leslie Krims, Fargo Avenue, Buffalo, NY, 1969* again shows a scene set in a bedroom. We recognize the square window through which daylight passes onto the naked woman standing on the floor with her arms at her sides. Her head is tilted upwards, and her eyes are closed. A man, Les Krims himself, lies naked on the bed spraying the woman's lower abdomen with a gaseous substance from a small spray can. Is the man spraying the woman's private parts in order to 'get her clean'? *Pussy and Crime Scene Fiction with visible Tampon String, 1969* shows a semi-naked female body covered down to the waist by a pile of autumn leaves.

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A black cat sits at the other end of the pile. Not much more happens in the picture. We get the impression that it shows a crime scene. The surroundings are homely—we recognize the home garden, the cat, and the autumn leaves raked together into a pile. The pile of leaves is in the centre of the image, as if the photographer wanted to obtain an overview of the entire scene instead of concentrating on the supposedly dead woman.

What was so disturbing to the kidnapper? In what way did Krims's images violate to an unbearable extent? And how did they do it? Why were they more disturbing than Robert Heineken's explicit pornographic imagery that was shown in the same exhibition?[45] For a contemporary viewer used to provocative photography these questions might be hard to answer, but I would suggest that it is Krims's play with the idea of photography as a witness or proof of what happens in reality that at a basic level triggered the reaction. It has been suggested that Krims's images allude to 'fears and frustrations which go even deeper than the sexual perversity of our culture',[46] and perhaps those fears and frustrations explain in terms of the uncanny the casting down of the border between reality and fiction that Krims's images thematize.

As often with Krims's images, the title gives a clue as to the picture, makes us see more, and directs our interpretation. After reading the title, for example, we suddenly see the tampon string between the woman's thighs. His titles thus function as complement to the visual information given in the pictures, so that the visual content of the images is directed by textual account that supplements it. The formulation of the title, as in this case, ensures it is a parody, not of forensic photography as such, but of the view of the photograph as an evidence. Krims's images fight on multiple fronts against stable meanings in general, and the photographic truth claim specifically. One ephemeral border that is key to the uncanny experience of his images is the border between image and text. As words in titles have ambiguous meaning—as pussy does in this case—and several of the objects that a certain word alludes to sometimes appear in one and same photograph, Krims underscores how words are dependent for their interpretation on their context, and how their meanings can be altered by supplementing visual information. The same is true

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of the interpretation of the visual representation that is manifested in complementary textual information. Both textual language and image language prove to be constructs in Krims's images. I will return to this in the last part of this chapter.

The disembodying illusions of Michals and Samaras

In terms of the uncanny, American staged photography of the 1970s can be said to oscillate between an uncanny, surreal, and absurd expression found at the motif level (as discussed above) and a level of the uncanny that was tied to the technological, existential, and epistemological impact of camera technology. In the case of the latter, the uncanny effect is evoked as a consequence of a collapse of technological mastering of visual information about the surrounding world. According to this approach, we do not get to know the world by photographing it, as traditionally believed; but we might get to know that we cannot know it—at least, not as long as we depend solely on the optical, visually pure representation of it.

Nicholas Royle has identified two variations on the uncanny experience that are important to the technologically evoked experience of the uncanny in Seventies' staged photography. Royle suggests that the uncanny is:

> a crisis of the natural, touching upon everything that one might have thought was 'part of nature': one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world. … The uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality. It may be that the uncanny is a feeling that happens only to oneself, but it is never one's 'own': its meaning and significance may have to do, most of all, with what is not oneself, with others, with the world 'itself'. It may thus be constructed as a foreign body within oneself, even the experience of oneself as a foreign body, the very estrangement of inner silence and solitude.[47]

To the extent that the uncanny is a 'crisis of the natural'—stemming from an insight that what is experienced is not 'natural', and that the borders surrounding the experience are arbitrary and con-

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structed—it shows great affinity with Ihde's theory of technology as prosthesis as discussed above. Ihde's prosthesis, in fact, appears to be the uncanny explained as an effect of not being able to recognize the world-view presented by mediating technology as one's own familiar or anticipated view. In the staged photography of the 1970s, the reality depicted by photography is instead shown as disembodied: it resembles a world known to us, but by highlighting the role of camera technology and photography in this mediation, the staged art photographers single out the camera as a producer of what Royle has termed the 'crisis of the natural'.

The other aspect of the uncanny that is important here, one also described by Royle, is the 'experience of oneself as a foreign body'. This can also be related to the discussion in my introductory chapter on the distancing effect of optical vision, where any visual representation that is heedless of other sensory experiences appears to the body to be mendacious. A photographic visual reproduction of the visual appearance of the body is thus experienced as uncanny and disembodied. Michals repeatedly identifies a 'crisis of the natural' through photography. Contrary to an assumed and desired photographic extension into the world that is the origin of the myth of the camera's sacred relation to reality, photography for Michals reduces the experience of reality by solely copying appearances. The experience of reduction through photography is clearly seen in his note *A failed attempt to photograph reality* from 1975 (Fig. 11), which was written on photographic paper to be exhibited among other photographs. The text reads:

> How foolish of me to believe that it would be that easy. I had confused the appearance of trees and people with reality itself, and I believed that a photograph of these transient appearances to be a photograph of it. It is a melancholy truth that I can never photograph it and must always fail. I am a reflection photographing other reflections within a reflection. To photograph reality is to photograph nothing.

In *A failed attempt to photograph reality*, a possible photographic image has been replaced by nine handwritten lines on a photographic
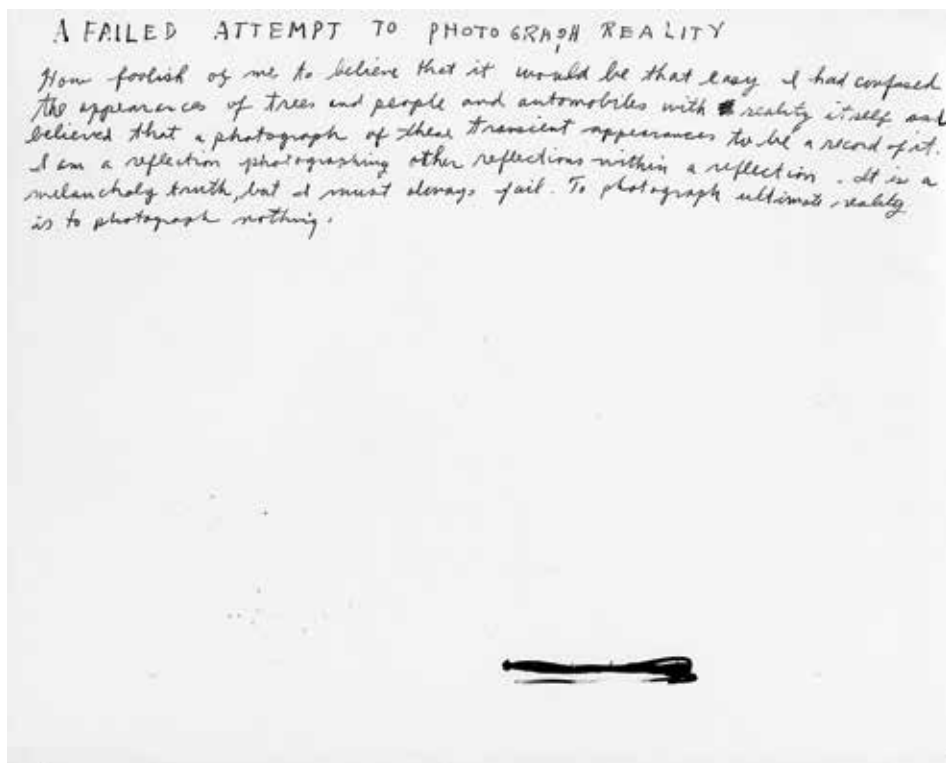
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FIGURE 11 *A failed attempt to photograph reality, 1975*. Photograph by Duane Michals.

paper. They clearly express Michals's approach to both reality and photography: the slice of reality that photography is able to capture is an illusion of reality, since visual reality also is an illusion, at least as long as it is reproduced by optically pure photographic means. The work not only signals Michals's attitude towards photography, but also his attitude towards text. Just as in *There are things here not seen in this photograph* (Fig. 1) the text is here given a mandate to formulate the reductionist characteristics of photography, and is thus presented as being somewhat more successful when it comes to capturing reality.

Michal sees reality as eluding documentation. For Michals, reality instead is presence; a multitude of simultaneous sensory experiences; something that could never be captured with the limited

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visual technology of photography. Instead, it is the very act of being phenomenologically *in* the world that makes up the only true reality for Michals:

> I am writing this to you in my thirty-ninth year. It is the twelfth of June, 1971, and as I sit here I can feel the warmth of the sun through the window, and the only sound is the buzzing of a fly against the glass. I can feel my breathing. I am in the midst of consciousness, this life. Everything before has dissolved to this moment, and this too will become memory instantly.[48]

To Michals's mind, every attempt to photographically capture this multisensual being in the world will result in a disembodying illusion of presence. The estranging powers of photography Michals uses to highlight the absurdity in the visual representation of reality, and to stretch the concept of reality to include the strange and the ambiguous. The result is a large body of photographs that explore an intermittent region between world, body, and photographic technology, where everything is known yet remains unfamiliar. Michals's imagery is situated in a place of slippage, of displacement of meaning. Here things are out of proportion compared to some general natural comprehension of the order of things: their meanings are slippery, they are queer.

The sequence *Things are queer* (Fig. 12) is really an exercise in evoking the uncanny through photography. For every image we feel that *now* we know, now we understand what we see, but in the next image our newly gained knowledge is overthrown. In the first image we see an ordinary bathroom. In the next image a giant leg has suddenly stepped into the middle of it. Our sense of scale is challenged. Is it perhaps really the bathroom that is small? The next image is taken from a greater distance. Here we see other objects that support the view that it is the bathroom that is small, and the man, who is now bending down towards the floor, is of ordinary size. The next image shows the same image again, but now as an illustration in a book. The book text seen underneath the image seems to be an excerpt from the fairy tale 'The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was' by the Brothers Grimm,

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FIGURE 12. *Things are queer, 1973*. Photograph by Duane Michals.

in which a giant, a king, and three treasure chests figure. The giant thumb that covers a part of the page, together with the text, once again introduces the idea of a giant, once more disrupting our notion of scale. The two subsequent images again step back from the scene: the first shows the reader of the book from close behind, the other the same reader from a greater distance. We now see how the reader is approaching an illuminated doorway. The reader and the illuminated doorway are in the next image shown as the content of a framed photographic picture hanging on a wall, while in the next picture the framed image is hanging over a white washbasin. In the last picture—which is also the same as the first image of the sequence—we again return to the scene we started out from. The frame, which at first we barely noticed hanging on the wall over the washbasin, we now know contains the mystery of photographic

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illusive representation. To relate the sequence to the prosthetic function of photographic technology we first extend visually into the interior of the bathroom, but in the next image we are bereft of our new understanding. The cyclical form suggests that this process is eternal. Even if there might be a feeling of successive liberation from order during the series, this order is again solidified in the last frame. The arbitrariness of photographic representation is reinforced by the sequential presentation, as the images become dependent upon one another for their interpretation, and the cyclical format makes sure that the confusion is eternal, as no point of reference is more stable than the next.

Michals's photographic investigation of relating to the world through technology seems to have pushed him gradually towards the insight that reality is elusive. He describes his own changing experience of reality due to his photographic practice as 'some kind of growth but I find it frightening because I'm losing things out of my life that my ego can't account for. … The familiar is becoming unfamiliar.'[49] Samaras reports a similar experience as photography seems to make his feeling of being disembodied or estranged from his own body manifest. Samaras's work consists of self-taken colourful Polaroid images, often showing parts of his undressed, or partly dressed, body or in whole-figure, expressing awkwardness and unconformity by striking uncomfortable poses or pulling wry faces that signal displeasure. Neither Samaras's self-relation or his relation to the camera is displayed as harmonic. Rather, Samaras's art seems to be a constant photographic chase after his identity or self-essence—a chase he knows is in vain. In a self-made 'Autointerview' from 1971, he answers his own question in the following way:

—What is your reflection to you?
—A disembodied relative.[50]

Samaras's experienced distance from his body is communicated through his endless pictorial reports on his investigations of his body and self, which result in a notion of how the self is ungraspable and deviant. Donald Kuspit has compared Samaras to the Greek god Proteus, sharing his ability, or handicap, to deceive everyone

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FIGURE 13 *Photo-Transformation, May 4, 1974.* Photograph by Lucas Samaras.

except himself.[51] I suggest the photographic image could be held responsible for generating, or strengthening, this Protean effect. The mirror image that the Polaroid offers is in Samaras's image-world an uncanny notion that we visually only ever know ourselves as 'disembodied relatives'. The creeping restlessness underneath Samaras's large image production, with its numerous depictions of his body and body parts, communicates a frustration over photography's

limited powers to convey anything beyond visual information of the body and self.

In one of his pictures (Fig. 13), Samaras stands beside his stove in his kitchen. From other images taken in his apartment we recognize the orange frying-pan, and the aluminium foil under the cooker hood. The mystery about to happen is taking place in Samaras's homely environment, which has also become homely to us by frequent exposure. Samaras has pulled some white clothing, perhaps a singlet, in front his face. The fabric seems to be symbolizing his surface, or his skin, and the rays emanating from underneath it seem to be radiating from his inner power core—his inner self. In the act of exposing this inner self to the camera and the public, Samaras covers his face. It seems as if he is trying to say that in order to reveal the true self, the face—often thought of as the point of access to a person—has to be covered and attention called to it as a visual illusion of an inner character. Samaras's art seems to propose that the photographic representation of the self will always stop at being a disembodied and uncanny visual reflection of a partly known, but also foreign, body. Samaras's image is a good example of how the uncanny of the photographic medium and the uncanny on the level of motif are impossible to separate, since the theme of the alienating photographic technology here is expressed through the motif.

By staging scenes of dreams, thoughts, conceptual ideas, and inner worlds, the reality concept that had manifested itself in straight photography as accessible by means of a skilled, technical, optical use of the camera is negotiated, rendered uncanny, and destabilized in the photographs of Krims, Tress, Samaras, and Michals. Reality is recognized as a construct, and the staged, constructed scenes are presented as real and true, as like any other definition of reality and truth. The uncanny effects of the images can be traced both to the motif level and to the level of the epistemological impact of camera technology: at a motif level, the images, often helped along by their titles, make the homely unhomely by destabilizing the boundaries of what we think we know and the unknown; on the level of the effects of camera technology, the images make us aware of the problems of the camera technology's ability to represent a multisensuous reality,

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and the disembodying effects of visual representation that make us into foreign bodies only partly known to ourselves.

Theatre and narration—resurrecting the hybrid

During the 1970s, photography became upgraded as an art form in the American art world. In the 1960s photography had become entangled with other art forms and suddenly accounted for a large number of the artworks shown in galleries. Thus performance artists had from the mid Sixties been using photography as part of their performance acts in order to document their artworks; and what was left, and exhibited, after the performance was often only a photographic trace. Equally, the pop artists of the Sixties used photographs to paint from, or as parts of their assemblages. Another obvious influence from photography on painted art could be seen in Photo-Realism, which was big in the Seventies.[52] When the photographic medium as such started to become interesting in the art world during the late Sixties, as galleries devoted solely to photography opened and a market developed,[53] photography began to take on the shape of distinguishable sphere of art. In 1970 there were four galleries instituted in New York that mainly exhibited photography; in 1975 this number had risen to fifteen.[54]

During the 1960s and 1970s, photography and theatre became connected through performance art since photography was used to document one-off performance acts. Thus photography became an important part, the surviving remains, of the performance work. This activity along the borders of performance and photography attracted some interest in the art debate. Nancy Foote described in an article from 1976 how many artists at the time were worried by the risks they took of being viewed as photographers instead of 'artists' when they incorporated photography into their art-making.[55] One explanation for this reaction was probably straight photography's purist ideals that still dominated art photography in the 1960s, and held that photography should be isolated from the other arts.

The hybrid climate that was developing within the art field, and into which photography had been integrated, influenced writers on photography and art photographers to adopt terminology and stylistic

devices from theatre art and theory. Given that Krims, Michals, Tress, and Samaras were introduced to a public as working in 'The Directorial Mode' producing 'staged' photography, the associations to theatre and performance were already present from the very first definitions of their photographic style. The identification was just, since they all used stylistic devices from theatre, as well as from other art forms, that helped their artworks communicate the theme of the limitations of photography in conveying a holistic life experience.

The debate whether photography was an art in its own right or only a version of painting has a long history dating back to its invention. The debate that raged during the Seventies on this issue was to a great extent centred on the ideas of John Szarkowski. Szarkowski was one of the mentors of the straight photographic movement, and he continued the implementation of the theories of the art critic Clement Greenberg.[56] Greenberg had in the 1940s instituted a theoretical programme according to which each artistic medium would have to define and purify its own essence and qualities in order to maintain its meaning as high art.[57] Straight photography was found by Szarkowski to satisfy these requirements as it was expressive by being objective. What I have termed optical vision was thus central for photography to qualify as a pure art form. Apart from certain technological, optically visual demands that Szarkowski placed on the photographic image, a pure photograph should be able to stand alone without help from other means of expression that would make its inherent communicative power redundant. Thus, the isolated image was supposed to be expressive, not narrative, which made all forms of allegories, tableaux, or theatricality taboo. In the more general field of art theory, Greenberg's ideas were still influential in the 1960s. Scholars such as Michael Fried strongly rejected hybrid, impure forms of art, calling them a form of 'theatre' as a way of signalling their lower aesthetic status.[58] The staged art photographers, and indeed the Seventies performance artists, rejected Fried's aesthetic principles by ignoring the borders between art forms and traditionally unconventional artistic hybridity. The rejection of hybrid art forms also dominated in the photographic theories important to straight photography. Szarkowski's writing, for example, can be read as a manifesto for

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the independence of photography from other art forms. By breaking down this metanarrative of photographic pureness, the staged art photographers of the 1970s freed their art from the mechanical reproducibility of the photograph, and produced art objects whose hybrid principles for art-making functioned in a broader art field, sharing aesthetic principles similar to those of other art produced during the decade. The concept of hybridity can instead be said to be constitutive of the staged art photographers' work. To stay with the theatrical discourse, I find the staged art photographers' post-phenomenological ideas to carry more than a trace of Berthold Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. Evoked when the distance between the audience and the work is highlighted in order to keep them aware that they are seeing a staged play, *Verfremdungseffekt* is a condition that promotes reflection on the part of the audience. In the same way, the staged art photographers called on their public to reflect on the boundaries of the photographic medium.

Samaras and Tress—directors of *Verfremdungseffekt*

Neither staged art photography, nor the debate about whether photography was supposed to depict 'reality' or 'fantasy', were innovations exclusive to Seventies' photography. From the invention of photography until the 1920s there was immense interest in the staged photograph in a movement referred to as 'pictorialism'. Several groups of photographers, the British Pre-Raphaelites and the Linked Ring among them, created manipulated images in the darkroom by using a range of painterly techniques that made their images look like paintings or charcoal drawings. During the 1930s, the pictorialist school faded away and was replaced by modernist, realist photography.[59] In America the straight photographic tradition was hegemonic as early as the 1920s, and an animated debate between the pictorialist William Mortensen and straight photographer Ansel Adams took place in the 1930s in the magazine *Camera Craft* over the proper photographic approach to reality.[60] Adams and the straight photographers came out on top, and when the histories came to be written during the purist era of photography Mortensen was not mentioned in any of the books on the photographic history of the

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twentieth century.[61] The 1970s saw a similar collision of interests when staged photography challenged straight photography and its interpretative prerogative over what photography was allowed to do, within which frames, and with what methods. One such point where the two schools diverged was in their approach to theatre.

In the works of Samaras, Michals, Tress, and Krims there is a clear emphasis on the photographic scene as being theatrically staged. When Coleman coined the expression 'The directorial mode', the references to theatre to describe the methods and effects of this particular photographic approach were already many. The directorial mode, Coleman explains, is a photographic creation of false documents, which stand in the same relation to the photographic medium as Beckettian theatre does to conventional theatre: 'All the assumptions, rituals, and roles in the spectator/actor/spectacle relationship are laid out in the open and the audience is left free to engage with the event on whichever level it finds most intriguing.'[62] In Seventies' staged photography there are no attempts to mask the photograph as something else than a photograph. Anne Hoy argues that the unabashed artifice of the photographs made by conceptual art photographers in the 1970s and 1980s intentionally and consciously called attention to the makers and to what had been made.[63] This also meant that the representative powers of the photographic medium were laid bare in order for the onlooker to dissect it in terms of illusion, technology, world, fantasy, reality, mind, and body. Reality is revealed as a theatrical stage, and photography as a theatrical act—fabricated, constructed and laden with representation.

I have found it fruitful to compare the effect of viewing reality as staged through photography to the *Verfremdungseffekt*, or *V-effekt*, as elaborated in the 1930s by the director and playwright Berthold Brecht. The stylistic device of the *V-effekt* was taken by Brecht from Russian formalist theatre (where it was called *ostranie*, or 'making strange'), and is closely related both to the prosthetic function of technology and the uncanny effect. Brecht used the *V-effekt* to emancipate historically defined, socially conditioned phenomena from the stamp of familiarity that he found protected them from possible contemporary critical redefinition.[64] By using different stylistic methods that repeatedly underscore the borders of the play

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and the staging, Brecht's *V-effekt* ensures that the spectator does not emotionally lose himself in the performance, but that he instead is constantly conscious of the theatrical setting on a meta level, and remains able to consciously reflect.[65] One method of achieving the *V-effekt* is to stage the scenes so they are clearly scenic, and thereby underline the artificial setting of the theatre performance. The four photographers studied here create a similar effect by emphasizing the borders and limitations of the photographic medium in order to force the onlooker to reflect on a meta level about the borders of mind/body/technology and the world. The political, socialist overtones that structure Brechtian theatre theory have in the staged photography of the 1970s been replaced by an epistemological inquiry into representation through visual technology.

Coleman lists Tress with Michals and Krims as belonging to a generation of photographers who engaged 'less with sociology than with theater'.[66] Inherent in this is a certain amount of criticism of the socially concerned photography of photojournalism, not to mention photographic theory as it had developed during the Seventies at the hands of theorists such as Victor Burgin, who stressed the importance of photographic theories that concentrated on the sociological aspects of photography. Yet it also points to these photographers' urge to express the inner world of the emotions through photography, instead of recording social documents as photographers such as Robert Frank and Diane Arbus had done. Tress's imagery is aesthetically similar to the photography of artists such as Arbus and Frank, but he applies the reality quality of photography so prominent in their social documentary photography in order to raze, or create confusion about, the borders between reality and fantasy. His images thus looked like traditional documentary photographs, but on closer viewing appeared as fabricated stagings. Tress saw all of reality as a stage where 'We create our own drama and theatre. We don't really live in reality so much. We create little stage sets for ourselves.'[67] In his 1970s books *The Dream Collector* (1974) and *The Theater of the Mind* (1976), Tress set out to unveil and visualize the invisible stage sets that influence and direct our daily behaviour, by asking children and grown-ups to describe their dreams and fantasies. The *Theater of the Mind* is divided into five sections that all

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have names that suggests the close connection between everyday life and theatre: 'Child's Play', 'Private Acts', 'Domestic Scenes', 'Stage Properties', 'Directors of Darkness', and 'Final Curtain'. In relation to the publication of *The Theater of the Mind*, Tress also wrote a note on his method of achieving such pictures, describing the way 'a playlike drama is set up before the lens'. The photographer here acts as a combination of psychoanalyst and director in that he first asks his models to tell of their emotional relationships, and then asks them to act them out before the camera. Tress declares that these emotional relations have often already been perceived in an intuitive manner by the photographer.[68]

Arthur Young and his Daughter, Marthas Vineyard, 1976 (Fig. 14) is shot in a Seventies' kitchen where the floral wallpaper on the cupboard doors, the patterned carpet on the floor, kitchen equipment of various sorts, and a clock telling us it is early afternoon all combine to give a homely impression. The centre of the picture is occupied by a portly, semi-dressed man looking at us with a gaze that is both satisfied and mischievous. From this point down in the image the homely impression is transformed into something very unhomely. The man is pressing down a young woman's head, holding her against a platter that is placed on a butcher's block. In his other hand he holds a knife that he points at the young woman's neck as if he was going to decapitate her and serve her head on the plate as in a ritual sacrifice. The young woman, dressed in a bikini, has a calm and satisfied expression on her face. She trusts him, and he is her master. Just as with *Ed Berman and his Mother*, once again our humorous first impression of an absurd scene of a happy man about to slice through a young woman's neck is ruptured by the title. Their relationship as father and daughter is not sound. There are no doubts that this scene is staged. There is no secrecy about the crime that is going to be committed. The man looks at us, and invites us to look. The unhidden stage set directs our thoughts about the picture away from the motif on a more general level, and points them, courtesy of the title, to the relationship between father and daughter.

Tress, who has been open about his unhappy childhood, later admitted that his stated intentions with his visual investigations into the minds of others was 'really a mirror reflection of the fet-
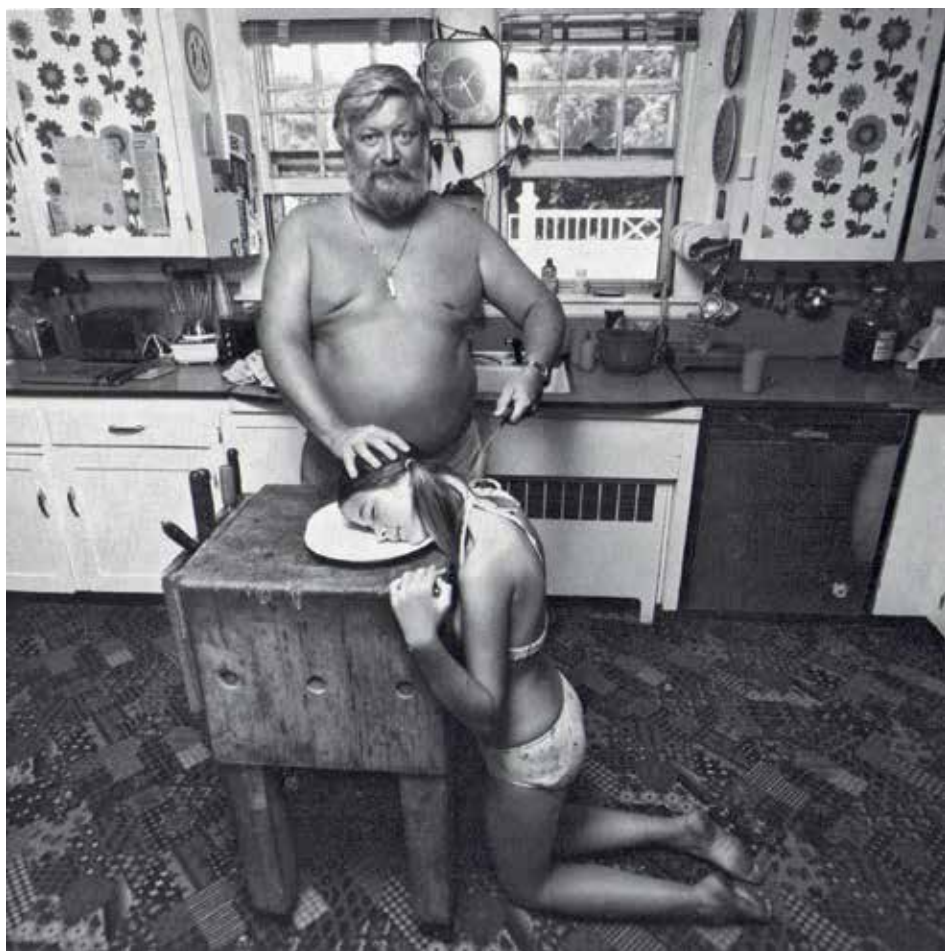
FIGURE 14 *Arthur Young and his Daughter, Martha's Vineyard, 1976*. Photograph by Arthur Tress.

ishistically obsessed person who created the image—the rest is just an alibi … a cover story to make it palatable to the academic functionaries and the general public who demand a neatly defined caption.'[69] Thus the images of *The Theatre of the Mind* can be seen as Tress's projections of his own inner life onto stage sets constructed by him from the raw material he found in his photographed subjects. Whichever way we choose to see them, the images of *The Theatre of The Mind* suggest that the individual life is acted out

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on an invisible stage, and that this stage can be materialized by staging a photograph of it. In the process, the constructed reality of our daily lives is revealed.

In one of Samaras's works (Fig. 15) the moment of shooting such a scene is displayed as a stage set. Samaras is shown in silhouette, sitting in a director's chair in charge of the equipment. In front of the camera, in a stage-like place flooded by a light recognizable from sci-fi movies, Samara's body is dissolving. The metamorphosis that is taking place is being recorded, but equally the recording of the metamorphosis is recorded by the Polaroid camera and the person operating it—Samaras himself. Given the visual reflection that the optics of the camera medium could produce of his own body and self had such an alienating effect on Samaras, the camera's recording role in the dissolving notion of the self becomes central to the interpretation of this particular image. The dissolution of Samara's levitating body seems to be a product of the camera, or the cameraman, being there. Hoy has suggested that theatrical representations in conceptual photo art have been used to explore psychological truth.[70] Samaras, in his psychological investigations of the self, makes use of the Polaroid photo shoot as a happening. A veteran of conceptual art happenings in the Sixties, Samaras found the Polaroid offered a form of private, controlled outcome from a happening with no 'accidents or audience'.[71] The Polaroid let him carry on the exploration of psychological truth through performance art, but in the solitude of his apartment, where he could continue with his private, controlled self-investigations.

Photograph and text—narrative hybrids in the work of Krims and Michals

The theatricality of staged photography can be said to be a resurrection of the narrative that had been repressed under modernism's straight photographic depiction of the world of objects.[72] Several other indications of the interest in narrative can be seen in the staged photography of the Seventies, such as titles, texts in or proximate to the photographs, and use of the sequential format. For both Michals and Krims, text is important. In *Idiosyncratic Pictures*, Krims used

FIGURE 15 *Photo-Transformation, July 4, 1975*. Photograph by Lucas Samaras.

idiomatic, slangy, satirical, and often politically incorrect titles to help spin the meaning of his pictures.[73] His multilayered satirical tableaux assembling a large number of American political and cultural references are mirrored in his titles which, to an onlooker who is perhaps not an initiate of American cultural politics three decades ago, looks like long Dadaistic or associative word games. Peeling back the titles and the images together, like an onion, a spectator might

FIGURE 16 *Les Krims Teaches them to Do It Abe Reles Style: Ice Picks for Kid Twist; Black Dicks a New Twist; and a Picture Designed to Piss-Off Danny, 1980*. Photograph by Les Krims

arrive at an intended point of view—but there are no guarantees.

At first glance, *Les Krims Teaches them to Do It Abe Reles Style: Ice Picks for Kid Twist; Black Dicks a New Twist; and a Picture Designed to Piss-Off Danny* (Fig. 16), neither the image nor the title, nor the two together, opens up any single obvious meaning to the photograph. It takes considerable effort for a contemporary viewer to dig into the intended meaning of the 35-year-old cultural satire veiled in rebus-like visual fragments alluding to American mass murderers of the 1930s, Krims's own role on the contemporaneous photographic art scene, Robert Mapplethorpe, and American AIDS policies in the 1980s—for a start.[74] The image shows a room where a muddle of

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decorations and props have been placed out or pasted on the walls. Three naked figures stand in the middle of the picture in front of a fireplace. I realize that every single detail that has been placed in the room around them means something in Krims's meticulous staged tableau, and in relation to other objects too, but these meanings are not accessible to me. Thus, Krims's image becomes proof of the arbitrariness of visual detail; his use of titles proof of how textual additions can pinpoint and steer interpretations in a propagandistic manner. About the titles of *Idiosyncratic Pictures*, Krims says: 'Texts and pictures are the mainstays of fiction and propaganda. How could propaganda be revealed and criticized without using a similar method? … I was told by Europeans on several occasions that my texts are idiomatic; not easily understood. Work harder!'[75]

Michals grafts several literary techniques onto photography. Just like Krims, his use of text in combination with images calls attention to the limitations of the isolated photograph's ability to communicate or evoke an experience of reality, or to communicate some objective meaning. Michals often makes his images in sequences, underlining the limitations of the still, isolated image as a sufficient piece of information: 'Sequences are to me like haiku, juste moments, I was dissatisfied with the single image because I could not bend it to a wider expression. In a sequence the sum total of all the photographs suggest something that no one picture could say.'[76] Michals is referring to himself as a 'short story writer', in contrast to most other photographers who for him are 'reporters'.[77]

In 1974 Michals started to write on his prints, something that was considered an anomaly according to the purist ideal. The combining of text and photographic image in order to convey a message is important to Michals, for as he said, 'where the photo ends, the writing begins. There's a symbiotic relationship. That's why the text and the image, when you view them at the same time, say something that neither individual element could say on its own.'[78] Just as Krims's combination of lengthy titles and images reveals the problems of representation both when it comes to the text and to the images, as well as the combination of the two, Michals's words also point to the shortcomings of image and text as forms of representation. It bears repeating that Michals considers the focus on vision in

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photography to be the main fallacy of the straight photographic tradition. In a comment bursting with criticism of Szarkowski and his ilk, Michals says: 'Photography books often have titles like *The Photographic Eye* or *The vision of So and So* or *Seeing Photographs*— as if photographers didn't have minds, only eyes.'[79] *There are things here not seen in this photograph* (Fig. 17) is a single image of a bar interior, empty of people, where Michals has transplanted text onto his photograph by writing directly at the photographic paper. The text written underneath the image reads:

> My shirt was wet with perspiration. The beer tasted good but I was still thirsty. Some drunk was talking to another drunk about Nixon. I watched a roach walk slowly along the edge of the bar stool. On the juke box Glenn Campbell was singing 'Southern nights', I had to go to the men's room. A derelict began to walk towards me to ask for money. It was time to leave.

The eerily dead impression of the depopulated bar in the image is in stark contrast to the noisy, sweaty, multisensual atmosphere of the bar described in the text. By providing a textual account of the things the visual reproduction has left out from his lived experience of the bar at the time the photograph was taken, Michals indicates how photography reduces the lived experience of reality because of its focus on the visual. He also suggests that a combination of representational techniques—here image and text—can come closer to an experience of multisensory reality by empowering one another's narrative elements. In a text written for a retrospective Duane Michals exhibition in Paris 1982, Michel Foucault identifies Michals's use of text in his photographs as being unlike that other photographers (who use it to further explain what is in the picture to make sure it conveys what it is intended to convey), for his texts serve other purposes, being 'not there to fix the image, hold it fast, but rather expose it to invisible breezes … permit it to sail free. … They are there to make the picture circulate in the mind.'[80] Thus Foucault suggests that the textual elements in Michals's images do not confine the meaning of the photograph to one story, but instead open up his images to several different meanings that are created between the

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THERE ARE THING HERE NOT SEEN IN THIS PHOTOGRAPH

My shirt was wet with perspiration.
The beer tasted good, but I was still thirsty.

Some drunk was talking to another drunk about Nixon.
I watched a roach walk slowly along the edge of a bar stool.
On the jukebox Glen Campbell began to sing about "Southern Nights".
I had to go to the men's room. A derelict was walking towards me to ask for money.
It was time to leave.   Duane Michals

FIGURE 17 *There are things here not seen in this photograph*, 1977. Photograph by Duane Michals.

photograph and the spectator. To me, both Michals's and Krims's combination of text and image tells the story of the limitations of purely visual, as well as purely textual, representations of reality.

Conclusion

My analysis of Seventies' staged art photography in America thus far has shown how the rejection of the technology fetishism that structured the ideas of American straight photography, which had peaked during high modernism with photographers such as Minor White, led American staged art photography to play extensively with feelings of the uncanny and the arbitrary borders between human, technology, and reality. It was especially the idea of the camera's

ability to function as an optically sharp and well-defined super-eye, and how by virtue of this it could reveal certain deeper aspects of reality, that was opposed by the staged art photographers. With the focus on visually exquisite images came a belief that the photograph should function as a crystal-clear window onto the secrets of the world, which would reveal themselves through visually exact reproduced details and forms found in nature. The photographer could and should use the camera as a calibrated tool in order to attain certain pre-visualized results that he controlled by his knowledge of the technology he was using and of the zone system. The role of the photographer, his equipment, and the reality from where he borrowed his objects appears well defined and separated in the process.

In American staged art photography in the Seventies, the optically pure and crystal-clear window of the camera was purposely misted over, and the relationship between human, reality, and photographic technology and its outcome blurred. Other senses than vision were dragged into the process in order to represent a wider notion of the reality concept through photography, and to show the absurdity of believing vision to have a mandate to tell us what multisensuous reality is. The negative implementations of focusing on the pure and optical, visual representation of reality is often shown in Seventies' American staged art photography by evoking uncanny effects, where a focus on the visual is thought to estrange us from reality rather than to bring us close to it. This effect is often provoked by deliberately showing how photography is a construct or fabrication by using methods similar to those found in Brechtian theatre, where the stage is emphasized as a constructed stage, and the audience always is kept aware of that they are seeing a fictive construction. By showing how photography was a construct, the American staged art photographers of the 1970s laid bare the relation between audience, photographer, photographic technology, and reality for that audience to see and reflect upon. A similar effect, where the limitations of the medium are addressed, is also achieved by reviving narrative: relating photography to literature by using lengthy detailed titles, writing on the photographs, and by presenting them in sequences that give them the form of photographic short stories.

The new multisensory approach to photography was paralleled

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by a redefinition of the concept of reality that had already begun with White and his emphasis on accessing inner worlds through photography. But where White's photographic theories were solidly anchored in the technological and optical mastery of photographic practice and in theories of well-defined borders to inner life, image, and reality, the staged art photographers of the 1970s set photography free from the purely visual and levelled the borders of technology, reality, and mind, thus redefining both the concept of photography and the concept of reality. In the next chapter we will look at how this levelling was carried out.

Communicating inner life

In an early attempt to characterize the photographic art movement of the Seventies, Corinne Robins describes how photographers then chose to leave reality behind in order to concentrate on introspection and producing art that was to be felt rather than seen.[1] My research shows that there are good reasons to question Robins's statement, at least the part that concerns feelings. Emotion did play a large role in the works of the American staged art photographers in the Seventies, but not in the sense that they were supposed to be communicated through the artworks; rather, the artworks were often designed to show photography's limited ability to express emotion as long as it was captured using the optical visualist paradigm. The first part of Robins's statement—that the Seventies photographers were introspective—is thus more than justified. In this brand of staged photography, I see an interest in exploring the personal, subjective inner world of thoughts and dreams, but no intention to communicate those introspections in a way that was supposed to make the audience feel the same as the photographer, or even to understand the ideas they were staging. Instead, their attitude towards the images conjured from their inner lives is characterized by a sceptical tone. It is as if they were asking how optical visual photography would be able to communicate anything about anyone's inner life to anyone else—it was not as if it were visual, after all. Overall, the audience and the beholder are little mentioned in the staged art photographers' writings. The reception of photography seems thus not to have been of any particular importance to their art-making or to their reflections on the photographic medium. This was because they were working from an approach where photography was a personal business, and the idea of the optical

photographic, visual communication of inner life—of emotions and thoughts—was believed to be vain.

In this chapter I first investigate the attitude towards the camera's role in communicating emotions, opening with a short account of the thoughts, emotions, and introspection seen in staged photography in the Seventies, and looking at the rejection of the straight photographic and documentarist ideal of the Fifties and Sixties that photography should serve to communicate emotions. I then turn to the approach taken to the relation between photography and the mind in staged photography, using the works and textual statements by the staged art photographers themselves. This relation is seen in terms of a theoretical discussion of technology as an extension of the mind that is centred on Jean Baudrillard's postmodern theory of the simulacra and Don Ihde's post-phenomenological approach to the relations between human, reality, and technology.

Thoughts, emotions, and disrupted communication

The concept of the mind in the staged photography of the 1970s understood it as containing both thoughts and emotions. The shift to photographic introspection had already been started by Minor White in the Fifties and Sixties, but crucial to White's introspections was a reliance on technical perfection where optical techniques still played a great role. The dependence on technology had been rejected by the staged art photographers, as discussed in Chapter 2. The interest in the mind evinced by staged photography implied a shift in the total experience of reality, which was made up by both visual and emotional content, as borne out by Michals's comment that 'We are what we feel, not what we look at'.[2]

For staged photography in the Seventies, the inner life was absolutely central as the source of images. The mind was the place for concepts and ideas to take form that were then realized by being staged and photographed. Many works of staged photography bear titles related to thoughts and dreams. Introspection, as Robins declared, was the main imperative behind the art-making of Samaras, Tress, Michals, and Krims. All of them stated how they used their inner worlds as the basis for their photography, and that their work had an

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introspective and self-therapeutic function. Their self-concerned art thus uses the objects of the outer world to realize and display scenes and ideas already preconceived in their minds. Indeed, for each, his mind was his personal 'ultimate only truth',[3] and its exploration the only way in which to make a photograph meaningful to him. Samaras's Polaroid photographs, which he himself has called 'creative psycho-dramas',[4] are self-introspective. Michals uses his mind as the source of his images, and explains how thoughts are his only reality.[5] This is worth emphasizing, since the self-introspective art of the staged art photographers not is to be understood as universally decodable. Michals clearly states that his art-making is a self-investigation, and that he is using photography to explain his experiences *to himself*.[6] Similarly, Tress uses photography in a self-defensive way. Reality for Tress is a rush of confusing scenes; photography helps him bring some order to the confusing flow of chaotic experience.[7] He also states how he researches his dreams and desires, and tries to translate them into 'concrete images'.[8] Krims refers to his own images as 'fabrications' and says that it is 'possible to create any image one thinks of', since 'The greatest potential source of photographic imagery is the mind.'[9] The idea of the mind as a source of images contradicts the straight photography ideal where one of the most important ideas was that the photographer was to find, and not invent, his objects in real life, without imposing alterations of any kind on the chosen slice of reality—either before or after the exposure.[10] The optically visual definition of the objects of reality as something that can be found in Nature, photographically collected, and brought home, is contradicted in the staged photography of the 1970s. Krims and Michals are the two photographers who were most outspokenly critical of this 'found aesthetics' in the straight photographic tradition, but Tress too deplored how the inner life had been overlooked in contemporary photo-making: 'so much of today's photography fails to touch upon the hidden life of imagination and fantasy, which is hungry for stimulation'.[11] Michals, throughout his interviews and texts, repeatedly criticized the social imperative of photographers acting as reporters of societal trivialities and surreal impressions of Nature.[12] In an interview from 1980 he said, with an allusion to the photographer Ed Ruscha, 'I don't need

to go across the country on a motorbike photographing every gas station. … I can sit in my living room and the universe comes to me.'[13] In 1963, the pop artist Ed Ruscha had published *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations*, a book of photographs of twenty-six petrol stations along Route 66. Indeed, the book only contained twenty-six images, each with a brief note of the petrol station's geographical location and the name of the petrol company. Ruscha said in an interview in 1975 that he had on purpose omitted text from his book because he wanted the 'facts' he presented in it to be 'neutral'.[14] The staged photography of the Seventies was a long way from presenting natural facts. One of the important points about the artworks produced then was that it did not matter if they meant something to anyone other than the photographers themselves. Self-expression as a self-concerned purpose took priority over communication, as can be seen in Krims's comment that 'Each picture must fascinate and entertain me. That's it. … Each picture must for me be interesting to look at. The decision of whether a picture works is made by me, not a focus group, committee, art director, wife, friend, or curator.'[15] The impossibility of communicating through photography was a theme in Krims's work that I will return to later.

The universal, 'natural facts' that Ruscha was after were thus accounted impossibilities in the staged photography of the 1970s. Michals's reaction to Ruscha's approach to photography speaks to the issue of how to show some kind of reality, for photography could not simply be concentrated to the optically visual, and reality not could be understood as belonging to the optically visual outer world of objects. The introspection of the staged art photographers is thus to be understood as self-exploration of the mind and dreams rather than as communications of any sort. My approach here is to take their images to be self-exploring or self-reflexive, but not self-expressive in a universal sense.

Thus far I have considered how American staged art photography in the 1970s challenged several of the most important formulations of the modernist straight photographers. We have seen how, in their fictionism, they opposed the ideal of found photography; how, in their refusal to credit any importance to traditional, technical, photographic qualities, their art opposed straight photography's credo of

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opticality; how, in their emphasis on the image's dependence on its surroundings for its interpretation, they rejected the modernist idea of the autonomy of the photographic picture. By relating it to theatre, they mocked the high modernist idea of photography as a pure art form. By combining text and image, they challenged the view of photographic expression as self-sufficient and pure. We have seen that their reaction to the idea that photography can capture reality was to stress its inability to capture anything essential about the experience of the world through its optical visual qualities. And we will now see how their images also contradicted the idea of the communication of emotions through photography, which was crucial both to White and to the documentary photographers of the Fifties and Sixties who shared the same ideals of objectivity, non-intervention, and truthfulness to Nature as straight photography did. Straight photography was wedded to the notion that objective and technically pure optical vision was the ideal when it came to communicating emotion. In a letter from 1933 to his artistic antithesis, the pictorialist William Mortensen, Ansel Adams declared that 'The Purist shuns sentimental–subjective connotations that undermine the power and clarity of the real photographic expression. All great art in any medium avoids weak sentimental–subjective conceptions. The objective attitude in no way implies that photography is not emotional. I am surprised that you are not aware that objectivity is only the tool of intense expression.'[16] This approach continued into both White's photography and Fifties' and Sixties' documentary photography.

Focusing on the metaphor— the equivalents of Minor White

Minor White's photography during the Fifties and Sixties challenged the straight photographic paradigm in one aspect: he plumbed emotion and the inner life more deeply than traditional straight photography might had recommended. Wolfgang Kemp has summarized American post-war art photography in four terms: inwardness, abstraction, nature-themed, and private symbolism.[17] Though it could be argued that photographers like White partly freed photography

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from literal interpretations and social contexts by methodologically pushing the medium in a transcendental and metaphysical direction, it was never freed from its specific stance on objective vision. Though White's work led photography into more introspective avenues philosophically speaking, and gave it an abstract turn in terms of motif, he never wavered from straight photography's technical approach which held him fast in a traditional approach to the relation between image and reality.[18] The relation between mind and photography that developed with White during the 1960s in American art photography still carried all the hallmarks of Ansel Adams's ideas on straight photography as able to reveal a correspondence between the objects of the world and the human soul. The successful communication of emotion, according to Adams, was dependent on the photographer's optical photographic perfection. In 'A personal credo' written 1943, Adams had explained that 'A great photograph is a full expression of what one feels about what is being photographed in the deepest sense, and is, thereby, a true expression of what one feels about life in its entirety. And the expression of what one feels should be set forth in terms of simple devotion to the medium—a statement of the utmost clarity and perfection possible under the conditions of creation and production.'[19] In the same year, White wrote an instructive text on how to photograph feelings through objects.[20] The photography that dominated the American photographic art scene in the Sixties adhered in all essentials to the same principles of optical technological vision as straight photography had done, though now with a greater emphasis on abstraction and symbolism using photographic metaphors.

Inspired by Alfred Stieglitz's 1925–34 series of photographs of clouds he had titled *Equivalents*, a major proportion of Minor White's post-war production was concentrated on 'equivalents', or metaphors, where mundane details found in the surrounding world—pieces of bark, broken glass, frost crystals, melting snow, stones: most often taken from Nature—were captured in close-up, suggesting an abstract pattern that, according to White's teaching, would be able to instil in the viewer a state of mind or a feeling. For White, the photograph is thus a function instead of a thing:

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> When the photographer shows us what he considers to be an Equivalent, he is showing us an expression of a feeling, but this feeling is not the feeling he had for the object that he photographed. What really happened is that he recognized an object or series of forms that, when photographed, would yield an image with specific suggestive powers that can direct the viewer into a specific and known feeling, state or place within himself. With constantly metamorphosing material such as water, or clouds or ice, or light on cellophane and similar materials, the infinity of forms and shapes, reflections and colours suggest all sorts and manners of emotions and tactile encounters and intellectual speculations that are supported by and formed by the material but which maintain an independent identity from which the photographer can choose what he wishes to express.[21]

Clearly, by keeping to the straight photographic ideals, where the objects photographed were to be found in reality and not invented, and the focus was on technical skill and optical sharpness, White became reliant on visual metaphors. Things that are equivalent are not the same; rather, they stand in a relationship to each other that is characterized by a certain parallelism or correspondence. To better understand White's model, it can be compared to Freud's use of the photographic metaphor when explaining his psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious and the conscious. The relation between the two required two locations to be present at the same time: one where something was sealed, and one where something was revealed, a revelation that was believed to take place over and over again. The imprint in the unconscious was thus not removed when the conscious thought arose, but was possible to return to it through the act of psychoanalysis. Freud found the photographic process could provide him with a plausible metaphor for the interplay of the unconscious and the conscious:

> A rough but not inadequate analogy to this supposed relation of conscious to unconscious activity might be drawn from the field of ordinary photography. The first stage of the photograph is the 'negative'; every photographic picture has to pass through the

'negative process', and some of these negatives which have held good in examination are admitted to the 'positive process' ending in the picture.[22]

In Freud's metaphor, the negative is the index, the sensory impression, while development is the process of censorship, which results in a positive image—a conscious thought or memory. To elaborate further on his figurative use, it suggests that some of the negatives are made into masked visual representations of the impression. To see their origin, and to subject them to psychoanalysis, the psychoanalyst has to return to the negative in order to understand their particular manifestation.

The process of translation of a sensory impression into a visual manifestation—a memory image—is fundamental to Freud's theory. The initial concealment has to be translated into revealment by a certain defined process designed to tear down the borders between the two, or, in other words, psychoanalysis. This translation process has strong connections to Minor White's approach to photography where the photograph is the site of translation between inner life and the objects of the world. In White's images, visual elements of the photographic motives were supposed to act as traces of emotions. By seeing these visual elements, the beholder was to experience a translation from the formal visual element into their own feelings, soul, or state of mind that did not necessarily corresponded to the feeling the photographer had felt. This act White called 'mirroring' and explained it to be the act when the viewer invented a subject for the abstractions of the picture from his own repertoire.[23] No emotional content of the images is thus specified. The communication that photography is capable of is to shout to the beholder, Look, here are emotions! The emotions are then filled by the beholder from his own inner life.

Moon and Wall Encrustations, Pultneyville, New York, Equivalent of Josh (Fig. 18) is a typical image from White's Fifties' and Sixties' production. The image is sharp with, high contrast, emphasizing the texture of the photographed object. The pattern calls to mind ink washes from the Far East. The middle part of the title anchors the image in objective reality with the precise photographed object and the exact geographical location of the picture. This is in con-

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Figure 18 *Moon and Wall Encrustations, Pultneyville, New York, Equivalent of Josh, 1964*. Photograph by Minor White.

trast to the first and last part of the title, and indeed the abstract motif itself. Thus while the title makes clear it is an encrusted wall, photographed in Pultneyville, and the first part suggests we see a moon, if we are to trust the middle part of title we know it cannot be the moon—no wall so encrusted can reflect the moon. The mystery of the moon eludes analysis. Similarly, the last part of the title suggests that the image has a meaning that reaches beyond the image's surface: it is the equivalent of someone named Josh. This trace of equivalence set out by White is not one we are allowed to follow, but we are encouraged to interpret it in terms of equivalences relevant to ourselves. One key aspect that separated White's photographic philosophy from the staged photography of the Seventies

was his conviction that the mind itself should be kept secret and never revealed in any image. White believed that 'The moment when a photograph transforms into a mirror that can be walked into … must always remain secret because the experience is entirely within the individual. It is personal, his own private experience, ineffable, and untranslatable.'[24]

White's untranslatable, private emotional experience conveyed through the objects of the world by means of photography reveals a sense in which every man ultimately *is* an island. It is important to point out that this barrier to communicating messages was something positive to White, who saw it as essential to the ultimate creative process of photography in which everyone could reveal their own inner life to themselves, hidden from the rest in a hermetic, mystical artistic experience. Thus the disruption of photo-mediated communication was something positive for White. The same subjective idea of the incommensurability of inner lives can be found in the staged photography of the Seventies. Michals described photographs of people expressing emotion as hollow visual semblances of the emotions that gave no insight into the feelings of the person photographed. White's two-way system, where the beholder was supposed to fill in his own emotions, was thus rejected by Michals as the meaningless projection onto empty visual shells of the visual illusion of emotion.[25]

The empty appearance of emotion

The critique of the pointlessness of communicating emotions I have ascribed to Michals becomes even more vivid if contrasted to the social documentarist tradition in the photography of the Fifties and Sixties. White's philosophy of the isolation of the creative mind was here contrasted by a simpler communicative outlook on photography as a universal visual language.[26] Underneath the idea of photography as a universal language lay an understanding of humanism as the main element in photography. In an article from 1946, Clement Greenberg had explained how photography, due to its mechanical and neutral way of portraying objects and humans, circumvented the banality that haunted other forms of art when they tried to act under the flag

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of 'human interest'.[27] A similar idea also guided Edward Steichen, director of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1947–1962) when in 1955 he curated the exhibition 'Family of Man'. The exhibition, which consisted of 508 photographs taken in 68 countries by 273 different photographers, travelled around the world and was seen by a total of 9 million visitors.[28] Steichen told how the exhibition was supposed to act as 'a mirror of the universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life—as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world.'[29] The exhibition was a huge commercial success and Steichen became world famous as a curating genius. The photographic community, however, was severely critical of *Family of Man* in many respects.[30] One much-criticized aspect was the idea of photography as universal communication. The exhibition was considered to be disrespectful towards photography as art, as it was centred on 'mankind' instead of the medium or the photographers.[31] This communicative model continued to be critically scrutinized in photography circles during the Seventies.

The Seventies saw the decline in public interest in magazines such as *Life*, where photography had constituted an important part of the reporting.[32] In his 1978 *Mirrors and Windows. American Photography since 1960*, Szarkowski set out to isolate some of the reasons why photojournalism in the Seventies was replaced by a more self-expressive, subjective phase of photo history. One of the factors, according to Szarkowski, was a widespread decline in the belief in photography's ability to communicate with magazine readers. The redundancy of journalistic photography was raised in the debate as an effect of photography's failure to report anything other than visual appearances. Photographs, noted Szarkowski, failed to communicate anything about the minds and feelings of the people photographed, and the crisis of belief in representative power was, according to Szarkowski, one of the factors that led photography to become an increasingly personal business during the 1970s.[33] The straight photographic model of empathic communication using formal elements, and the photojournalist's socially concerned idea that the world could be changed by taking photographs of suffering and poverty and publishing them in magazines—both

invoked in Steichen's sentimental approach to photography as a universal language—were provocative to Les Krims, whose work in the Seventies extensively criticized photography for relying on such socially concerned imperatives. In 1972 Krims produced a faux cookbook, *Making Chicken Soup* (Fig. 19), which contained several photographs of his mother preparing and cooking chicken soup naked in her kitchen. The concept of the book is more important to this discussion than the images it contains. Chicken soup in the Jewish kitchen is a panacea that helps restore strength and health. Krims says the photo book was 'designed to present the statement that concerned photography at best was a palliative.'[34] Photography was found to be unable either to communicate feelings or to change the world as long as it relied on optical, visual representation.

The rising awareness of the limitations of photography in conveying feelings can be seen in a comment Michals made in an interview about a photograph of his close relatives: 'A photograph of my parents or my father doesn't tell me for a second what I thought of my father, which for me is much more important than what the man looked like.'[35] In a later interview from 1987 he explained his frustration at photography's limited ability to convey feelings, as it was doomed only to deal with the appearance of emotion, which tells us nothing of the emotions other than what they look like.[36] Arthur Tress described his method of penetrating the emotional bonds within families in *The Theater of the Mind* in the following way:

> The photographic frame is no longer being used as a documentary window into undisturbed private lives, but as a stage on which the subjects consciously direct themselves to bring forward hidden information that is not usually displayed on the surface. The photographer hopes not only to show us what families look like, which we already know, but to penetrate deeper into their thoughts and emotions.[37]

In order for an image to penetrate deep into the emotions, Tress argued, they have to be 'consciously directed' with the help of sceneries, props, and symbols. In Tress's view, feelings could be communicated through photography, but only by intervention in
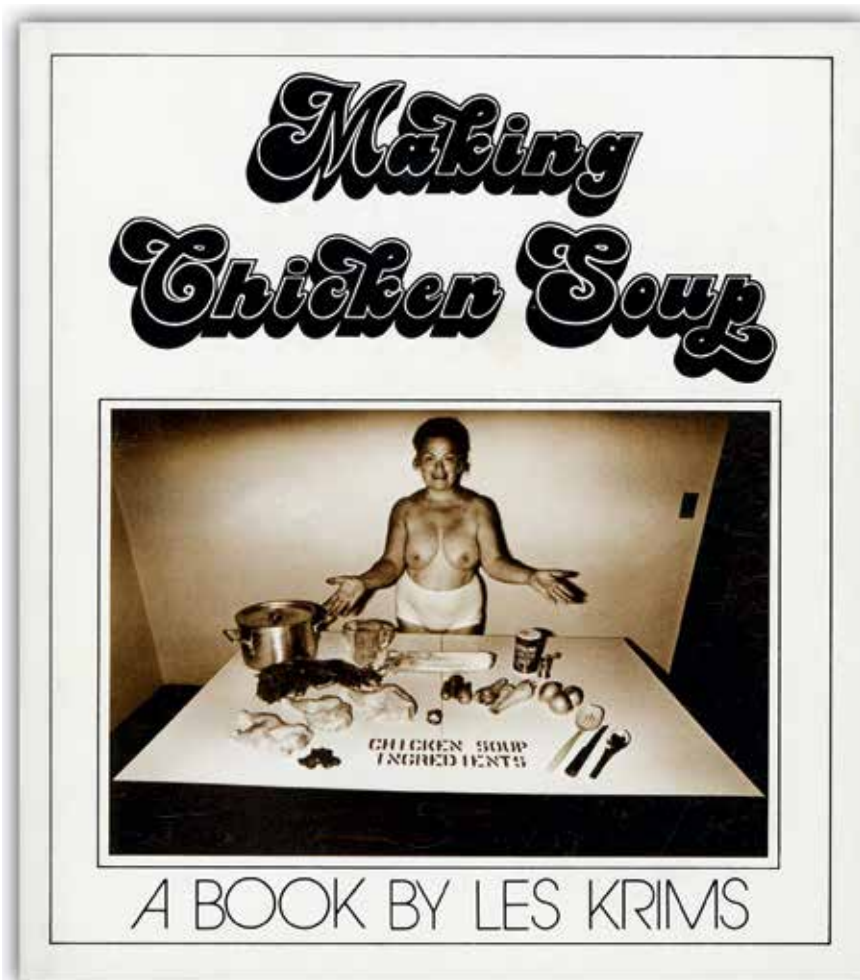
FIGURE 19 *Making Chicken Soup, 1972*. Photograph by Les Krims.

the shape of directions and staging. No photographic image can actively show the emotions of photographed people due to its simple reliance on visual objective encoding. Neither for Tress was the visual appearance of someone experiencing emotion sufficient for emotional communication to occur.

The fact that both Tress and Michals dwelled on photography's emotional emptiness and inability to convey anything except

appearances as long as it was only an objective, optical, record of reality, is best interpreted in the light of Seventies' social photo theory as presented by the group of theorists in Victor Burgin's circle. In this Marxist-informed semiotic theory, photography was held to be a vehicle that lacked an identity and history of its own, and thus needed to be controlled, since it could be used by anyone to say anything. As such, the identification of photography's promiscuity when changing context is really the dark side of Steichen's universal language. Burgin et al. were heavily influenced by Roland Barthes's semiotic and structuralist theory of photography that he had developed during the Fifties and Sixties. In *Thinking Photography*, Barthes's early works are mentioned frequently, with his ideas seen as constitutive of the new theory paradigm that Burgin and his circle were instituting.[38] Two years before *Thinking Photography* was published, Roland Barthes wrote *Camera Lucida*, in which he revisited phenomenological philosophy and Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism in order to find methodological points of access to photography. Although Barthes had been a role model for the circle around Burgin, because of his structuralist writings on photography in the Fifties and Sixties, the release of *Camera Lucida* was met with silence in *Thinking Photography*.[39] *Camera Lucida* was a total phenomenological turnaround from Barthes's earlier theoretical approach, as it focused on emotion and subjectivity, both aspects of photography that were rejected in the theory Burgin et. al. represented.

Though the staged photography movement shares one common idea with postmodern photo theory—a belief in the emptiness of visual codes of photography—they also share a profound affinity with the phenomenological approach found in *Camera Lucida*. *Camera Lucida* connects in an immediate way to the Seventies' embodied perspective of photography that photo theory had distanced itself from. Michals's statement about the photo not getting close to his feelings about his father recalls Barthes's reflections on the photographic limitations to communicating the essence of a photographed person to the viewer of the photograph. In one of the passages in *Camera Lucida,* Barthes describes the frustration of looking at photographs of his dead mother that only are able to give him 'painful labor' because they show him partially true glimpses of

his mother's essential being through details in the pictures. Because the images prove partially true, to Barthes they appear totally false:

> To say, confronted with a certain photograph, 'That's almost the way she was!' was more distressing than to say, confronted with another, 'That's not the way she was at all.' The almost: love's dreadful regime, but also the dream's disappointing status—which is why I hate dreams. … I dream about her, I do not dream her.[40]

In Barthes's words we see a parallel to the estranging effect of the camera medium Ihde described as a prosthetic function: visual fragments may be recognizable in the photographic image, but are recognized as only partly belonging to us and our corporeal vision. As evidence of a living being, a photograph can only tell us a partial truth, since it leaves out the cluster of sensory impressions needed to make it complete. The 'postmodern nausea' that Barthes and Michals described when a photograph is found to be empty of emotional content beneath the surface of optical, visual reproduction is thus a variant on the prosthetic, uncanny effect achieved by technology's non-transparent characteristics as theorized by Ihde and thematized by the staged art photographers.

Since the new theory opposed the modernist, straight photographic ideas as formulated by Szarkowski,[41] Burgin's theoretical model has subsequently been termed a 'postmodern photographic theory'.[42] If staged photography is thought of as postmodern art, we see how postmodern photographic theory only is able to explain one small element in the approach taken by movement; the remainder seem to be grounded in the antithesis of postmodern photographic theory, and rather belong to Barthes's phenomenological approach that refuses to separate corporeality from the visual representations of the world outside us. The paradox found in staged photography between the recognition that photography is a communicator of empty signs, and a subjective approach to it that holds it only can tell the truth, is not alien to the staged art photographers' approach to the relationship between photography and mind. This relationship is seen as promoting self-exploration, which rhymes with Barthes's subjective and existential outlook, but at the same time it is seen as

limited when it comes to communicating the results of these self-explorations in a manner meaningful to anyone except themselves: they are better explained by referring to Burgins's theory, where the photograph is equated with an empty, arbitrary sign.

Technology and mind

Though it was found to be empty and unable to communicate emotion, the photographic experience was not a negative one for the staged art photographers. On the contrary, as we have seen, photography offered them a strategy to cope with chaotic life,[43] and provided a tool for deeper self-knowledge. Their photographic practice therefore seems to be a post-phenomenological exploration that identifies the limitations to reality, embodied mind, and photographic technology, but these limits are used constructively in a process of self-reflection on their own relation to the world and to the camera medium. Thus much of the staged art photographers' work can be called a sort of metaphotography—photographic works about photographic experience. At this point I will clarify the post-phenomenological outlook on photography that I see permeating the works of the staged art photographers of the Seventies, relating their ideas to a theoretical discussion where Baudrillard and McLuhan are contrasted to the post-phenomenological ideas advanced by Ihde. As we have seen, the ability to communicate inner worlds was rejected by the staged art photographers where social documentary and photojournalist photography was concerned. The idea that photography would be able to give the reader of a magazine access to the feelings of photographed people, or would make a difference in the real world, was strongly opposed. In this respect, the emptiness of photographic representation was considered a limitation within the medium that reduced the real, multisensory world experience. In their art-making, on the contrary, I find that this photographic emptiness and inability to communicate instead acted as a positive force, because it challenged the staged art photographers to seek new ways to document their reality that went beyond the naturalistic outer reality of found objects that straight photography once saw as its arena

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of photographic praxis. By forsaking the outer world of objects, they were obliged to explore the imagery taken from their minds.

Camera as extra cognitive organ

In his seminal book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* from 1964, McLuhan described how the different circumstances that make up our society and culture can be seen as an 'extension' of our own selves. Technology is the extension of our bodies and brains, clothes the extension of the human skin,[44] and cities the 'extensions of bodily organs to accommodate the needs of large groups',[45] to mention a few examples. All of these are mechanical, safe extensions that humans can control. Far more threatening in McLuhan's eyes was electrified technology, where power and speed have increased at such a rate that it can only be compared to extensions of our central nervous system.[46] This new sense of 'inclusive awareness' leads to disintegration, a loss of control, and to a state of 'implosion and contraction' among mankind.[47] Just as Baudrillard would later, McLuhan describes a phenomenological collapse of technology, body, world, and mind that he thinks threatens the sanity of mankind.

An equally dystopian view of technology can be found in the writings of Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard, a leading light in the pluralist, postmodern debate that saw technology's impact on mankind's relation to lived 'real life' experience as one of the big philosophical issues of the day, with a clear focus on its negative aspects. Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* from 1979, which is often referred to as originating the academic debate on postmodernity, holds technology to be at the very core of the epistemological turn from modern metanarratives to postmodern forms of knowledge. Machines used in scientific research were said to be responsible for producing a mass of information that then prompted the shift to a postmodern, more scattered form of knowledge.[48] Baudrillard's contemporary theory of simulacra, like Lyotard's, is centred on technological development, and in particular visual technology—television, film, and photography—that Baudrillard said had contributed to the dissolution of reality. Baudrillard divides

the concept of simulacra into three phases, clearly corresponding to the development of visual culture. The first order of simulacra is the phase when an image looks like the object it represents. The second is a symbolic, unfaithful representation of the original, where the referent and the image stands in a dynamic correspondence, hinting at something beyond what the thing can visually correspond to in itself. The third order of simulacra is a conflation of the real and the representation of it, and is constitutive of postmodernism. The third order of simulacra lacks origin (as in an indexical relationship to reality), and has become a sort of hyperreality where the border between the real and its model is imploded in a short-circuit that Baudrillard identifies as meaningless. Baudrillard's description of how the whole traditional world of causality, built up in binary pairs such as active/passive and subject/object, has collapsed into one—to him—meaningless level, becomes a necrology of the modernist metanarrative as well as mankind's power to actively choose and control one's sensory input. In the new postmodern, simulacral world, symbolic representations have been rejected following the 'negation of the sign as value'.[49]

In a discussion of photography that bears a resemblance to Baudrillard's theory, Susan Sontag set out to depict the difference between the traditional fine arts and photography, and came to the conclusion that photography's democratic features—the fact that it can be accessed and mastered by anyone—was what differentiated it from the more elitist, traditional fine arts. Photography, as included in modern media, created in Sontag's view a meta-art that was not dependent on the dichotomies of true and false, original and copy, or bad and good taste, as was the case with fine art, but instead combined them in a characteristic tone that she recognized as 'ironic, or dead-pan, or parodistic'.[50] Sontag's idea of photography's power to resolve traditional binary pairs is similar to Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, but, for Baudrillard, modern visual technologies had a much more severe impact: instead of provoking merely parodistic implosions of binary pairs, they had become a threat to life itself, since they implied a total bodily takeover and the control of mankind's minds. The breakdown of the metanarrative that Lyotard identified and described was interpreted by Baudrillard in terms of

a breakdown of the boundaries between mind, body, and technology. Television was one of his prime suspects in this development:

> it is TV that is true, it is TV that renders true. Truth that is no longer the reflexive truth of the mirror, nor the perspectival truth of the panoptic system and of the gaze, but the manipulative truth of the test that sounds out and interrogates, of the laser that touches and pierces, of computer cards that retain your preferred sequences, of the genetic code that controls your combinations, of cells that inform your sensory universe. … Such a blending, such a viral, endemic, chronic, alarming presence of the medium, without the possibility of isolating the effects … dissolution of TV in life, dissolution of life in TV.[51]

Television for Baudrillard became a manifestation of what is best termed a negative embodiment—a totally pacifying technological takeover, where body, mind and technology have imploded into a meaningless, scattered flow of information:

> It is only a screen or, better, it is a miniaturized terminal that immediately appears in your head (you are the screen and the television is watching you), transistorizes all your neurons and passes for a magnetic tape—a tape, not an image.[52]

A more positive outlook on technology can be found in the post-phenomenological theories of Don Ihde. Ihde puts technology at the very heart of the phenomenological philosophical problem, as something that pinpoints the relational aspect of mankind's being in and with the world. Ihde thus argues that the embodiment of one's praxis in technologies is ultimately an existential relation with the world.[53] If McLuhan saw the reductive aspect of technology as located in a psychological mechanism responding to a technical development not designed for mankind to rightly manoeuvre, this transposition from extension to reduction is instead found in the very phenomenological relation between man and world. Man wants to be one with his experience of the world through technology, but can never be so because he is dependent on a mediator in order to have the

experience, as discussed in terms of the prosthesis in Chapter 2. This gives rise to a situation where the phenomenological questions are posed and explored. This is also the role I find that photography had in the staged photography of the 1970s. As a tool for self-intro-spection and self-exploration that is able to highlight the relation to the world by its very technological function, the camera is used to explore this relation in metaphotographic art-making. They make images about photography, and about themselves as photographers.

McLuhan believed that the modern status of mediation had caused the human consciousness to auto-amputate itself, in order to maintain a sane equilibrium. He grounds this theory in medi-cal research that has shown that when equilibrium in the body is unattainable, the body detaches or numbs the body part or organ responsible for the overstimulation. This auto-amputation is thus a psychological mechanism connected to the nervous system, and is activated when our senses are overly stimulated.[54] The idea of bodily reactions to overstimulation resembles Georg Simmel's modernist critique of the 1890s, where the modern urban life with its blinking lights and self-assertive, steady flow of information supposedly in-stilled a blasé attitude in the man in the street, whose nerves became exhausted by the exposure to such stimuli. Instead of amputating the body, according to Simmel the urban human being develops an extra organ that can take care of the impressions and prevent the brain from overloading. This organ, which protects the city dweller 'against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment', is in Simmel's theory the 'organ that is least sensitive and quite remote from the depth of the personality.'[55] Simmel's words are echoed in Tress's self-defensive use of his camera where it helps him to structure his world cognitively:

> Photography is my method for defining the confusing world that rushes constantly towards me. It is my defensive attempt to reduce our daily chaos to a set of understandable images. Through my cam-era I try to clarify and edit the innumerable flow of moments that constantly parades and invades my senses. My urge to photograph is activated by an almost biological instinct for self-preservation from disorder. The camera is a mechanical apparatus that extends

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my natural ability and desire for meaningful organization. I need it to survive.[56]

Tress's words can be taken to mean that photography, for him, makes possible a transformation of the chaotic multistimulations of the outer world into a quiet, solemn, and manageable flat copy of the real world, which would harmonize theoretically with Simmel's extra organ. But Simmel's extra organ is as remote and as separate as possible from the 'depth of personality'. Tress's view of the camera is rather one where photography has become his method of merging scattered flows into the cognitive process of which photographic technology is part. In this sense Tress's approach to the camera and photography bears more resemblance to the theory of technology as an extension of the mind as developed by the cognitivist Andy Clark.

Standing on the shoulders of phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Clark has launched the theory of the extended mind in certain external, often technological, devices—also called cognitive prosthetics. Clark is referred to as an anti-representationalist because of his denial of the idea that the world and mind are separate. Instead, 'cognition leaks onto the world',[57] and should hence be understood as an intermingling of mind, body, world, and technology. In a re-action to the contemporary focus on brain imaging and neuronic investigations in order to explain our behaviour, Clark argues that not all thinking must go on in the brain:

> If, as we confront some task, a part of the world functions as a pro-cess which, were it done in the head, we would have no hesitation in recognizing as part of the cognitive process, then that part of the world is (so we claim) part of the cognitive process. Cognitive processes ain't (all) in the head![58]

This principle, by which a device is recognized as a cognitive pros-thesis, Clark calls the parity principle. A quick look around the room where I am sitting writing this makes it obvious that a very great many objects in the world can fall under the parity principle. The things do not even have to be technological: my calendar and I are a cognitive circuit, as are my notebook and I, and the back of my hand

(where I have written things to remember) and I. The extension of the mind hypothesis is connected to memory function, and one of Clark's most well-known examples is that of an Alzheimer's patient who carries around a notebook which he consults as a memory aid. What if we now take Clark's concept of cognitive prosthetics and apply it to the example of camera and photography? With its ability to act as a memory aid, the camera is then found to fall under the parity principle as, during this process, the mind leaks onto camera and the camera onto the mind. But it can also be a cognitive prosthesis in Tress's use of the term; a personal device with which to help process and structure subjective impressions at the moment of experience. This function of photography—as a gadget with which to explore and explain the mind to oneself—is used by both Tress and Michals in their quest to stretch the concept of reality to include the inner world.

Real dreams—Michals and Tress
stretch the concept of reality

Clearly, then, the staged art photographers found the communication of feelings in social documentary and photojournalism not only a contrivance, but a lie. This emptiness of visualism, and the disrupted communication it symbolized to them, stimulated them to go beyond the traditional reality of empty appearances and explore their own subjective worlds. Far from White's transcendental search for equivalences through the truthful depiction of forms found in nature, we find the image-worlds of Tress and Michals. When interviewed by Barbaralee Diamonstein in 1980, Michals revealed his view of the intimate relationship between his image-making and his view of reality:

> Michals: 'Real to me is a very relative word. Even world is a relative word.'
> Diamonstein: 'Relative to what?'
> Michals: 'Relative to what most people think it is. I probably don't view it the same way most people view it, so consequently my photographs really don't look the same way most photographers' work look.'[59]

Because of their stretched concept of reality that embraces their inner worlds, both Michals and Tress are sometimes labelled surrealist photographers.[60] Tress even characterizes himself as a surrealist, although Michals does not.[61] A special bond between photography and surrealism was identified by Susan Sontag in *On Photography* when she declared that surrealism was the very kernel of photography, as it could create a duplicate world.[62] Rosalind Krauss, in similar vein, has suggested that photography was found to be the perfect means of expression by the surrealists since it was surreal in itself.[63] Tress and Michals share the surrealist—and psychoanalytical—approach to reality where dreams and fantasies are as real as anything else; however, what is not present in surrealist photography is any exploration or critique of how photography only can portray a diminished reality as long as it is captured with an epistemology that is centred on optical vision and the optically visual, which I find important to Tress and Michals. Instead, according to Krauss, there is a 'privileging of visuality' in surrealist art theory.[64] Though, as Sandbye has pointed out, the staged art photography of the Seventies and surrealist photography bear some thematic and many visual resemblances to each other,[65] I find them to differ on this crucial point: where the surrealists hailed vision as a domain through which to express a surreal reality, the American staged art photographers of the Seventies instead recognized the visually surreal and uncanny version of reality, shown through photography as reductive and negative, because it only was able to reproduce a static and non-holistic concept of reality. Thus, the multisensual mind can be shown through staged images, but will never come off as really meaningful to anyone else than the photographer to whom the photographic function of self-exploration is of the highest value.

The sequence *Bogey Man* (Fig. 20) from 1976 tells us something about Michals's stretched concept of reality, and photography's role in this extension. The first image in the sequence shows a girl sitting in a chair reading a book, next to a hatstand on which hangs a coat and hat. In the second image the girl pays attention to the hatstand; in the third she has jumped up to still her anxiety or satisfy her curiosity about what is inside the coat by opening it in the fourth image. The fifth image shows that the girl, reassured, has returned to her chair

FIGURE 20 *The Bogey Man, 1973*. Photograph by Duane Michals.

and fallen asleep. At the same time, a motion blur has been added to the coat and hat, which has also gained legs and shoes. In the sixth image the coat and hat, which have turned into a man, starts to walk towards the sleeping girl in the chair, and in the last image he carries her away screaming. At first we view the scene as if it was happening in reality for everyone to see. When the girl falls asleep the sequence is not disrupted, for the scene is portrayed in the same way as it has been from the beginning, with the same perspective and in the same grainy blacks and whites. If we assume the rest of the sequence shows the dream of the sleeping girl, starting with the fifth image the perspective purportedly moves inside the mind of the girl as the sequence now shows her nightmare of the coat coming alive. Since there is no shift in presentation, reality and dream are interwoven by the camera, which is shown to be equally good at recording both outer reality and inner mind. Interpreted this way, the sequence suggests how photography can stretch the concept of reality to include mind in it.

If compared to White's mystical transgression when communicating emotions by means of photography, the relation between photography and mind seems in Michals's imagery to be rather transparent. The borders between mind, technology, and reality that were crucial for a meaningful interpretation to take place in White's photography are in Michals's work found to be totally arbitrary. As Michals puts it, rather flatly, 'When you look at my photographs you are looking at my thoughts.'[66] Michals's statement reveals two important things: firstly, a sense that the relation between thought and photograph is direct, flat, and not dependent on any transition, since the inner world is as real as the outer; and secondly, the world 'looking' implies that we cannot fathom a deeper level of thought than the surface of their visual appearances. We are not feeling, living, translating them into our own experiences, or understanding them.

Tress has a greater affinity with White's—and Freud's—ideas than Michals does. Tress expressed a view on the relation between photography and the mind reminiscent of White's in a text from 1980 called 'Fantasy and the Forlorn'. Here he equated the photographic negative with the process in which fantasy penetrated everyday life and turned it into a 'deeper level of experience'.[67] In Tress's view, pho-

tographers who wanted to create images of their inner worlds must 'dare to reverse the passive light-absorbing functions of the film'.[68] This would be done by taking command of the stage and refusing to passively submit to the objective concreteness of photography and 'the narrowest fragment of the present'.[69] Tress's call to return to the negative, by reversing everyday life into fantasy and dreams, resembled Freud's explanatory models of the workings of the mind in terms of photography, as well as White's idea of the photograph as a process that connects inner worlds and objects in Nature. But there was one important difference between Tress and White: Tress repeatedly pointed to the necessity of staging photographed scenes in order to catch underlying emotional registers, where White relied on the straight photographic ideal, where found scenes could not be compositionally altered to suit the photographer's intentions.

To reach his underlying psychological dimensions, Tress staged scenes from his inner world in which he investigated himself. Often this process was carried out through projection. The book *The Theater of the Mind* from 1976 comprises some seventy photographs of children's and adults' fantasies that the photographed subjects had been asked to act out in a way they felt visually concretized the feeling. In the process of acting out their normally unrevealed fantasies and emotions, Tress acted like a director, imposing on the scenes his own fears and fantasies: 'I project my knowledge of my own unhappy often complex relationships with my own family, friends, and lovers. My portraits are often mirrors of my own anxieties and fears … they are alibis for sharing those tensions and terrors.'[70] Thus, it is suggested that it is Tress's inner life and thoughts we see, projected onto his photographed subjects.

A more ethnographically inspired method he had used some years earlier, in 1972, resulted in the book *The Dream Collector*. To make the book, Tress went to playgrounds and other places where children congregated and asked them to tell him about the dreams and nightmares they had had. The children were asked to suggest how their dreams might possibly be translated into 'visual actualities', and Tress helped them stage a scene that corresponded to the feeling of the dream.[71] The children were then told to act the dream out in front of Tress's camera. Tress refers to his ethnographic interest as

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FIGURE 21 *Boy with Root Hands, New York, 1971*. Photograph by Arthur Tress.

being the driving force behind the book.[72] Every spread consists of one image of a dream and one short text written by John Minahan on the specific type of dream the image belongs to in Tress's survey. The dreams told and acted out are nearly always nightmarish, as in the image that belongs to a type of dream where 'vegetable forms (are) growing from their body, usually the extremities'[73] and one of being buried alive. *Boy with Root Hands, New York, 1971* (Fig. 21)
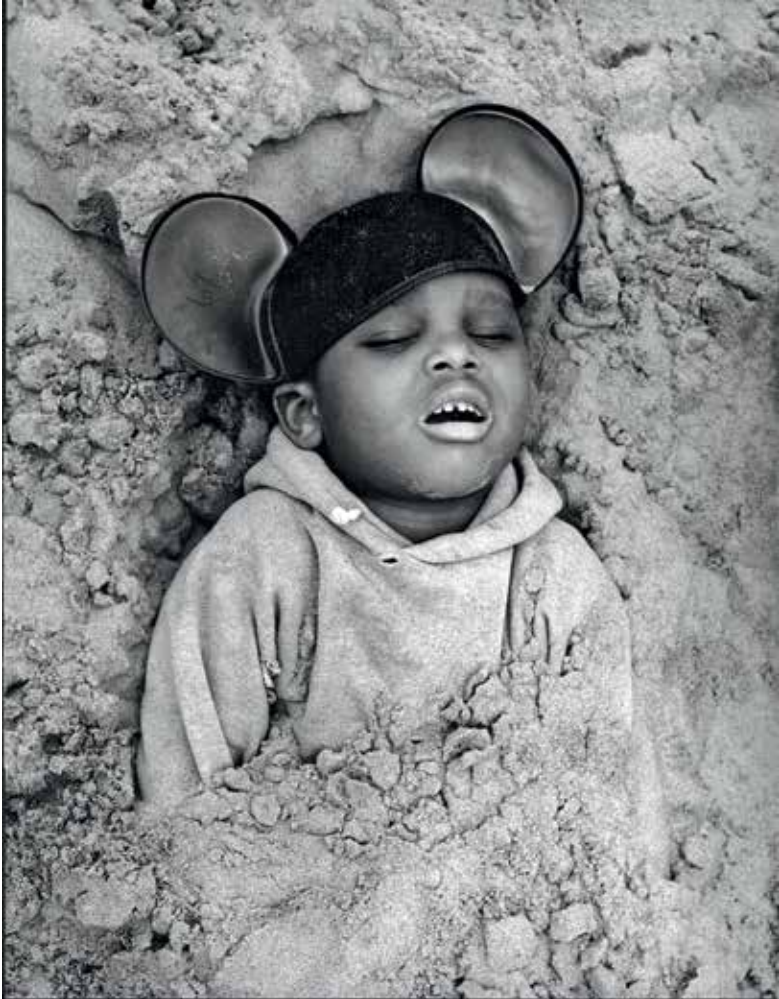
FIGURE 22 *Boy with Mickey Mouse Hat, Coney Island, 1968*. Photograph by Arthur Tress.

shows a boy lying on a road or pathway scattered with fallen leaves. The lower part of his body seems to be missing, which conveys a sensation of him crawling up from the asphalt. Instead of hands sticking out from the arms of his hoodie there are two clumps of roots. The background is out of focus, which makes the running gestalt behind him hard to define. Is he running towards the boy

to do him harm? Or is he running off now the harm is done? As so often in Tress's imagery, the boy seems unable to get away, trapped both in the image and the situation it depicts. In *Boy with Mickey Mouse Hat, Coney Island, 1968* (Fig. 22) a boy lies half buried in sand, he too unable to escape his confines. The Mickey Mouse hat he wears emphasizes the innocence of the child in an effective way. In a note on this project, Tress stated that he sought for a 'trans-formation moment' between illusion and reality that he thought children were better able to access and act out, since the two worlds of illusion and reality still overlapped in their imagination.[74] Given that the recreation of the children's fantasies was for Tress a combi-nation of 'actual dream, mythical archetypes, fairytale, horror movie, comic hook, and imaginative play', as both children and adults were 'always interchanging or translating our daily perceptions of reality into the enchanted sphere of the dream world',[75] the intentions behind Tress's work show an obvious affinity with Jungian themes of children's play and dreams, but also with the ideas about reality current in the surrealist art movement.

To further contrast White's approach to that of Tress and Michals, their different outlooks on the relation between photography and the mind can be related to Szarkowski's distinction between the photograph as a window or as a mirror.[76] In White's philosophy, photography is used in terms of a mirror as Szarkowski describes it: as a self-expressive reflection of the photographer who took the picture. It is also serves as a mirror for the viewer who projects his own emotions onto the abstractions. The image itself is the mirror; the process is what makes reflection possible. In the staged photogra-phy of the Seventies there were no real distinctions made between photograph as mirror and photograph as window. The photograph acts as a private mirror when it reflects the photographers' thoughts about themselves, but it also acts as their private window onto reality since the concept of reality has been stretched to include fabricated scenes from the mind. The mirror and the window are thus merged into one in the work of Tress and Michals. This difference tells us something about changing views on reality and selfhood, and two different types of subjective photography. In White's photography of the 1960s, the mind and self-reference is a place accessible through

photography's visual elements in a psychoanalytical translation process. In the staged photography of the 1970s, the process is no longer distinguishable, since the self-reference and the subjective mind have become the ultimate reality.

In the late 1980s, Baudrillard's dystopian views on the impact of new visual media were taken to their rhetorical extreme in texts on contemporary culture. In the exhibition catalogue for an exhibition of postmodern art at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, the curator Lars Nittve described the postmodern condition as a 'quagmire of electronic plasma in which the pillars of our modern view of the world—linear time, logical space, the cohesive subject—collapse; a hyper space in which the difference between true and false, genuine and fake, original and copy, is devoured by an ever denser flow of transmitted and simulated "reality".'[77] The language of postmodern writers on visual technology and its effect on humanity was often larded with the hyperventilating language of electronic and atomic references, comparing the effects of the visual media to the fragmenting of the known world into small, uncontrollable, scattered parts. This confusing insight, stemming from the disintegration of grand narrative, was often transferred onto the body along with its symptoms of dizziness, nausea, and vertigo. In 'Answering the Question: What is postmodernism?' from 1982, Jean-François Lyotard points out that postmodernism cannot be interpreted as 'modernism at its end but in the nascent state'.[78] In a postmodern world, nothing stands still; all is moving and dissolving, reshaping, and taking form in a constant process.

The postmodern, nauseating quagmire of reality of Nittve's description is also evident in Michael Köhler's article on staged photography as a phase in the development of postmodern photography. Köhler points out that postmodern image technologies are the most powerful agents of postmodern insecurity about what the real and reality might be.[79] Köhler argues that the world of photography had become a secondary reality, and that photographs have to some extent replaced empirical reality as our frame of reference.[80] Köhler's words are an echo of Baudrillard's simulacra, where original and copy are indistinguishable from each other. Köhler suggests that if Baudrillard's stages of simulacral development are applied to what

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happened in American art photography during the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies, we can then identify a break between the simulacra of the second and third orders.[81] I agree that the idea found in White's Fifties' and Sixties' philosophy of photography, where a world of visual representations is said to exist parallel to a real world of objects, between which interpretation is carried out according to certain patterns of communication, belongs to what Baudrillard would call a second order of simulacra. There are also good reasons to consider their self-absorbed outlook on photography-making and their identification of the impossibility of photographic communication to be a step towards the third order of simulacra where all borders implode, but with the important difference that this implosion is not a negative thing to them. Instead, they see it as the crumbling of the borders of the paradigm that structures the straight photographic ideals they oppose. Viewed in a post-phenomenological perspective, the revealed arbitrariness of the borders between reality, embodied mind, and technology offers them a chance to reflect on their role as photographers and, on a metalevel, on the photographic medium.

Conclusion

American staged photography during the Seventies was self-introspective and self-concerned, but not self-expressive in the sense that some initial meaning existed to be communicated to a public. Their photographic work was rather seen as a process of explaining their inner worlds of emotions and thoughts to themselves.

All attempts at communicating emotional content in image-making influenced by optically visualist ideals, such as social documentary or photojournalism, were rejected as meaningless. The optical, visual representation of emotions was found only to capture empty visual shells onto which the beholder could merely project emotions from his own emotional register. Emotions were not visual, and could not be represented visually.

In Minor White's photography, emotions and the communicative aspect of photography played an important role. In a process that resembles the approach taken by the staged art photographers, Minor White thought the photograph able to open an emotional

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channel—a space that could be filled with the beholder's emotions, which were not necessarily the same as the photographer had felt when taking the picture. For White, this sealed communication, which was rendered meaningless by the staged art photographers, was crucial if an art experience was to take place. The mystical communicative process of photography contrasted vividly with the idea of photography as a universal language as it appeared in photojournalism and social documentaries.

The ideas of photography as a tool in self-exploration took a post-phenomenological turn in the works of the staged art photographers in the Seventies. Instead of the dystopian notions and crumbling borders of technology, reality, body, and mind that can be found in McLuhan's and Baudrillard's theories of the impact of modern visual media on modern and postmodern society, their work bears a more profound affinity with the post-phenomenological theories developed by Ihde. In Ihde's view, relating to the world through technology constitutes a phenomenological experience, where the borders of mind, technology, and reality are found to be arbitrary and open to discussion. I find that photography had this function for the staged art photographers of the Seventies, as the medium let them reflect on their role as photographers and they could use photography to explain their inner lives to themselves. A broadening of the concept of reality to include the mind can be seen foremost in the works of Tress and Michals, where photography was used to explore photography's relation to dreams, but also to explain their inner worlds to themselves.

Its self-concern with photography-making and the supposed impossibility of photographic communication suggests that staged photography could be said to belong to Baudrillard's third order of simulacra, and therefore that it, tentatively, could be placed within postmodernism as defined by Baudrillard. But the arbitrariness that the third order of simulacra implied was not drawback for the staged art photographers; rather it was used in a post-phenomenological way to move beyond the visualist paradigm where the borders, imploded in third order of simulacra, had been firmly upheld. In the next chapter the implosion of the borders between sensibility and reality will be further examined, as will the image-world of their art-making.

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Haptic vision

In the previous chapter I compared the tendency to tear down the borders between inner and outer reality that can be seen in Seventies' American staged art photography, and Baudrillard's descriptions of the postmodern world using the concept of simulacra. Simulacra were also found to contain a razing of borders between the senses— an important theme for American staged photography from the Seventies. By bringing vision and touch closer within their photo art, the staged art photographers revitalized the haptic element in the concept of vision. Crucial to optic vision is distance, and in this chapter I will discuss how Krims, Michals, Tress, and Samaras broke free from the disembodying distance that had been so important to straight photographers, in order to follow the ideal of objectivity. This distance was overcome by interventions in the mechanical photographic process that disturbed an objectivity reliant on embodying distance by means of smudging, cutting, or writing on the surfaces of images. The blending of the real world and the image-world by eradicating distance not only brought the art-making of the staged art photographers close to Baudrillard's postmodern theories, but also to magic practice. Here I will discuss how Polaroid art offered a chance to get beyond the disembodiment created by objective distance idealized by straight photography, as the staged art photographers' made use of the Polaroid's features of immediacy and presence. I then consider Barthes's concept of punctum to further investigate a place of haptic and optic convergence in photography, and read punctum as an effect of photographic indexicality. Indexicality will then be compared and contrasted to Baudrillard's concept of simulacra (where the borders between outer reality and image reality have been eroded), and to staged photography, where

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such an erosion takes on the characteristics of the contagious magic principle posited by James Frazer.

Vision and touch—a separation and a reunification

In Chapter 2, I argued that a sense of the reduction in lived experience was expressed in the work of the Seventies staged art photographers, and explained how this reduction should be understood as an effect of what Don Ihde has called prosthetic technology. It is characteristic of prosthetic technology that it reminds the user of its existence: it is non-transparent, and so provokes a feeling of how interaction with the world through technological equipment does not fully belong to the user and user's body, but always also to someone else with whom the user relates. This feeling is further linked to the sensation of the uncanny, and together the uncanny and prosthetic effects were identified as possible side-effects of the optical vision that had been the ideal for American modernist photography. Moreover, the focus on the visual element in an optical understanding of photography was shown to be singled out as absurd in the work of Tress, Michals, Krims, and Samaras.

Our uncanny strangeness to ourselves is explored by the theorist Eric Santner, who, following Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek, has investigated the possibilities of reaching an understanding where universality reigns by finding a place he calls the 'midst-of-life'.[1] According to Santner, this state of mind can never be attained as long as one places oneself at a distance from life, assuming that a distance to the world would give the right overview needed for understanding.[2] Applied to my discussion of photography, Santner's idea can be used as a critique of the epistemological construction of Western visualism, in which photography is used as an optical device that, through mechanical mechanisms, brings a guaranteed distance from the objects of study, which is also believed to be what ensures that photography functions objectively within this paradigm. By rejecting such views, the American staged art photographers of the Seventies seem to suggest that optical, visual distance only can further estrange us from reality, since it will produce representations of objects of the world that tell us nothing about a multisensory re-

ality. Instead, they encourage something very similar to what Mieke Bal has identified as 'impure vision'[3]—synaesthetic effects triggered by visual impressions created by introducing the element of touch to photography. The works of the staged art photographers of the Seventies reclaim this impure quality of vision, as they point at the element of the haptic inherent in a vision that had been repressed during the long hegemony of scientific, objective, and optical vision born of the scientific discourse, and embraced by modernist straight art photography.

Haptic vision is tightly knit to the concept of photographic indexicality. Indexicality is a concept imported into photography theory from Charles Sanders Peirce's late nineteenth-century semiotic model of signs and their functions. In a text from 1894 Peirce writes, 'The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it, after it is established.'[4] Peirce's definition of the indexical function reveals a concept where materiality—the physical trace—is crucial, and where visual likeness or iconic symbolic mechanisms are redundant if the indexical function is to work. Thus a haptic element is highly active in indexicality. When transferred to photography, this haptic element—the material relation between the photograph and objects of the world effected by rays of light—seems to have been considered a necessity in order to make photography sufficiently objective for scientific use. Visual likeness was thus accompanied by this guarantee of presence and material relations that followed on from the haptic element of indexicality. Much has been written about the optical vision of science in the nineteenth century, and how the optically visual characteristic of photography benefited the objective ideal, whereby human interpretation was to be sorted out from the scientific process.[5] To my mind, this is a view of history too much informed by modernist, scientific ideals, where the haptic element of photography has been actively neglected. It seems, as is argued in Chapter 1, that in the 1890s an anthropomorphic trend in science—with the camera eye compared to the human eye in a strictly optical sense, leaving aside the haptic dimension of vision—separated haptic vision from the optic in photography.

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Martin Jay has suggested that the scepticism of visuality and the authoritarian eye that followed the invention of photography in 1839 was formative for the inquiry into visualism he considers crucial to twentieth-century French thought. The doubts that arose as early as the 1830s about the relations between truth, reality, and camera, Jay argues, undermined the epistemology of Western visualism.[6] I hold these 'doubts' to have been to less do with vision in general and more a critique of the reign of the optical eye on behalf of embodied vision, and a protest against the neglect of the haptic eye. I see the split of optic and haptic in science in the late nineteenth century as the moment when the undermining of visualism first became truly effective. What Jay recognizes in twentieth-century French thought is, to me, a reflection on a society where the rift between the optic and the haptic in the visual media was healing. Suddenly, the optical mechanism of the visual in photography was recognized as 'mendacious' to the body, and after a long period when the two were separated, Baudrillard noticed a return of the haptic vision; a unification of the haptic and the optic induced by postmodernism and the visual media, where all dichotomies converged into one imploded, uncontrollable flow of information, where the distance required to form objective reflections was obliterated. In what follows, I will suggest that a postmodernist conception of vision generated from Baudrillard's theories embraces both its optical and the haptic elements, and that this is also crucial in the art of the American staged art photographers of the 1970s.

The disembodied twin

As we have seen in earlier examples, one important theme in Michals's work was the idea of how a photographic creation of an optical parallel world separated from the real could provoke uncanny and estranging experiences. The distancing effect of optical photographic vision is taken in one of his images to its uncanny and estranging extreme (Fig. 23). Michals is standing beside his own body, looking at himself. The purely visual element of photography does not reveal whether the body on the table is dead, sleeping, unconscious, or simply lying down with closed eyes. Photography is a medium of death and the

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FIGURE 23 *Self-portrait as if I were dead, 1970*. Photograph by Duane Michals.

lifeless, as long as it relies on its objective qualities. The double in the image is totally separated from Michals: the optical visuality of photography has opened up a distance between the two versions of Michals. Michals has also conjured up a conceptual, disembodied twin whom he calls Stefan Mihal. Mihal appears as the publisher of Michal's book *Take One and See Mt. Fujiyama* and other stories from 1976, while in other photographs and texts too Michals returns to his fictive antithetical twin who is everything Michals is not. In an interview, Michals described their relationship in the following way: 'I am very attracted to the person of Stefan Mihal. He is the man I never became. We are complete opposites, although we were born at the same moment. If we should meet, we would explode. We are

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like matter and antimatter. He is my shadow. I saved myself from him.'[7] Mihal is portrayed as a man who lives life to the full, and looks the way Michals will never look: Mihal is married, Catholic, has six children, lives in Pittsburgh, likes football and beer, is very fat, and has a lot of hair.[8] But Mihal not only differs from Michals in appearance and lifestyle; he also has a different approach to photography. Mihal tells Michals he should do studies of 'laborers and farm workers and unwed mothers and make some social changes. Do something for someone else—something noble. That's what I'd do.'[9] Thus, Mihal criticizes Michals's self-centered approach to photography as a means of exploring his own life and existence. At the same time, Michals points out that Mihal's ideals are those of an ordinary man, indoctrinated by photographical tradition. Mihal becomes a definite disembodied twin, always present to define Michals's work for himself as someone to provoke or react against.

In Samaras's work a 'disembodied relative' is present,[10] as we saw in Chapter 2. Samaras explains how his work is an investigation of his experience of alienation, and how a fear of the alienation of the self acts as the catalyst in his work.[11] Samaras's imagery is often referred to as narcissist, and Samaras himself explains this narcissism as an effect of his being an immigrant. Because he always had to 'watch himself' from an outside view in his new country, a 'self involvement' became a natural part of his person.[12] Apart from providing a biographical explanation for his narcissist art, Samaras's remark about being on constant watch over the self from a distant position offers a point of access to the theme of the 'disembodied twin' that haunts his Photo-Transformation series.

One image (Fig. 24) shows a sandwiched Polaroid image staged in Samaras's chequered-floored kitchen. Samaras's naked, duplicated bodies are moving away from each other in a dramatic gesture. A chair stands in front of the bodies. It seems to have been pushed away from the table in an abrupt movement. Perhaps Samaras was sitting in this chair looking at the images lying on the table in neat rows and suddenly became upset about something? Has something he experienced when looking at the images made his self split into two disagreeing personas? The motif of getting away from his split self that is expressed in this image recurs throughout his production,

FIGURE 24 *Photo-Transformation, July 15, 1976.* Photograph by Lucas Samaras.

and in his writings too. Samaras expresses the struggle to get free from his disembodied double as a question of independence. But this independence, he says, is supposed to be gained by a fusion of his disembodied self with himself. Samaras thus seeks to overcome the distance, to become a single whole with his visual image, at a point resembling Santner's 'midst-of-life' position. He says:

> I thought about the possibility of having a brother. Not a brother with independent will, a brother who felt and thought as I did. Then there would be two of us, two of me. … Two of me would be able to cope with me better. … Now, however, I am able to imagine that I have already fused with such a double who is within me and the thrill is one of independence.[13]

Michals uses his double as someone who defines what he is *not*, and that helps him develop a strategy for his art-making. By stepping out and looking at himself from a distance, in a distant perspective, Michals's double solidifies his own approach to photographic art-making. Michals's use of the double in his work, as for example in *Self-portrait as if I were dead*, is also characterized by this idea of the double as separated and totally disembodied. As an effect of the optical, visual photographic reproduction, the double of the self is killed when visually exposed by photography, leading to the statement, common to Michals's photography, that photography is reductionist when it comes to conjuring up life. For Samaras, his double is instead highly alive; only partly disembodied. In Samaras's work the double is found at a technological–existential level, as a problematic side-effect of the estranging optical photographical medium. Samaras's work suggests that there is no possibility of separating from this double by means of photography, only of unifying with it in a position of central presence. Unlike Michals's assertion that photography is reductionist, Samaras seems to ask, what can we do about it?

The haptics of the Polaroid—immediacy, presence, and skin

One opportunity to get beyond the optical, visual estrangement of photography was offered by the Polaroid technique, which offered a reintroduction of haptics into photographic vision. Both Krims and Samaras praised the immediacy and presence that Polaroids offered. In the foreword of the photo book *Fictcryptokrimsographs* from 1975, Les Krims paid tribute to the Polaroid technique for being a 'totally integrated mind–machine–hand generative system'

that removed the static qualities of photography from photography, yet kept it within the photographic.[14] In the same manner, Samaras judged the Polaroid technique to be immediately 'there' without too much obstruction en route.[15] For Samaras, this 'being there' is different from the objective photographical ideal where 'being there' is proof of authenticity and truthfulness. To explain the approach to image-making and reality connection that shines through in Samaras's work, and the way in which it differs from an optically visual approach, one can apply the conceptual pairing of 'de facto' vision and 'there is' vision taken from Merleau-Ponty. Thus 'de facto' and 'there is' vision in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy are both present in the concept of vision, and are inseparable. 'De facto' vision is vision upon which I reflect; a vision I cannot think of 'except as thought, the minds inspection, judgement, a reading of signs.'[16] The 'there is' vision is characterized by being 'squeezed into a body—its own body, of which we can have no idea except in the exercise of it, and which introduces, between space and thought, the autonomous order of the compound of soul and body.'[17] In a similar way, in Samaras's work, immediacy or the 'there is' was not a mechanical guarantee of objectivity. Rather it was a presence intensified by touch—a magic fusion with the world and between the worlds of photographic image and reality—and a method with which to fuse with his disembodied twin by making their parallel worlds come together through photography. In the process of uniting with a separated double, and in order to eliminate a feeling of uncanniness opened up by the distance implied by optical vision, Samaras pushed the limits of photography forward to the haptic sense of vision found in the combination of photography, performance, and sculpture that the Polaroid technique offered him. Samaras manipulated Polaroid photographs by touching them with his hand, sweeping aside the objective borderline that distinguishes and disembodies the photographic image from the living body. This stresses the immediacy and presence in and of the image.

In this shift from optics to haptics the Polaroid camera fitted perfectly. It had been developed as an optical vision gadget, with Ansel Adams very much involved in the technical, aesthetic, and philosophical developments of the Polaroid Corporation and its

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products.[18] The inventor and owner of the company, Edwin Land, saw the Polaroid as the perfect match of science and art, where the concept of art was defined as optic vision. Polaroid techniques were thus developed in order to 'remove most of the manipulative barriers between photographer and the photograph'.[19] Between 1972 and 1981, the Polaroid Corporation produced the Polaroid camera model SX-70, which became a huge commercial success. The mylar covering of the film that it used made it possible to manipulate the gelatine-based emulsion of the image while it was developing. Manipulation became trendy, and several artists used the SX-70 in their work.

Polaroid technology was born into the tradition of straight photography. Here its intensified relation to the material reality that the immediacy of the technique promised gave Polaroid images a sense of being more impregnable and foolproof than other photographic techniques. When photographers such as Samaras and Krims started to manipulate the sensitive layer of the Polaroid sheet by hand, it was thus a violation of the conventional Polaroid approach. In the introduction to a catalogue of SX-70 art from 1979, Max Kozloff writes about the 'twilight state' of Polaroid photography. He went on to identify the paradoxical identity of Polaroid as both a 'transcriber' of reality (a characteristic hailed by the straight photographers) and its ability to channel this reality in a creative interpretation.[20] A. D. Coleman early on identified the Polaroid as a challenge to photographers eager to ruin the objectivity of photography:

> The SX-70 as an image making device is uniquely challenging precisely because it is so restrictive. … The camera's operator has a minimum of control over the appearance of the prints which the camera spits out, and no choice over the format: it's a 31/4-inch square every time. Thus it poses a unique test to image-makers, viz., how can its integrity be violated?[21]

Samaras's auto-Polaroids were all made with an SX-70 Polaroid camera, and the opportunity to manipulate the images by hand that the Polaroid technique offered him was central to his work. Many of his *Photo-Transformations* were made using a particular method

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in which Samaras violated the Polaroid surface mechanically in the following way:

> Well, the SX-70 film, after you push the button and it takes your picture, out comes this thing which is really a sandwich. So it's many layers, 16 layers, 12 layers of chemicals. Very, very fine, very thin layers. And If you put it on a hard surface and you press upon it with something hard, like a nail file which I use, you disturb the image. If there's a figure there with a nose going this way you can push it a little bit and it goes the other way. But it doesn't destroy the nose. It just displaces it a little bit. … So you can do all that with this little sandwich. And sometimes you put it on a lamp to heat it up a little bit, to give it a little cooking. It looses up the emulsion.[22]

It seems as if Samaras manipulated the emulsion of the Polaroid images mechanically in order to be able to thematize the body and self on a plastic level, leaving the merely flat pictorial surface behind. Instead of showing a 'true' representation of his bodily self, he used Polaroid emulsion as sculptor's clay to create new selves in his own image. These images show other notions of the self that went beyond the visual representation gained if the camera had been left to its mechanical devices. As Ben Lifson has pointed out, the plastic potential of the Polaroid was important to Samaras since it is both an image and an object open to manipulation: the image lies beneath the transparent skin of the print, and the objects of the image thereby become plastic and can be remodelled.[23] Samaras himself often returned to this wish to remodel in his statements about his views on expressing himself through auto-Polaroids: 'I was my own clay. I formulated myself, I mated with myself, and I gave birth to myself. And my real self was the product—the Polaroids.'[24] The same idea returned in a formulation about how it felt to portray other people using Polaroids: 'Making art is dealing with people on your own terms. The ideal way of using people is using them like clay'.[25] The Polaroids offered Samaras an opportunity to make his own body into a 'human abstraction' and to turn his body into 'flesh', 'fact', 'skin', and 'form',[26] grotesquely manipulated into distorted human shapes. In his work, the skin of the body and the skin of the Polaroid

FIGURE 25 *Photo-Transformation, April 12, 1974.* Photograph by Lucas Samaras.

sheet are fused in a dimension where body and photograph become part of the same layer of corporeal reality.

Hence in one of Samaras's Polaroid images (Fig. 25) the myelin surface has been violated to look like haze or a water surface. Samaras's gestalt seems to be coming through this blurry surface, reaching out from an image-world into our side of the world. His one hysterical eye stares at us from his borderless face, and a giant open mouth ready to bite is also coming through the dispersing haze. His hand

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Figure 26 *Radiation Victim Holding Rabbit and Carrot, 1974.* Photograph by Les Krims.

is halfway through to our side. Samaras's face, supposedly a combination of two different images, appears grotesque in its monstrous hybridity. Yet it is not only on the level of the motif that Samaras's work can be interpreted as a hybrid. By merging photography with the act of sculpting, it morphs from a mechanical, optical reproduction of the world to a uniquely hybrid art object that exists at the intersection of different types of art. The same is true of Krims's image *Radiation Victim Holding Rabbit and Carrot* (Fig. 26), where a woman sits on a patio holding a white rabbit in one hand and a

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carrot in the other. The skin of her hands and face has been smudged, and her eyes are small glowing white balls. The title suggests she has been exposed to radiation, and the glowing white eyeballs suggest she has kept the radiation within her as a bodily reservoir of deathly power. The white rabbit, with its innocence and fluffy fur, can be seen as a contrast to the nuclear woman.

Krims has since commented on how manipulated Polaroid images were a step away from the ideas from photography as transparent and communicative, and he noticed how manipulation by hand rendered it 'indecipherable'.[27] By encouraging the reintroduction of touch into the photographic sphere, traditionally conceived of as optically visual, the Polaroid technique offered the chance to go beyond optics in order to work with such haptic dimensions of vision as immediacy and presence. The distance optical vision left between the photographed body and the corporeal body was literally smudged out by working with the emulsion of the skin and the bodies on a plastic level. The unique artworks produced by this method contrasted in both their hybridity (combining different art forms) and their non-reproducibility to the optical, mechanically reproducible, straight photograph.

Punctum and indexicality

The recombination of haptics and optics I have identified in American staged art photography from the 1970s will here be related to Barthes's concepts of punctum and indexicality. Even if much of the photographic theory written has—consciously or unconsciously—concentrated on its optical and iconic visuality, at a certain level the photograph goes beyond intellectualized meaning, and it is that which has been sought after and theorized by some influential theorists. Barthes is the main example here. His oeuvre shows clear evidence of his growing interest in the effects of photography that went beyond intellectual reasoning and interpretation. The level of meaning that he calls a third, 'non-coded' meaning of the photographic image was scrutinized in ever greater detail in the 1960s and 1970s in articles such as 'The Photographic Image' (1961), 'The Rhetoric of the Image' (1966), and 'The Third Meaning' (1970).

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Originally a distinguishable entity, yet inseparable from the iconic level of meaning, the non-coded message gradually broke free from Barthes's initial semiotic web of levels of meaning, and became an autonomous essence of the photographic image to which he dedicated a whole book in 1980 entitled *Camera Lucida*. It was in this work that punctum was introduced as a concept—an effect inherent in photography that, by combining its visual and haptic elements, brings to the fore a synaesthetic experience of certain details of the photograph.

There is a paradox in Barthes's punctum where it relates to the haptic. Barthes's notion of punctum can also operate on the iconic level, and his examples of punctuating instances of the images sometimes contain absurd or unexpected details—details that do not fit into the iconic wholeness of the image. For example, he points out a pair of old-fashioned shoes worn by a woman in a family portrait as a punctum of the image because of their cultural and temporal misplacement. He also gives examples of punctum that are reliant on the textuality and materiality of the objects depicted, as for example the soft and hard-edged nails that appear in a portrait of Andy Warhol, or the texture of a dirty road in Hungary. Barthes in this way describes two different puncta, the one inseparable from its iconic meaning as it is dependent on cultural values, and the other concerned with the textuality of depicted objects and freed from the iconic meaning of details. The one referred to in the following discussion is the haptic punctum.

The punctum experience of the photograph is thus not the same as indexicality, as it is a characteristic activated at the moment of the reception of the image, whereas indexicality is a relationship present at the moment of the production of the image. Indexicality, following Peirce, is here taken to be the physical connection between the photograph and the object exposed. It shares the function and mechanism of a trace of a presence before the camera that has been materially imprinted on the light-sensitive surface by rays of light. The material touch of the light rays, firstly on the object and then on the light-sensitive surface, is therefore crucial to the understanding of the concept. Punctum can thus be said to be an effect of indexicality. For the onlooker to be touched by an object when

looking at a picture, the object must have been materially present at the moment of exposure.

Vision, touch, and punctum

During the 1970s the concept of indexicality became a key concept for photography theorists, not in a haptic sense, but in a semiotic and sociological sense. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Roland Barthes had in several semiotic essays such as 'The Photographic Image' (1961), 'The Rhetoric of the Image' (1966), and 'The Third Meaning' (1970) presented and discussed a model of the photographic image as consisting of three distinguishable, interacting messages, or layers of meaning: one linguistic, if text, titles and labels were present; one iconic, which was decoded using cultural connotations of various sorts; and one non-coded iconic message that was left if the others could be removed, and only consisted of the imprints of the real object themselves.[28] His essays came to influence a whole generation of photo theorists, and were presented as crucial to the new emerging photographic theory of the 1970s.[29] The indexicality of a photograph, found in the third category of his message model, Barthes himself often called the third message, or the 'message without a code'.[30] The third meaning is contrasted in Barthes's theory from the 1960s with the semiotically interpretable second iconic message, which is the level of cultural connotations, and found to be necessary, but not sufficient, to give any meaning to the photograph. The picture as an imprint is therefore, according to the early Barthes, always empty of meaning where it is possible to remove all textual, cultural, and personal connotations from the image.

Both of the two key publications of the 1970s and early 1980s on photo theory, the issue of *October* dedicated to photography in 1977 and the essays collected in Victor Burgin's *Thinking Photography* from 1982, start from Barthes's model. In their introduction, the editors of the special *October* issue point to the urgent need for a radical sociology of photography to analyse the market forming around photographic practices and processes, addressing 'questions of value, authenticity, [and] formal structure' by means of a 'perceptual and semiotic analysis'.[31] To fulfil the Foucault-inspired sociological aims

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of *October*'s editorial board and Victor Burgin's editing of *Thinking Photography*, Barthes's concept of indexicality, as it appeared in the Sixties, was of crucial importance, because it offered a theory that attached photography to the real world, while arguing that photography's meaning changed according to the institutional powers who used it at any given moment—it was an empty message that could be filled by anyone who wanted to use it.

In her article 'Tracing Nadar', Rosalind Krauss, who was both editor and a contributor to the *October* issue, contrasted the semiotic–sociologic concept of indexicality outlined by Barthes, meaningless in itself, to the approach that had dominated nineteenth-century views on photography. Krauss notes with scepticism that 'The activity of the trace was understood as the manifest presence of meaning', as the 'material object becomes intelligible' in the nineteenth–century photographic discourse.[32] Ironically, this, in Krauss's view obsolete, approach to the index was very similar to the one launched by Barthes some years later in *Camera Lucida*. The material trace of the photographed object that Barthes had rendered observable, but incapable of conveying meaning in itself, was already in 'The third meaning' from 1967 tentatively appointed as a dimension of the picture that had its own agency. In *Camera Lucida* the indexical meaning had become entirely essential for the experience of and effects imposed by the photograph. The notion of presence conveyed by the photograph is described as a synaesthetic experience—most often as a combination of vision and touch. This convergence of vision and touch also underlies the concept of punctum. The punctum, says Barthes, is a quality in a certain image that makes details in it poignant to the observer to such an extension that it 'pricks' or 'bruises' the onlooker.[33] It has nothing to do with the cultural meaning of the photograph, and thus is not connected to the iconic level, but instead, according to Barthes, it is active on a non-coded, indexical level. The haptic and the visual are inseparable in the concept, and their co-existence is crucial to the affect that images containing punctum evoke. The other senses are said by Barthes not to be able to work with the visual to evoke the same effect. For example, he refers to images that 'shout', but that fail to wound.[34]

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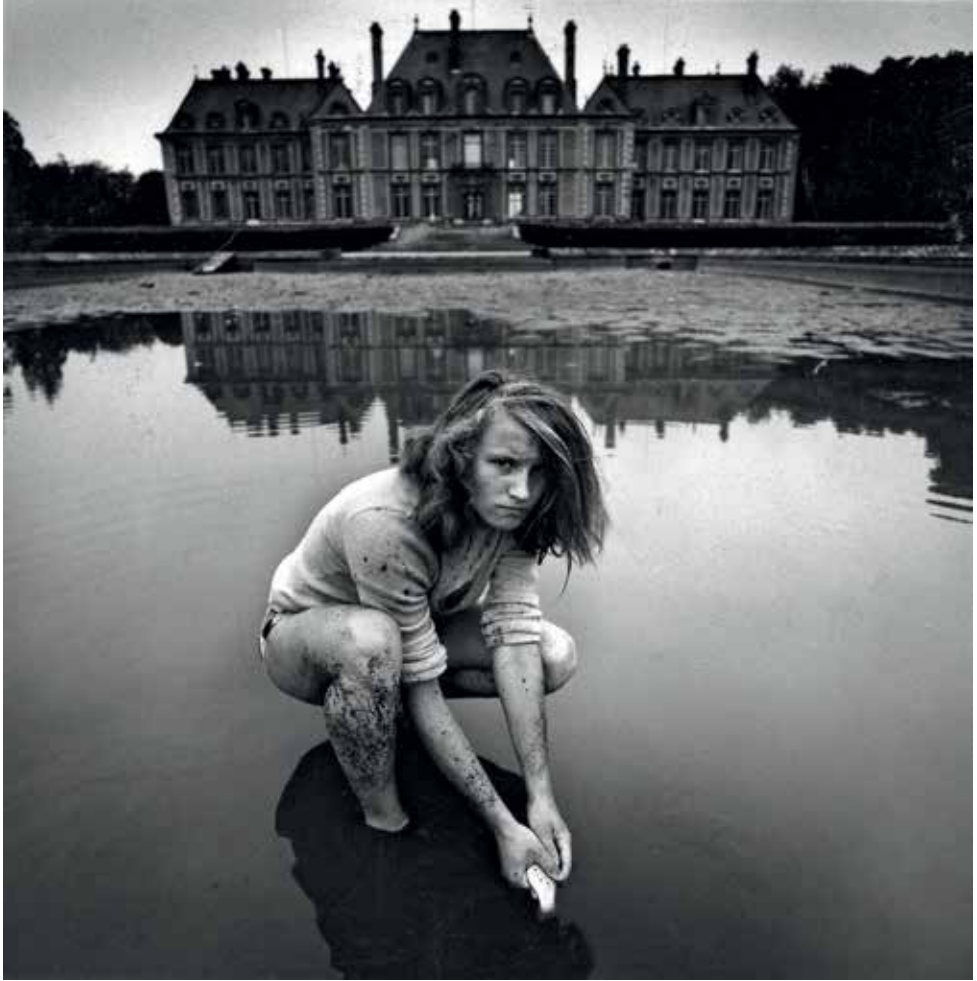
FIGURE 27 *Girl collecting goldfish, Château Breteuil, France, 1974*. Photograph by Arthur Tress.

Just as both the 'de facto' vision and the 'there is' vision are necessarily present in Merleau-Ponty's concept of vision, haptic and optic visions are present and dependent upon each other in photography. The presence of this simultaneity has not been accepted in all epistemologies. In modernist, straight, American art photography, and especially in the formalist branch, the entanglement of haptics and optics is present to a high degree.

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Although a certain pure optical vision is sought, the formalists' work shows how the optic and haptic visions are intrinsically entangled. Edward Weston's famous photograph of a pepper intended to expose it as a good scientific super-eye would see it—sharp in every detail and with distinct but smoothly ranging tones—also brings out the texture of the pepper, thereby evoking what might be called the 'impure' or haptic vision, or what Geoffrey Batchen has poignantly called 'Braille for the eyes'.[35] This haptic vision, activated by bringing out the texture in objects using photography, is intimately connected to the materiality of photography. Tress is conscious of the power of photography in evoking synaesthetic effects using texture. In a video interview, he addresses the quality of the reality in photographs, dwellings on his photographs' ability to play on the borders of reality and fiction by presenting objects in a way that underlines their materiality: 'these things can't be real and yet they're real because there is all this heavy texture of dirt and decay and that gives it a kind of reality [Tress feels with his fingers in the air] to the material.'[36]

Tress's images are generally full of heavy texture that encourages haptic moments of vision. In one (Fig. 27) the texture of the girls' hair stands out as a place where the 'impure' form of haptic vision is elicited. If the gaze, sweeping over the surface of the image, is compared to a stroke, this is where the movement is altered by a sudden resistance or roughness. The large area of water that appears dense like melted jelly sets up a striking contrast with the steel-wool fuzz of the girl's hair. Pausing there, a synaesthetic impression is evoked, and memories of the feel of uncombed hair are actualized in an experience where more body parts than the eyes are involved. Such heavy-textured areas in the image can be said to serve as a punctum grounded in haptics.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes struggles with the problems of imposing linguistics on the photographic image by describing it in words, and his reluctance to ruin the photograph's analogous relation to reality by doing so is stated on several occasions. As early as 'The Photographic Image' from 1961, Barthes identified the methodological problems with theorizing about the third level of meaning in a photograph. Barthes notes how a description of a photograph is nothing less

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than the imposition of a new structure on the image—a structure made from the code of language that disrupts the photographic analogy with reality: 'to describe, then, is not only to be inexact or incomplete, it is to change structures, it is to signify something other than what is shown.'[37] Twenty years later, in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes was still struggling with the methodological problems of his phenomenological intentions in describing photography's essence. The photographic resistance to interpretation is here of central importance to Barthes's discussion of photographic meaning, since it leads him to develop a non-generalizing and subjective methodological approach that insists on the development of 'a new science for each object'.[38] The third meaning of a photograph will always be lost in the translation between image and word.[39] Here we see how Barthes realized what Barbara Maria Stafford has described as the effect of a linguistic approach to photography that usurps the image's full meaning potential.[40] What is described as 'shown' in Barthes's text is apparently not only visual, and therefore not translatable into a semiotic linguistic system. In *Camera Lucida*, the concern with the interface of sensory modalities that Barthes argues the photographic image represents is wholly explicit. He dwells in particular on the the convergence of touch and vision, as he explains the image to be an emanation of the photographed object:

> From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical chord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.[41]

The third meaning of photography is thus declared in *Camera Lucida* to be a sort of haptic visual magic that relies on the touch of the photographed object through its visual appearance in the picture. As a punctum, this Braille sticks out from the image and pleads for the eye to feel it and experience it. Barthes's punctum thus includes the indexical, but his understanding runs contrary to the traditional

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meaning of the term as only existing in the relation between object and image. The experience that cannot be described in language is circumvented by creating a new model for communication that relies on texture, presence, and proximity—a haptic language of the visual.

Indexicality

The photographic theory under development in the Seventies with *Thinking Photography* and the special *October* did not consider photography art, as we have seen; instead it was thought a tool of power—without own identity—that could be filled with meaning and put to use by societal and cultural powers. Among art critics, however, photography as an artistic expression attracted more and more attention during the Seventies. Many visual artists started to incorporate photography into their productions. Rosalind Krauss noted in an analysis of the American art scene in 1977 the extent to which other forms of art seemed interested in the trace, and that this fascination with the indexical made photography the natural method of artistic expression for all artists in the Seventies. The diverse American art scene in the Seventies was in Krauss's view no longer held together by style, but by explorations of bodily presence, with photography's indexical relationship to reality a central idea.[42]

The importance of haptics to the concept of indexicality has been problematic for recent scholars of photography theory. Working in the tradition emanating from the semiotic, linguistic tradition developed during the 1970s, most contemporary scholars of photo theory discuss indexicality as separate from visual likeness, where interpretation is equated with imposing linguistically interpretable meanings on the image.[43] *Photography Theory*, edited by James Elkins, which also includes a recent text on the index by Krauss, gives a good overview of the state of the field. It amounts to a seminar on photography, where different questions about photography theory are raised. Much of the discussion ends up circling around indexicality. The example of a photograph of a sneezing James Elkins, looking like a smudge, becomes central at one point of the discussion. Joel Snyder proclaims that we never can say that the picture can be seen as a picture of James Elkins. In a reply, Jonathan Friday nails

the problem of the discussion, and, as I see it, the whole one-sided theoretical discourse on indexicality:

> The index, or indexicality, is a mode of representation, and the point is that whatever a photograph indexically represents was in front of the camera. If you say 'The smudge was not in front of the camera' I agree, but then the smudge is not indexically represented. What was in front of the camera in your example was Jim, and he is indexically represented whether or not the smudge looks like him. With indexicality, notions like 'looks like' have no purchase. … You seem to be running together the categories of index and icon in the example of the blurred photo of Jim. It's an index, and you're asking, 'An index of what?' and expecting an answer in terms of iconicity.[44]

If photography now is related to Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, indexicality seems to be what is lost in passing into a simulacrum of the third degree where the borders between an original and a copy are eliminated, and no traces of touch are present or possible. Yet this is only the result if the iconic, semiotic notion of indexicality is used where the representation of the image relies on a visual likeness to a 'real' outer reality. As Friday declares, the indexical, interpreted in a haptic sense, will always be present in a photographic image.

The belief that the digital era has come to mean a loss of photographic indexicality is a common misunderstanding. As seen in Friday's quote, a haptic approach to indexicality undermines the common notion that it has ceased to exist in digital photography. Tom Gunning points out that the difference between analogue and digital cameras is the way the information is captured—as numerical data in the latter. Even if these rows of numbers do not resemble a photograph, or what it represents, this is unimportant to the concept of index in a Peircan, material sense. The presence and touch of the object is still intact. This circumstance, as Gunning rightly points out, makes digital images just as suitable as passport photographs and other sorts of legal evidence or documents as traditional photographs.[45] Gunning has also pointed to the index of photography when freed from iconicity: 'An index need not (and frequently does

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not) resemble the thing it represents. The indexicality of a traditional photograph inheres in the effect of light on chemicals, not in the picture it produces.'[46] The early 1990s saw the invention of digital processing image programmes such as Photoshop, and Martin Lister has described how fear of what would happen to photography's relation to truth once it went from being materially indexical to merely digitalized and electronic, haunted the discussion of photography.[47] W. J. T. Mitchell, for example, argued in 1992 that the 'post-photographic era', which was the corollary of digital imaging techniques, had forced people to face 'the tragic elusiveness of the Cartesian dream'.[48] It is clear that the fears that surfaced in the early 1990s that photography would lose touch with the real world in the flow of digitalized images, resemble Baudrillard's jeremiads about simulacra and the implosion of reality and imagination, as discussed in the previous chapter. But it also shows how the notion of photography's indexicality is grounded in a semiotic understanding where indexicality is sometimes confused with iconicity.

With its trace of presence, the indexicality of photography is essential for the punctum to function. To be touched by the presence of a visual object when looking at a picture, the object must have been materially present at the moment of exposure. The postmodern fear of the loss of references to the real in visual media is a fear of a loss of indexicality. However, as we shall see, in the staged art photography of the 1970s this trace of presence became increasingly important as the hegemony of vision was challenged by the reintroduction of touch to the realm of the optically visual photograph.

Magic principles

Both Barthes's phenomenological, haptic approach to photographic vision as expressed in *Camera Lucida*, and American staged art photography as practiced in the 1970s, can be related to the principles of magic that anthropologist James Frazer saw and analysed at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1890, James Frazer published *The Golden Bough*, in which he launched a theory of magic that identified two principal categories: homeopathic magic and contagious magic.

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Homeopathic magic is based on the principle that 'like produces like or that an affect resembles its cause'; contagious magic on the principle that 'things that have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed.'[49] Photography seems to contain both of these principles, as it can both bear visual likeness to its depicted object and is an indexical physical trace of the object. The first principle is tied to optical vision, the latter to haptic vision. Michael Taussig has described how Frazer's theory almost immediately came in for criticism from Marcel Mauss for the importance he ascribed to visual likenesses in magic mechanisms, Mauss countering that the principle of visual likeness was subordinate to the principle of contact, since visual likeness is always dependent on 'social conventions of classifications'.[50] Voodoo, for example—sticking pins into an object that has been in contact with the person who is the subject of the magic—is believed to cause immediate damage to the body of the subject. Visual likeness between object and subject is not important as long as the object has been in bodily contact with the victim. Besides being dependent on indexicality in a haptic sense, voodoo also transcends the boundaries between object and victim: the object becomes the body of the victim in the magic act.

Transferred to Seventies' staged photography, optical distance and visual likeness are less important for a photograph to 'do magic' than are the presence and closeness produced by the indexical relationship to the photographed object. Yet there is also upheaval along the boundaries of outer reality and the image that equates to the voodoo mechanism, as the photographs are used as sites where one can attack people physically and manipulate reality. This use of the image surface as an arena to make changes to the real, outer world can further be compared to the concept of 'corpothetics' as developed by Christopher Pinney, which is closely related to a materialist approach to photographic images. Social anthropology in recent years has developed an approach to photography that offers a possible solution to the search for a methodology to circumvent the intellectual interpretation of the image's iconicity as the only site for the production of meaning, as it takes into account the other sensory qualities that photography inhabits, as well as the material

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dimension of the photographic image. Pinney advocates an approach to photography that acknowledges the use of images as objects in a reality where all five senses direct our action. Photographs in Pinney's analysis are thus not only viewed as aesthetic objects on display, but also as material objects with multiple significance for our daily lives.[51] The staged art photographers of the 1970s often played on the notion of the photographer as magician, and the photograph as something that could be used to 'pray to'—talismans—or places to act out aggression. For that reason I will turn to how a contagious magical approach to photography sheds light on the photographers' role as magicians, enabling them to erode the border between the parallel worlds of image and outer reality, and use their images as talismans and voodoo fetishes.

The contagious magic of photography

In Barthes's concept of photography, the haptic is given priority over visual likeness. The element of presence is crucial to his understanding of the photograph, which, he explains, 'carries its referent within itself.'[52] Barthes's approach as expressed in *Camera Lucida* bears considerable similarities to Frazer's principle of contagious magic. The adherence of the referent to the image that Barthes describes also suggests that the image-world and real world of photographed objects is dissolved in the photographic act. A similar adherence of object and photograph was expressed by the film critic Andre Bazin's in the essay 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' written in 1945. Bazin here discussed the photographic image as a 'mould', a 'fingerprint', and a 'death mask', explained in contagious terms as traces of presence. According to the contagious relation between image and depicted object, the photographic image for Bazin 'is the object itself … No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, 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.'[53] Just as in voodoo photography, according to Barthes and Bazin, has the power to merge image and object into one by virtue of photography's indexical relationship to the outer world, reliant on touch,

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closeness, and presence. I find a similar bridging of the image-world and photographed world, again as described by Barthes and Bazin, in the staged art photographers' SX-70 art, with its manipulations of the material skin of the Polaroid emulsion. Also important to the convergence of the world of objects and the world conveyed by photographic representation was the immediacy and malleability of the Polaroid technique, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

In contagious magic, the parallelity of corresponding worlds, a relation used—as we saw in Chapter 3—by the modernist photographer White to translate symbols into feelings, is levelled into one world where no one element is accorded greater objective status than the rest. The breakdown of a parallel relationship between image-world and reality can be seen in Krims's theory of the reception of photographic images. When asked about how a photograph works in terms of leaving an impression on the onlooker, Krims throws out a theory reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's in *Eye and Mind* in which he makes no ontological difference between the experience of the object-world and the image-world, but declares that they affect the body and perception in the same way, regardless of their origin.[54] As Krims says:

> the light oscillations composing a photographic illusion—the variegated distribution of wavelengths of light reflected from a photographic image—enter the brain through the eyes. Light can stimulate through chemical & electrical reactions, the formation of substances in the brain, and result in a memory—a permanent change affecting an area in the brain. Viewing light reflected from a changing 3D world can have the same result: memory. Therefore, light reflected from a stable, two dimensional illusion of reality, and light reflected directly from the flux of a 3D world, can similarly affect the brain (looking at a photograph is, after all, a real-time visual experience). As both can be the result of fabrication (to one degree or another), and it's impossible to tell from the photographic illusion itself what was or was not fabricated, emanations from either may result in memories—the photograph may have, as The Shadow used to say (a character in an old radio show), 'The power to cloud men's minds.' … Arguably, a photographic imaging

device (camera) is the best instrument there is to make images to cloud men's minds.[55]

Bearing in mind the idea of convergence of outer reality and image-world in the photographic act, this is very close to Baudrillard's theory of simulacra addressed in the last chapter. If the idea of simulacra is firstly juxtaposed with Frazer's magic principles, a paradox inherent in the simulacra concept is revealed. On one hand, it becomes clear that simulacra stand for a contagious magic that has disappeared in a digitalization process, where like gives like, gives like, gives like, in a neverending chain, where no haptic contact with the real objects depicted is either necessary or desirable. Thus simulacra bring a removal of contagious elements from visual representations—one that relies solely on an optically visual ideal. On the other hand, simulacra seem to form a state where experiences of the world are phenomenologically imploded, where one sense impression cannot be separated from another—total embodiment with technology and media to such an extent that it has begun to intermingle with our nervous system. At the same time as simulacra are described as a loss of indexicality in a contagious sense, they are presented as the new form of total presence and a multisensory approach to reality. Perhaps this indicates that Baudrillard oscillates between an understanding of the world as either ruled by contagious principles or by homeopathic principles, and has problems including them both in a new postmodern visual paradigm.

The postmodern implosion catalysed by visual media was not only recognized as the breakdown of theoretically and morally charged binary pairs as true/false, or indeed of the borders between body/technology/mind, but also of the borders between sensory impressions. Baudrillard's words here merit a slightly different emphasis:

> [TV] is innocuous because it no longer conveys an imaginary, for the simple reason that it is no longer an image. Here it contrasts with the cinema which … still resembles a double, a mirror, a fantasy, a dream, etc. None of this is the TV image. … It is only a screen, or better, its a miniaturized terminal that appears in your head.[56]

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What are normally thought of as visual impressions are in Baudrillard's description of the effects of the medium of television no longer distinguishable as purely visual. The visual has merged into an uncontrollable, inseparable cluster of sensory impressions that autonomously invade the brain without time for reflection. Baudrillard thus describes a fear of what might best be termed a phenomenological implosion. It seems as if a postmodern turn in the impure impression of so-called visual media, as identified by Bal and Mitchell,[57] is what makes Baudrillard so worried. Baudrillard emphasizes how the optical qualities of the visual media have been rendered more uninteresting by the new postmodern paradigm, which he calls 'the end of perspectival and panoptic space'.[58] In the new paradigm, the distance to viewer and object viewed has been brought closer in an imploded phenomenological undertaking. By saying this, he points at the postmodern shift from optic to haptic vision that is found in the works of the American staged art photographers of the 1970s. The distance and control that are characteristic of optical vision, have in both Baudrillard's fears and the staged photography of the 1970s been narrowed by reintroducing the haptic to the concept of vision. I earlier mentioned that Sontag identified photography as being able to create a duplicate world that is as real as the real world is, and how this qualified photography for a place at the heart of surrealism. Perhaps it is sufficient to suggest that, by the same lights, the manipulated Polaroid lies at the core of postmodernism? The borders between reality, technology, body, and mind crucial to the straight photographic paradigm and marked down as reductionist, divisive, and estranging, were by the magic of Polaroid art-making utterly thrown down.

Photography as voodoo and place for violent acts

The relation between art and magic is old. Equally, camera and photography has a long history of being connected to magic, including dreams of alchemy, ghostly apparitions in the creation of doubles, the magic of the dark chamber of the camera, and so on. Both Tress and Samaras emphasize a connection between art-maker, photographer, and magician in their work as well as in their presentations

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of themselves. Tress refers to the photograph as 'a magical object' and to the photographer as a 'magician',[59] and Samaras's small, dark apartment, where he made all his work, was popularly known in the Seventies as an 'Aladdin's cave' in the New York art world.[60]

Tress does not wield his magic through Polaroid manipulations, but in black-and-white images. In the note 'The Photograph as Magical Object (1970)', he argues that any good photographer has supernatural powers and instincts that enable him to 'control mysterious forces and energies outside himself'. These powers enable him to function as a clairvoyant, bending his photographed subjects to his will by force of mind alone and anticipating their moves. Thus the photographer's mentally conceived image of reality occasionally becomes true in his images. Moreover, the photographic image as an object has magical qualities, as it 'has the potency of releasing in the viewer preconditioned reactions that cause him to physically change or be mentally transformed.' This magical healing quality does not apply to all types of photography; only to that which visualizes fantasies:

> The documentary photographer supplies us with facts or drowns in humanity, while the pictorialist, avant-garde or conservative, pleases us with mere aesthetically correct compositions—but where are the photographs we can pray to, that will make us well again, or scare the hell out of us? Most of mankind's art for the past 5,000 years was created for just these purposes. It seems absurd to stop now.[61]

The ability to create this kind of magic photography has perhaps undermined the border between the reality of the image-world and the reality of the objects of the outer world. In the essay 'The Image-World', Susan Sontag writes that the belief that the photographic image is distinct from the object it depicts is one that belongs to a modernist view that 'defends the real'.[62] Instead, she notes how the Seventies audience viewed photography 'as a part of, or an extension of the subject; and a potent means of acquiring it, of gaining control over it.'[63] The controlling aspect is fused into both Tress's and Samaras's magical approach to creating photography. Gaining control is in their work often combined with a certain amount of violence.

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Figure 28 *Sutherland McCalley, Curator, Yonkers, New York, 1975*. Photograph by Arthur Tress.

Tress exerted violence on his photographed objects by suffocating, killing, and mummifying them in his pictures.[64] A quick look through Tress's oeuvre reveals a large number of images that show suffocation and entrapment of different kinds. Plastic sheets, ropes, or narrow containers are often used as props, suggesting restricted breathing or body movement. One image (Fig. 28) shows a man sitting in a chair. Both the man and the chair are draped with plastic. Outside this plastic straight-jacket the sun is shining through an open win-

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Figure 29 *Woman on Roof, New York City, 1975*. Photograph by Arthur Tress.

dow. Air fills the room where plants are photosynthesizing freely in
the sun and air, and a white statue in front of the window looks as
if she has just inhaled a deep breath. The suffocating entrapment
of the man is stressed by the breathing surroundings. In a second
image (Fig. 29) we see a woman standing on a flat roof. She is out
in the wide open air, but over her face Tress has placed a transpar-
ent plastic bag. The little of her face that can be seen through the
plastic is a pattern of anguish. The use of a wide-angle lens creates
a certain vortex into the image, almost an undertow dragging the

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FIGURE 30 *Photo-Transformation, July 6, 1976*. Photograph by Lucas Samaras.

photographed woman into its depths. Tress admits his fascination with photography's affinity with the act of killing, and compares the sound of the shutter to a guillotine, and the act of capturing his photographed subjects as 'mummification', 'entrapment without air', and a 'stillness of anguish'.[65]

Samaras too inflicted violence on the photographed bodes in his images—himself. One of Samaras's images (Fig. 30) is, as so often, set in his kitchen. One Samaras is kneeling on the floor with his

seemingly lifeless head on the chair. Another Samaras is standing bent over the first, stabbing or hitting his head. Furthermore, for Samaras, acting on the surface of his images, violating the emulsion, was equal to doing it in reality. Samaras called the models he occasionally used his 'victims',[66] and he described his attacks on the photograph's emulsion as a necessity in order to channel his latent need for violent expressiveness: 'people have to attack other people in one way or another … there is a biological need for you to attack … I want to attack, but I don't want to go and physically attack people when I can attack a chair or a cup … I get pleasure of doing it, but at the same time I create something new.'[67] Central to Samaras was the fact that the Polaroid is a hybrid of both object and image, and thus has 'real and virtual depth, physical and optical presence'.[68] Its hybridity of haptic and optic made it a perfect site for exerting contagious magic. By turning the body into an abstraction and an object, the human being-ness is removed from the image. The communication of person to person is suspended, and Samaras can concentrate on the facts, the flesh, and the skin as he exerts power over his 'victim'. To extend the earlier discussion of the double to this image, Samaras's self-violent act expressed in the Polaroid could be interpreted as an attempt to get rid of his uncanny twin who follows him as an efffect of photography.

The erosion of the border between outer reality and image reality by a manual manipulation of Polaroids, as seen in the works of Krims and Samaras, not only challenged the non-interventionist view of what photography was supposed to be, but also the idea of photography as mechanically reproducible. In their images, the photographic surface was transformed from being a window (or a mirror) into being a place as real as the real world. This magical dissolving of parallel worlds that photography could command in the staged photography of the 1970s relied on the principle of contagious magic, where a trace of presence is crucial for the magic to 'work'. The trace of the presence of the artist's hands, felt in the haptic manipulations and the bridging of the distance opened up by optical photographic vision, brings the viewer closer to the artistic process; but it also brings the photographed body or object closer the viewer, since the emulsion, the skin of the objects, is made into

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a living material that not has been killed and frozen by a mechanical registration, but altered sculpturally at the hands of the photographer.

Conclusion

By using the immediacy and presence that Polaroid techniques offered to the staged art photographers, they found a way to circumvent the optical tradition of photography. With manipulations of SX-70 Polaroid images, touch was reintroduced into photographs again. The gap that optical vision had opened between the visual representation of the body shown in photographs and the corporeal body was bridged by treating the emulsion of the Polaroids as a plastic skin. The unconventional use of hybrid artistic methods—photography and sculpting—transformed the artworks into unique art objects, in contrast to the traditionally reproducible, optical, straight photograph. The hegemony of the scientific vision in photography waned as a realm of haptic and subjective methods were combined with the optics of photography. Because of the long hegemony of optics while haptics had been repressed, the combination of vision and touch in photography has not really got a language of its own. One of the few exceptions is Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, which he devoted to the synaesthetic of photography. Barthes's punctum of photography is really a function of the synaesthetic elements of indexicality, which relies on a haptic trace of presence. To be touched by the presence of a visual object when looking at a picture, the object must have been materially present at the moment the shutter is fired. Furthermore, the postmodern fear of the loss of connection to the real in visual media is in truth a fear of a loss of indexicality. The discussions about indexical loss were constructed around an aporia where the concept of indexicality was confused as being a function of both a materialist presence and an iconic sign pointing out from the picture to the real world of objects. Within the staged art photography of the 1970s, indexicality—or the trace of presence—became increasingly important, as the hegemony of vision was challenged by the reintroduction of touch into the realm of the optically visual photographic. The visual likenesses of objects photographed were doomed to be only the visual illusions

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of appearances. Thus the emphasis on the haptic in Seventies' staged photography echoes the principle of contagious magic as analysed by James Frazer at the close of the nineteenth century. Both Krims and Samaras challenged the traditional, non-interventionist view of photography by their manual manipulations of SX-70 Polaroids. In their images, the image-world and the real world are magically smudged together, and the photographic image is lent the status of unique magical object, with traces of the presence of both the hand of the artist and the photographed object. By reintroducing haptics into photographic vision, the staged art photographers tore down the boundaries that optical, visualist straight photography relied on, and which they instead identified as reductionist, separating, and estranging in their artworks.

Summary and concluding comment

This thesis has set out to explore how American staged art photographers in the 1970s problematized a traditional, visualist approach to the photograph as mediator or interface between human subject and reality, which had been present in the straight photography that had dominated American art photography from the early decades of the twentieth century until it was dethroned in the 1970s. American staged art photography is researched using the statements and artworks of four photographers: Les Krims, Duane Michals, Lucas Samaras, and Arthur Tress.

Chapter 2, 'Dethroning optical vision', is an analysis of how the four photographers, in their artworks and statements, rejected the technology fetish that structured the ideas in American straight photography during the modernist era. The idea of the camera as an optically sharp super-eye, and its ability to reveal certain deeper aspects of reality, was challenged by the staged art photographers. The straight photographic approach to photography bore an affinity to the traditional scientific use of photography, where optical qualities such as control and distance had long been important to the photographic process. The distance opened up by an optical vision in photography was found estranging and uncanny by the staged art photographers, who instead ignored the borders between reality, photography, mind, and body that had been firmly defined by straight photography. Further, the narrow optical paradigm of traditionalist photography was singled out as being reductionist by the introduction of theatrical expression into art photography. Theatre helped the photographers stress that photography was a

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fabrication. By showing the extent to which photography was a construct, the American staged art photographers of the 1970s exposed the relationship between audience, photographer, photographic technology, and reality for their audience to see, reflect upon, and analyse. A similar effect, where the limitations of the medium were addressed, was achieved by reviving the narrative in photography. This was done by imposing elements from literature onto photography. The pure photography that had been idealized by straight photography was thus in staged photography rendered impure by opening its borders to other art forms.

Chapter 3, 'Communicating inner life', is an examination of the self-introspective and self-concerned motifs of staged photography and the sense that photography was unable to communicate anything other than visually empty semblances of reality. The self-explorations of the staged art photographers are thus not to be understood as self-expressive in a communicative sense, but as private, subjective investigations of their inner lives. All attempts to communicate emotional content in optical visualist image-making—as in straight photography, social documentary, or photojournalism—were rejected as meaningless by the staged art photographers. Visual representations of the emotions were seen as empty shells that could not provide the audience with any knowledge of the real emotional content of the depicted emotion. Instead, the staged art photographers turned inwards to explain their minds to themselves. The idea that photography was a tool of self-exploration took a post-phenomenological turn in the works of the staged art photographers of the 1970s. Their work shows a profound affinity with a post-phenomenological approach to lived experience through technology as developed by Don Ihde. In Ihde's view, relating to the world through technology constitutes a phenomenological experience where the borders of mind, technology, and reality are clearly arbitrary and open to discussion. This was photography's function for the staged art photographers of the Seventies, as the medium was used both to reflect on their role as photographers, and to use photography to explain their inner lives to themselves.

Where both Chapters 2 and 3 showed how the staged art photographers eschewed the reductionism of optical vision inherent

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in straight photography when it came to communicating real-life experience, Chapter 4, 'Haptic vision', investigates the experiments intended to push photography beyond its entrapment in the optical. By using the immediacy and presence that the SX-70 Polaroid technique offered, as well as the opportunity to manually alter the Polaroid emulsion, the staged art photographers reintroduced the long-repressed haptic to art photography. The distance opened up by the optical vision between the visual photographic representation of the body and the actual corporeal body was bridged by manually touching, smudging, and remodelling the skin of the Polaroid emulsion. As the staged art photographers declared visual likeness to be illusory and empty of deeper meaning, indexicality—the haptic trace of presence—became increasingly important in their work. In this process, the Polaroids gained the status of magical objects in which the borders between the image-world and the real world were eroded. The contagious magic act not only challenged the non-interventionist ideals of straight photography as photographers started to manipulate the Polaroid: the unconventional use of hybrid artistic methods—photography and sculpting—also made the artworks unique art objects that contrasted to the traditional, reproducible, straight photograph.

Though I am aware that I have been dependent upon my eyes when preparing this thesis, I hope that this study, with its phenomenologically coloured horizon, can contribute to a phenomenological turn in photography theory and photographic history writing—one that can move beyond the mere visual element in photography. An approach that, supposedly, will be needed in future in order to analyse the increasing embodiments of a 'visual' technology that now claims precedence at the touch–vision interface.

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Notes

1. Introduction

1 Coleman, 'The Directorial Mode', 251–2.
2 Bal, 'Visual essentialism', 9.
3 Köhler, 'Arranged Constructed and Staged', 18.
4 Szarkowski, *Photographer's Eye*, 12.
5 The f.64 manifesto is reprinted in Adams, *An Autobiography*, 111–12.
6 White, 'Your Concepts Are Showing', 90.
7 Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 19.
8 Ibid. 19.
9 Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 143 for example.
10 Batchen, *Burning with Desire,* 63 ff.
11 There is some debate in contemporary photographic theory as to whether Peirce's concept of the index should be interpreted as a non-signifying material trace or as an iconic sign. See Batchen, *Burning with desire*, 198; or Elkins (ed.), *Photography Theory*, 130–155, for arguments for why it should be interpreted as a sign.
12 Quote reprinted in Block and Freeman, *Shrouds of the Night*, 125.
13 White, 'Your Concepts Are Showing', 90.
14 Classen, *Worlds of sense*, 6.
15 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition,* xxiv.
16 Coleman, 'The Directorial Mode', 251–2.
17 Rice, 'Beyond Reality', 677.
18 Ibid. 677–8.
19 Köhler, 'Arranged Constructed and Staged', 24.
20 Hoy, *Fabrications*, 8.
21 Ibid. 167.
22 Sandbye, *Det iscensatte fotografi*, 10.
23 Ibid. 90.
24 Ibid. 11.
25 Ibid. 190 ff.
26 Vowinckel, 'Analysis and Simulation', 12.
27 Köhler, 'Arranged Constructed and Staged', 19.
28 Taschenberg, *Classic Essays on Photography*; Kemp, *Theorie der Fotografie,* iii.
29 See Burgin, 'Introduction'.
30 Ibid.
31 Edwards, 'Thinking photography beyond the visual', 31; Stafford, *Good Looking*, 5.
32 Stafford, *Good Looking,* 5.
33 Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, 39.
34 Uelsmann, 'Post-visualisation', 73–4.
35 Michals said this in the television programme 'Visions and Images: Duane Michals', 1980, interview, 24:12.

36 Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld,* 107.
37 Ibid. 107.
38 Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, 38.
39 Sontag, 'Against interpretation', 7.
40 McLuhan, *Understanding Media;* Ong, *Presence of the Word*.
41 Classen, *Worlds of sense*, 6–7.
42 Bal, 'Visual essentialism', 6; Mitchell, 'There are no mixed media'.
43 Mitchell, 'There are no visual media', 262.
44 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*.
45 Pinney, *Photos of the Gods*.
46 Marks, *The skin of the film,* 129 and 162–3.
47 Iversen, *Alois Riegl,* 10.
48 Ibid. 15–16.
49 Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', 162.
50 Jay, 'Photo-Unrealism', 350.
51 Michals, *Real Dreams,* 2.
52 Hostetler, 'Structure of Photographic Metaphors'.
53 Livingston, *The New York School,* 259.
54 Hirsch, *Seizing the light*, 343–5.
55 Rice, 'Beyond Reality', 663.
56 Coleman, 'The Directorial Mode', 257.
57 Les Krims, email to the author, 19 February 2012.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 'Visions and Images: Duane Michals', 1980, interview, 20:39.
61 Sandbye, *Det iscensatte fotografi*, 55.

2. Dethroning optical vision

1 Köhler, 'Arranged Constructed and Staged', 18.
2 Adams, *The Making of 40 Photographs*, 177.
3 Comer and Klochko, *The Moment of Seeing*, 24.
4 White, 'Your Concepts Are Showing', 90.
5 Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 107.
6 Pinney, 'Camerawork as technical practice', 167.
7 Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, 27.
8 Michals, *Real Dreams*, 4.
9 Uelsmann, 'Post-visualization', 74.
10 'Visions and Images: Duane Michals', 1980, interview, 23:32; Les Krims, email to the author, 2 February 2012.
11 <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/explore/glossary-of-art-terms1/kodalith.php>, accessed 12 November 2012.
12 Les Krims, e-mail to the author, 22 March 2012.
13 Martin Kao, 'Edwin Land's Polaroid', 18.
14 Adams, *An Autobiography*, 302.
15 Szarkowski, *Mirrors and windows,* 25.
16 'Bill Presented to the Chamber of Deputies', 31–35.
17 See, for example, Tucker, *Nature Exposed;* Block and Freeman, *Shrouds of the Night*, 134.

18 Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 178.
19 Strindberg, 'Fotografi och filosofi', 47. Translation by Charlotte Merton. 'Det var en gång en fotograf. Han fotograferade väldigt; profiler och facer, knästycken och helfigurer; och han kunde utveckla och fixera, tona guldbad och kopiera. Det var en huggare! Men han blev aldrig nöjd, för han var en filosof, en stor filosof och en uppfinnare. Han hade nämligen filosoferat att världen var bakvänd. Det kunde man ju se på plåten, när den låg i utvecklaren. Det som var höger på människan blev här till vänster;det som var mörkt blev ljust, skuggorna blevo dagrar, blått blev vitt och silverknappar blevo dunkla som järn. Bakvänt var det.'
20 Ruskin, 'Excerpt from *Cestus of Agalia*', 113.
21 Whitman, ' "Visit to Plumbe's Gallery", 21.
22 Baudelaire, 'From The Salon of 1859'.
23 Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', 185–6.
24 Flusser, *The shape of things,* 51.
25 Ibid. 44.
26 Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 73.
27 Ibid. 75.
28 Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 44.
29 Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 107. My italics.
30 See Gunning, 'Phantom Images', 42–71; and Gunning, 'Re-newing Old Technologies'.
31 Gunning, 'Phantom Images', 42 ff.
32 Sandbye, *Det iscensatte fotografi,* 49 ff.
33 Coleman, *The Grotesque in Photography*, 6.
34 Ibid. 9.
35 Freud, 'The Uncanny', 123.
36 Ibid. 132.
37 Ibid. 134 and 148.
38 Coleman, 'Les Krims: Four Photographs That Drove a Man to Crime', 59.
39 Royle, *The Uncanny*, 2.
40 *Tresspassing*, 12:25.
41 *Photoprofiles: Arthur Tress*, dir. and produced by Thomas Schiff, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IyWF4L8vUJQ>, accessed 24 October 2012, Pt I, 04:19.
42 Tress, 'Excerpt from Phallic Fantasy', 152.
43 Tress, 'Family portraits', 151.
44 Coleman, 'Les Krims: Four Photographs That Drove a Man to Crime', 58.
45 Coleman describes Heinecken's pictures on display in the exhibition as 'hard core pornographic' ('Les Krims: Four Photographs That Drove a Man to Crime', 59).
46 Coleman, 'Les Krims: Four Photographs That Drove a Man to Crime', 59.
47 Royle, 'The Uncanny', 1–2.
48 Michals, *The Journey of the Spirit after Death*, 1.
49 Bailey, *The Photographic Illusion*, 40.
50 Samaras, *Samaras Album,* 6.
51 Kuspit, 'Lucas Samaras: Master of the uncanny', 33.
52 Coleman, ' "From Today Painting is Dead" ', 183–2.
53 Ibid. 184.
54 Bailey, *The Photographic Illusion*, 9.

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55 Foote, 'The Anti-Photographers'.

56 Batchen, *Burning with desire*, 12 ff.

57 Ibid. 13.

58 Fried, 'Art and objecthood'; Fried's rejection of hybrid artforms is also discussed in Mitchell, 'There are no mixed media', 258.

59 Sandbye, *Det iscensatte fotografi*, 59.

60 Coleman, 'The Directorial Mode', 255.

61 Ibid. 256.

62 Coleman, *The Grotesque in Photography*, 72.

63 Hoy, *Fabrications*, 9.

64 Royle, *The Uncanny*, 5.

65 Brooker, *Bertholt Brecht,* 62 ff.

66 Coleman, 'Tickling the eye'.

67 *Photoprofiles: Arthur Tress*, Pt II, 02:00.

68 Tress, 'Family Portraits', 151.

69 Tress, email to the author, 6 August 2012.

70 Hoy, *Fabrications*, 8 quoting Max Kozloff, 'Through the narrative portal', 97. Hoy cites Kozloff slightly wrong as he writes 'expose psychological truth'.

71 Samaras, quoted in Lifson, *Introduction*, 13.

72 Hoy, *Fabrications,* 8.

73 Les Krims, email to the author, 8 March 2012.

74 Les Krims, email to the author, 16 April 2012.

75 Les Krims, email to the author, 20 August 2012.

76 Michals, *Chance meeting,* 1.

77 Michals, *Real Dreams*, 1.

78 Richardson, *Conversations with contemporary photographers*, 117.

79 Michals, *Real Dreams*, 3.

80 Foucault, 'Thought and emotion', 11.

3. Communicating inner life

1 Robins, *The Pluralist Era,* 209.

2 'Visions and Images: Duane Michals', 1980, interview, 24:07.

3 Ibid. 07:08.

4 Samaras, S*amaras Album,* 4.

5 'Visions and Images: Duane Michals', 1980, interview, 07:08. My italics.

6 Michals, *Real Dreams*, 1.

7 *Tresspassing*, 00:35.

8 Ibid. 09:00.

9 The quoted lines originally appeared in the Japanese photo magazine *Camera Mainichi*, 8 (1970) and are reprinted in Coleman, 'The Directorial Mode', 252.

10 Köhler, 'Arranged Constructed and Staged', 18.

11 Tress, 'The Photograph as magical object', 149.

12 Michals, *Chance meeting*, 1.

13 Michals, quoted in Bailey, *The Photographic Illusion*, 15.

14 'Concerning "Various small Fires": Edward Ruscha discusses his perplexing Publications", *Art Forum*, 1975, 25.

15 Les Krims, email to the author, 20 August 2012.

16 Adams, *An Autobiography*, 114.
17 Kemp, *Theorie der Fotografie,* iii. 18.
18 Ibid. iii. 20.
19 Adams, 'A personal credo', 29.
20 White, 'What is a creative photography?'.
21 White, 'Equivalence: The Perennial Trend', 170.
22 Freud, 'A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis', 264.
23 White, 'Equivalence: The Perennial Trend', 171 ff.
24 Ibid. 172.
25 'Visions and Images: Duane Michals', 1980, interview, 05:15.
26 Kemp, *Theorie der Fotografie*, iii. 18.
27 Greenberg, 'The camera's glass eye', 61.
28 Steichen, 'Introduction by Edward Steichen', 5
29 Ibid.
30 Jay, *Occam's Razor*, 89.
31 Ibid. 92–3.
32 Hirsch, *Seizing the Light*, 319.
33 Szarkowski, *Mirrors and windows*, 13–14.
34 Les Krims, email to the author, 19 February 2012.
35 Michals, *Duane Michals. Photographs/Sequences/Texts,* 1.
36 Michals and Seidner, 'Duane Michals', 24.
37 Tress, 'Family portraits', 151.
38 Welch and Long, 'Introduction', 12–13.
39 Ibid. 13.
40 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 66.
41 Long and Welch, 'Introduction', 9.
42 Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 5.
43 *Tresspassing*, 00:35.
44 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 119.
45 Ibid. 123.
46 Ibid. 90.
47 Ibid. 103.
48 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 3–4.
49 Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', 6.
50 Sontag, 'Photographic Evangels', 149.
51 Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', 29–30.
52 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 162.
53 Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, 72
54 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 42.
55 Simmel, 'Infelices Possidentes!', 262.
56 Tress, 'Statement about myself and photography'.
57 Clark, *Supersizing the mind,* xxviii.
58 Clark and Chalmers, 'The Extended Mind', 222.
59 'Visions and Images: Duane Michals', 1980, interview, 03:45.
60 Sandbye, *Det iscensatte fotografi*, 45 ff.
61 *Photoprofiles: Arthur Tress*, Pt I, 01:45.
62 Sontag, 'Melancholy objects', 52.
63 Krauss, 'Photography in the service of surrealism', 35.

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64 Krauss, 'Photography in the service of surrealism', 20.

65 Sandbye, *Det iscensatte fotografi*, 45 ff.

66 Michals, *Real Dreams*, 5.

67 Tress, 'Fantasy and the Forlorn', 152.

68 Ibid. 152.

69 Ibid. 152.

70 Arthur Tress, email to the author, 5 July 2012.

71 Tress, 'Excerpt from press release for "Daymares" exhibition'.

72 *Photoprofiles: Arthur Tress*, Pt, 12:50.

73 Tress, *The Dream Collector*.

74 Minahan, 'Introduction', 3.

75 Tress, 'Excerpt from press release for "Daymares" exhibition'.

76 Szarkowski, *Mirrors and windows*, 25.

77 Nittve, 'IMPLOSION—A postmodern perspective', 18.

78 Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What is postmodernism?', 79.

79 Köhler, 'Arranged Constructed and Staged', 22.

80 Ibid. 23.

81 Ibid. 23.

4. Haptic vision

1 Santner, *Psychotheology of everyday life*, 7.

2 Ibid. 13–14.

3 Bal, 'Visual essentialism', 9.

4 Peirce, 'What is a Sign?', 9.

5 Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*.

6 Jay, 'Photo-Unrealism', 350.

7 Michals, *Real Dreams*, 5.

8 Silverman, 'Duane Michals'.

9 Michals, *Real Dreams*, 9.

10 Samaras, *Samaras Album*, 6.

11 Ibid. 6.

12 'Inside New York's Art World: Lucas Samaras', 1979, interview, 08:37.

13 Samaras quoted in Levin, *Lucas Samaras*, 89.

14 Krims, *Fictcryptokrimsographs*, foreword.

15 'Inside New York's Art World: Lucas Samaras', 1979, interview, 19:14.

16 Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', 176.

17 Ibid. 167.

18 Martin Kao, 'Edwin Land's Polaroid', 17.

19 Edwin H. Land, 'Chairman's Letter', *Polaroid Corporation, Annual Report*, 23 March 1977, quoted in Martin Kao, 'Edwin Land's Polaroid', 18.

20 Kozloff, 'An Introduction by Max Kozloff', 11 ff.

21 Coleman, ' "Violated" Instants: Lucas Samaras and Les Krims', 238–9.

22 'Inside New York's Art World: Lucas Samaras and Grace Glueck', 1977?, interview, 24:48.

23 Lifson, 'Photo-Transformations', 43.

24 Samaras, *Samaras Album*, 4.

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25 Ibid. 7.
26 'Inside New York's Art World: Lucas Samaras', 1979, interview, 18:29.
27 Les Krims, email to the author, 20 August 2012.
28 Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image'.
29 Long, 'Introduction', 12–13.
30 Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', 25.
31 'Introduction', *October*, 4.
32 Krauss, Rosalind, 'Tracing Nadar', 34–5.
33 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 27.
34 Ibid. 41.
35 Batchen, 'Carnal Knowledge', 21.
36 *Photoprofiles: Arthur Tress*, Pt I, 04:19.
37 Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', 7.
38 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 8.
39 Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', 55.
40 Stafford, *Good Looking,* 5.
41 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 80–1.
42 Krauss, 'Notes on the Index', 78.
43 See 'Art Seminar' in Elkins, *Photography Theory*, 129 ff. where a gathering of prom-
     inent scholars on photography repeatedly relate indexicality to the iconic semiotic
     throughout the lengthy discussion of the subject.
44 Elkins, *Photography Theory*, 134–5.
45 Gunning, 'What's the point of an index?', 40–1.
46 Ibid. 40–1.
47 Lister, 'Photography in the age of electronic imaging', 305 ff.
48 Mitchell is quoted in Lister, 'Photography in the Age of Electronic Imaging', 313.
49 Frazer, *The Golden Bough,* 9–10.
50 Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity,* 52.
51 Pinney, *Photos of the Gods*, 8.
52 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 5.
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55 Les Krims, email to the author, 14 March 2012.
56 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 162. Original italics.
57 Bal, Mieke, 'Visual essentialism'; Mitchell, 'There are no visual media'.
58 Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', 30.
59 Tress, 'The Photograph as magical object', 149.
60 'Inside New York's Art World: Lucas Samaras', 1979, interview, 22:10.
61 Tress, 'The photograph as Magical Object', 149.
62 Sontag, 'The Image-World', 155.
63 Ibid., 155.
64 *Photoprofiles: Arthur Tress*, Pt I, 04:55 and 05:17.
65 Ibid., Pt I, 04:55.
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