The Queering of Photography: A Generative Encounter

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers what a queering of photography entails. It is situated in photographic studio practice using a large format camera, and is supported by aspects of materially informed, non-dialectical theories. Key thinkers include Karen Barad, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Johnny Golding, Martin Heidegger, Jean-François Lyotard, and Luce Irigaray. The original contribution to knowledge that this thesis offers comprises of a rethinking the ways in which a photograph is ontologically conditioned. It proposes a new concept of the photographic image that addresses its materiality – in the form of the poetic and the sensuous – in relationship to a generative principle: the photograph's ability to claim agential movement outside of pre-established measures. This generativity forms the bases for a materially rooted, queer, methodology that overturns the binary rooted logic that underpins the dominant discourse of photography, for example truth/falsehood, copy/original, subject/object, analogue/digital.

The thesis has been developed through the production of the photographic works *Looking Out, Looking In; Turn; Figural, Figurative; Frame;* and *Skin,* and is structured in three parts; Binary, Material Image, and Encounter. Binary problematises how representation has reduced queer to identity by positioning it in opposition to heteronormativity and photography's amplification of this fixity. This concern of agential deficiency is further addressed by outlining how the photograph has been granted agency when theorised. The thesis proposes that the photograph has predominantly been conditioned as something less than what it is: as a mediator (of a referent, of the human psyche, of new technological dissemination). The second part, Material Image, turns to the photograph's material constitution. Addressed materially, the photograph is enabled agency as image: no longer made passive as a mediator, it is ontologically conditioned through a self-referentiality. Queer is here presented as generative process where materialities and dimensions are renegotiated. The third part of the thesis, Encounter, addresses the causality underpinning this generative condition. While duration, light, and different spatial conditions within the camera optics comprise key ingredients, the metric measure enables their cohesion as image. In this way, the image reveals the queering of photography and the underpinning causality grounds it. Entangling traditional photographic disciplines with contemporary feminist concerns, this PhD culminates in making present how existence is conditioned through the human measure.

DECLARATION

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature:

Date:

19.08.2019

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INTRODUCTION

> But the question remained: whether one could account, both epistemologically and analytically, for the "constitutive is" as something that "made sense" […] without reintroducing the tetra-headed trap of Universal Totality, the Negative, and the teleological methods of Dialectical unfolding.[1]

This PhD investigates what a queering of photography entails. The central focus of the research explores how the photograph can address queer concerns without falling into binary structures. The purpose of this research project is thus not simply to expose the binary but to abandon it all together. This move requires a new logic through which things can make sense. Addressing the photograph as a material image allows for agential movement that frees it from its passive role as a representation (copy) of an identity (original).[2] It simultaneously frees queer from negating heteronormativity. The original contribution to knowledge offered by this thesis consists of the proposal that the queering of photography is better served by addressing the photograph's capacity, through its materiality, to generate the poetic and the sensuous than by its ability to represent identity. In this way, the photograph's material generativity names the queering of photography.

At a time when queer is at risk of being assimilated into the mainstream, commodified as a neat pre-packaged unit, this PhD seeks new ways of using queer not only to celebrate visibility but also to evoke a critical thinking that encourages further questioning of the underpinning structures of thought.[3] The initial motivation to undertake the research has grown out of questions developed through an ongoing art practice where photography is used to address issues concerning nonconforming gender. Until the start of this research project, I made work that operated as a critical dialogue with the ways in which photography had come to present and with this, to define, the image of *the other*, particularly the gendered other. I have made

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[1] Johnny Golding (2010), 'Fractal Philosophy: (and the Small Matter of Learning How to Listen: Attunement as the Task of Art' in A. Kroker and M. Kroker (eds), *Code Drift: Essays in Critical Digital Studies*, Victoria, Canada: New World Perspective/ CTheory Books, 30.

[2] According to Lyotard, structures that operate through signification inherently embody a plasticity and sensuousness, which he names a *libidinal economy*. See Jean-François Lyotard (1993), *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press and Jean-François Lyotard (2011), *Discourse, Figure*, trans. A. Hudek and M. Lydon, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[3] The use of queer has gradually become infiltrated with mainstream media. The past few years have witnessed a rapid rise in queer visibilities, for example through portrayals of nonbinary gender or transgender identities in television sitcoms and documentaries. The mainstreaming of queer has been particularly evident in fashion where persons identifying as nonbinary or trans have been signed up as models for fashion campaigns and model agencies. The positioning of queer as an identity is addressed further in Chapter 1.

photographs depicting my friends, acquaintances, and sometimes myself, contextualised through a thematic of gender and personhood.[4]

Fig.1. Åsa Johannesson. *All Same, All Different*, 2014

My practice has been further informed by my relation to my twin. The piece *All Same, All Different* (Fig. 1), depicts my twin and myself in black and white profiles. Informed by Francis Galton's and Alphonse Bertillon's use of photography to create systems to categorise humans according to their physical traits (physiognomy and eugenics), this diptych was a comment on the same/other, normal/abnormal division and its reaffirmation through photography.[5] *All Same, All Different*, in presenting two faces seen from the side, invites viewers to look without themselves being confronted by the two sitters' gazes. Consequently, it suggests a safe platform from where unhindered scrutiny and processes of visual comparison can unfold. The strategy to position the viewer as the 'measurer' poignantly raises questions of the dynamics embedded within the relationship between the seer and the seen. However, it also highlights the problems that this research project tackles: problems that are inherent to the relationship between queering and photography. First, in using categorisation as its strategy, this work risks to reinforce rather than unsettle the validation of the same/other distinction. As Foucault puts it, categorisation positions an individual as 'already resembl[ing] their crime before they have committed it'.[6] Second, in referencing physiognomic photography, the work suggests an indexical operation

[4] See http://asajohannesson.com/work/work/ [Accessed 14.08.2019].
[5] The photographic portrait as a means to record a person's facial features played a fundamental role to the late nineteenth century pseudo sciences physiognomy and eugenics and has helped generating a pictorial image of identity, and particularly of 'the other', as category. See Joan Fontcuberta (2014), 'Eugenics without Borders' in his *Pandora's Camera: Photogr@phy after Photography*, London: Mack, 65-67 and Roger Hargreaves and Peter Hamilton (2001), *The Beautiful and the Damned: The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth Century Photography*, London: Lund Humphries Ltd.
[6] See Michel Foucault (2003), *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975,* trans. Graham Burchell, London and New York: Verso, xvii.

where the photograph stands in for an already existing entity, a move that risks instrumentality through the copy/original paradigm. The idea of an assumed default category or positionality, an *a priori*, is something this thesis seeks to invalidate altogether. Developing from these concerns, the following research questions have developed:

- In which ways can the term queer be used in the context of photography to engender a debate on the possibility of existence outside of pre-established categories, and particularly binary logic?

- In which ways can the photographic image break away from its passivity of standing in for something else to account for its own existence?

- In which ways can the photograph overcome its twofold fixity of first, representation and second, its stasis as a still image?

The primary move in this thesis consists of relocating questions concerning *queer* and *photograph* from the body of the depicted person to the photograph's own constitution. This has enabled a break with the representational logic through which photography operates instrumentally as copy/original and where queer is upheld by heteronormativity. Using photographic practice as the core research method has helped to establish a mode of making sense of the photograph that takes into account its underlying causality and agential potentiality as image. This research project is further informed by the aspect of non-dialectical and materially rooted theories. Turning to thinkers who recognise art practice not just as a way to organise things (identity, life) but as a logic through which things (life) can make sense allows categories to be unsettled, instead of negating existing ones. While Martin Heidegger's argument for artmaking as *techne*, as that which reveals *poiesis*, helps photographic practice to be grasped through its own logic, Jean-François Lyotard's notion of the *figural* productively highlights the material and the poetic in sign-driven languages.[7] Karen Barad's *agential realism* and Johnny Golding's *ana-materialism* enable an understanding of different forms of material and agential conditions. Irigaray's writing on the forgetting of air further makes present the materiality which, while frequently overlooked, is inherently embedded within the photograph.[8] This move to a material thinking about photography came about due to a frustration with

[7] See for example Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology' in his *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lowitt, New York, London: Garland Publishing and Jean-François Lyotard (2011), *Discourse, Figure*.
[8] See Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Johnny Golding (2013), 'Ana-Materialism & the Pineal Eye: Becoming Mouth-Breast' in *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, vol. 19, no. 4, San Francisco: Leonardo/ISAST, 66-83 and Luce Irigaray (1999), *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, trans. Mary B. Mader, London: The Athlone Press.

identity-centred Queer theory and with dominant theories of photography which have addressed the photograph's relation to its referent, its context, its viewership and its ability to replicate and disseminate – but which often sidestep the image plane's aesthetic and material ambition.[9] This is concerning, as it suggests that the photograph's underpinning craft – the skill, technicality, and materialities – escapes theorisation. In other words, the photograph embodies a vocabulary that words struggle to comprehend. As Henry Rogers argues, '[n]o matter how detailed and carefully our words are fashioned, no matter how powerful our description, the condition of art always escapes them'.[10]

Exploring photography through its own material constitution by addressing questions generated through studio experimentation enables an agential flexibility and playfulness for both *queer* and *photograph*.[11] Returning to *All Same, All Different* with a material thinking helps an understanding of why and how it operates; why it *works* as a photograph. André Malraux poignantly proposes that in the photographic process, 'the model becomes the basic material of an image rather than the image being a reproduction of the model'.[12] This diptych works not simply because it can *explain* the wrongness in 'othering' or otherwise stereotyping a person through photography but because it *reveals* this photographic burden through a material coming together as image. Reclaiming the photograph's material integrity by highlighting what the photograph *generates*; greyscale, new textures and shadows, helps problematising the presupposed copy/original logic. In so doing this approach opens up to rethinking also other binary structures.[13] Consequently, the ways in which a photograph generates new material textures is fundamental to this research, as it demonstrates a move of difference without the requirement to limit its attributes to pre-set definitions.

Extending from my art practice means locating the research in photographic portraiture. It also means a continual exploration of subtle strategies: the queering is not suggested through a declared performativity but is instead teased out. Using a formal aesthetic and obeying the technical laws of photography (photographs are sharp and exposed according to light readings) allows the forming of a seemingly safe platform from which a queering vocabulary can be exercised. This subtlety helps to slow down the work, allowing it to take into account the image as (material) whole. It further helps to demonstrate that first, the traditionally produced

[9] While Chapter 1 addresses issues embedded within identity focused Queer theory, Chapter 2 addresses the agential role of the photograph in dominant theories of photography.
[10] Henry Rogers (2013), *Queertexturealities*, Birmingham: Article Press, 10. For art practice as research method, see also Paul Carter (2004), *Material Thinking*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press and Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum (2013), *On not Knowing: How Artists Think*, London: Black Dog Publishing.
[11] The photograph is addressed as a material image in Chapter 3 and its underpinning causality is addressed further in Chapter 4.
[12] André Malraux (1967), *Museum Without Walls*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 86.
[13] This material position comprises this thesis central claim and is developed in Chapter 3, 4, and 5.

photograph does not equate with representation, and second, that the photograph's materiality is inherent to its constitution. The people photographed for this research project are my friends, or persons who become my friends through the project. These sitters were recruited through an organic, word-of-mouth methodology.[14] As the research project developed, persons would contact me and show interest in being a sitter for the work. Sitters were not selected for this research project based on their physical appearance, nor were they asked to declare an identitarian position. Rather, these people came to the project as participators based on their shared concern with the binary as the measure for the (gendered and sexual) human. The project was carefully explained to the participating sitter before each photographic shoot began. In this way, the research project has taken a nonbinary position but without positioning itself in a new category: it operates as an escape but with an unknown destination.

The photographic works produced through the research project reveal this attitude. *Looking Out, Looking In* (Fig. 2) and *Turn* (Fig. 3.) were developed by considering the parameters of queer and the photograph, rather than simply operating as a portrayal of a person. While *Looking Out, Looking In* set out to explore the encounters in the studio (between photographer, sitter, backdrop, and in relation to the photographic process), *Turn* addressed the spatio-durational parameters of photographic technologies: for example, the photographic frame, the durational time, and the depth of field. *Frame* (Fig. 4) continued by addressing the rectangularity of the photographic frame and the hierarchy in the studio of figure and backdrop. *Figural, Figurative* (Fig. 5) developed through research undertaken at the British School at Rome, initiated in 2016 and continued in 2017. Photographing statues extended the photographic vocabulary explored through photographing humans. The already static marble sitters enabled further technical experimentation, for example longer exposure times and a slower and thus more attentive composition process. *Figural, Figurative* takes its name from Lyotard's notion of the figural as it foregrounds the photograph as an image of plasticity – what Lyotard refers to as 'thickness'.[15] The photograph's generative capacity, initiated with *Looking Out, Looking In,* was developed and defined further with these photographic experiments where the statues' suggestive seductiveness was heightened through the use of different temperatures of light, generating an intensity of both colour and texture that would be used to propose a queer sensibility.[16] The work *Skin* (Figs. 32 and 33) comprises the research project's wild card, as it suggests a queering through less subtle strategies. Made out of the Polaroids taken as exposure tests for *Looking Out, Looking In, Skin* is created from their emulsion layer only. Not quite image and not quite

[14] Participants are recruited organically using the *snowball effect methodology* (word of mouth). See Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2005), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
[15] Jean-François Lyotard (2011), *Discourse, Figure*, 90-102.
[16] The temperature of light names a light source's quality of light and will be addressed further in Chapter 3.

object, *Skin* helps to problematise the research project's position by raising questions about dimensionality and essence.

The thesis operates in three parts: Binary, Material Image, and Encounter. Binary (Chapter 1: A Shared Burden of the Binary and Chapter 2: Agential Potentialities in Theories of Photography) presents a thorough background to the problems proposed by this thesis. Material Image (Chapter 3: A Material Image) engages with the research concerns through studio practice and materially informed theories. It introduces the research method and presents this thesis' generative move as a form of photographic *poiesis* that comes to underpin the queering of photography. Encounter (Chapter 4: Measure and Chapter 5: Ground) develops the photograph's generative potential further by addressing its underpinning causality. With the photographic exposure as its central premise, it makes present the paradoxical moment where queering is generated through the calculable measure. The photograph's causality is here addressed as a manifold that enables the entanglement of materialities and dimensions to form the photograph's generative condition. The consideration of process and shape allows the queering of photography to be further problematised by positioning it in relation to questions of essentialism, transcendence and accountability. The Coda presents fragmented texts written from the perspective of the photographer. It addresses the development of the photographic practice, culminating in this thesis' argument on the queering of photography. Appendix 1 showcases examples of photographic practice not addressed in the body of the thesis and Appendix 2 presents the research project's ethics approval.

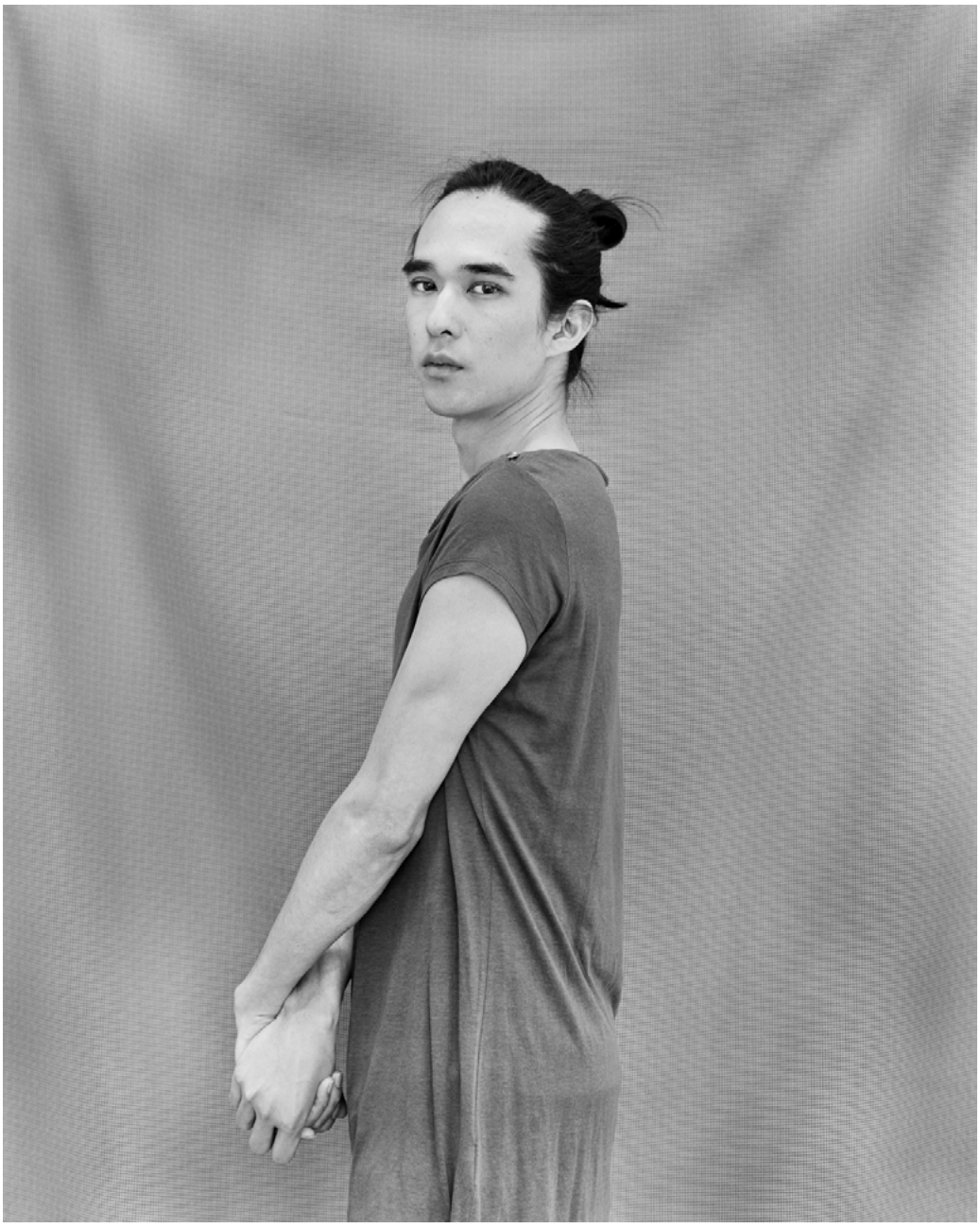

Fig 2. *Untitled* from *Looking Out, Looking In*, 2015

Fig. 3. *Untitled* from *Turn*, 2018

Fig 4. *Untitled* from *Frame,* 2017

Fig 5. *Untitled* from *Figural, Figurative*, 2016

PART 1:
BINARY

1. A SHARED BURDEN OF THE BINARY

This PhD proposes that there is an overlooked correlation between *queer* and *photograph*: their ability to generate nonbinary difference and their failure to do so when addressed through a representational mode of thinking. This chapter examines these two notions by addressing representation as concept. It proposes that ideologies of queer have been written into the bodies depicted by the camera rather than including the photograph itself as a queering agency. This has generated a mode of queering prescribed by identity and semiotics, as queer is accessed through an unpacking of visual codes. Looking at key examples of recent photographic practice and writings on queer in the context of photography, this chapter argues that the representational form of photography, in operating as a sign for something else, not only reduces queer to a fixed position of negation (queer/heteronormative) but also overlooks the photograph's own queering potential. In other words, the photograph's role in representation becomes instrumental, failing to take thought further than claiming an identity position that is accessed through semiotics. Developing from here, the chapter, informed by Martin Heidegger's notion of *enframing* and Gilles Deleuze's *image of thought*, suggests that the queering of photography is better served by attending to the logic underpinning the photograph's ontological conditioning: how it comes to make sense.

1.1. Queer as identity

The rainbow has come to function as the symbol for LGBTQI+ individuals and communities. Within this acronym, queer, as the Q, serves as the interlinking umbrella term. As a metaphor for a spectrum of identities, of forms of difference, the rainbow operates as a form of representation.[17] The use of queer to name a form of identity that does not conform with the norm, with heteronormativity, is a repurposing of former uses of the term.[18] Originally used to mean 'strange', 'odd', 'eccentric', 'unusual' 'with a shady character', but also with the pejorative connotation of a homosexual man, queer was in the late 1980s reclaimed as an inclusive self-affirming term for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans persons.[19] Heather Love notes in her *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*: 'When queer was adopted in the late 1980s it was chosen because it evoked a long history of insult and abuse – you could hear the hurt in it…'[20] This recent 'positive' meaning, in which queer is used as a

[17] David. J. Getsy (ed) (2016), *Queer (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 12-23.
[18] Michael Warner (1991), 'Fear of a Queer Planet' in *Social Text*, vol. 29, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 3-17.
[19] For examples of how queer has been shapeshifted as a concept see Iain Morland (2005), *Queer Theory,* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan and Kath. Browne and Catherine.J. Nash (ed) (2010), *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*. London and New York: Routledge.
[20] Heather Love (2007), *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2.

way to define an identity outside of the norm and without the necessity of declaring either one's sexual preference or preferred gender pronoun, has since the late 1980s been developed further into a theorisation of queer. Queer theory questions the validity of heterosexual and binary gender by examining heteronormativity as an assumed natural discourse and ideology.[21] With theorists Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick widely noted as pioneers, Queer theory developed from deconstructive post-structuralist feminist critical theories, particularly from lesbian and gay studies. Defying essentialism, Queer theory seeks to acknowledge and challenge the assumed stability of identity and desire. Contesting gender and sexuality as biologically predetermined, it instead examines these as societal constructions that are not pre-set but generated through cultural and societal norms.[22] Queer theory is in this way informed by Michel Foucault's discursive model of analysis centring on the subject not as pre-existing but as produced by the discourse in which it is situated.[23] This is evident in Nikki Sullivan's definition of queer as 'to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimise, to camp up – heteronormative knowledges and institutions, and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them.'[24]

This deconstruction of identity, and particularly the binary categories male/female and masculinity/femininity, has generated theories that suggest queer as something that cannot be pinned down into a neat category. Queer 'does not', David Halperin suggests, 'name some natural kind of referent to some deterministic object, [but] acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm'.[25] In its articulation of the potentiality of thinking about gender and sexuality outside of heterosexuality and outside of gender understood as biologically

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[21] See for example Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), *Epistemology of the Closet.* Oakland: University of California Press, Judith Butler (1999), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge Classics. New York: Routledge, José Esteban Muñoz (1999), *Disidentifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and Judith Halberstam (2005), *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York: New York University Press.

[22] See for example critical theorist Teresa de Lauretis who has been credited with coining 'queer' as an academic term. De Lauretis suggests that a Queer theory should encompass an acknowledgment of gender and sexuality understood separately from one another. She consequently calls for a new approach 'to recast or reinvent the terms of sexualities, to construct another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual.' Teresa de Lauretis (1991), 'Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities: An Introduction' in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 3, issue 2, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, iv.

[23] See for example Michel Foucault (2002), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, London: Routledge and Michel Foucault (1999), *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. unknown, London and New York: Routledge.

[24] Nikki Sullivan (2003), *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, New York: New York University Press, vi.

[25] David Halperin (1995), *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagriography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 62. For the othering of subordinated gender positions, see for example Simone de Beauvoir (1997), *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parschley, London: Vintage Classics and Luce Irigaray (1985), *The Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter, New York: Cornell University Press. See also Amelia Jones's and Erin Silvers' *Otherwise*. This compilation of essays seeks to build a bridge between traditional feminism and more recent, Queer theory informed, feminism. Amelia Jones and Erin Silver (eds) (2016), *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

determined, Queer theory has generated a new feminist analysis more complex than feminist discourse from the 1970s and 1980s, rooted in a binary framework of identity politics. Further to its breaking down the binary gay/straight, Queer theory has departed from the psychoanalytic model of sexual difference, a feminist concept which assumes the binary of man/woman and within this a female heterosexual position, excluding homosexuality as well as trans and nonbinary genders.[26] While Halperin suggests that queer operates from a place not necessarily labelled but nevertheless *opposite* to heteronormativity, Christine Delphy similarly proposes that '[p]erhaps we shall only really be able to think about gender on the day when we can imagine nongender'.[27]

It is precisely these forms of oppositions (negations) and in-betweenness (negotiations of the binary) that this research project aims to move away from.[28] Queer theory, despite the premise of disrupting binary categories by insisting on using identity as the vehicle for thinking, remains glued to the positions it seeks to dispute: heteronormativity and the binary logic.

Ellen Mortensen uses Judith Butler's performative model of gender formation as an example of an approach that claims, as Mortenson suggests, 'to contest and combat' binary thinking but that nevertheless relies on it for its argument'.[29] Butler's concept of performativity comprises one of the key moves in identity politics since the publication of her *Gender Trouble* in 1990.[30] Developing from Simone de Beauvoir's ideas of gender as a doing rather than a being and using J.L. Austin's speech act theory, Butler introduces the idea that gender is constituted through 'the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being'.[31] Suggesting that the argument of gender as inherent performativity is rooted in a negotiation of established positions, revealing a dependency on the norm, Mortensen highlights that the logic

[26] The binary model underpinning traditional models of feminist critique from the 1970s until the 1980s is described by Amelia Jones as connected to the Hegelian model of master/slave dialectic with '[t]he very understanding of the self, or the "subject", and its "identity", pivot[ing] around a notion of difference that is binary [resulting in] position[ing] feminist visual art and film strategies in direct opposition to patriarchal, misogynistic practices'. Amelia Jones (2012), *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts*, London and New York: Routledge, 46-47.
[27] Christine Delphy (1993), 'Rethinking Sex and Gender' in *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 16, no.1, 9.
[28] See also Lucy Nicholson who defines queerness as 'the alternatives to straight, rather than a fixed opposite of "gay"'. Lucy Nicholson (2015), *Queer Post-Gender Ethics: The Shape of Selves to Come*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 7.
[29] Ellen Mortensen (2002), *Touching Thought: Ontology and Sexual Difference*, New York: Lexington Books, 2.
[30] See 'Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire' in Judith Butler (1999), *Gender Trouble*, 3-33.
[31] Judith Butler (1999), *Gender Trouble*, 43-44. Butler's theory of gender formation was first published in her essay 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution'. See Judith Butler (1988), 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' in *Theatre Journal,* vol. 40, issue 4, 519-31. See also Simone de Beauvoir (1997), *The Second Sex* and J.L. Austin (2005), *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

of Butler's gender performativity is grounded in the binary of Hegelian dialectical thought.[32] Jackson Davidow further argues that Butler 'conflates transgender with gender performativity, queer, and subversive manifestations of sexual identity […].'[33] In other words, according to Mortensen and Davidow, Butler naturalises biologically determined gender (commonly referred to as cis gender). Mark Robin Griffith, following Michael Warner, similarly suggests that queer risks becoming a 'tenuous and contentious framework in itself, since it is only able to project its liberatory and fluid potential if it simultaneously inscribes the "heteronormative" as rigid and oppressive'. This presuming of a universality in heteronormativity, Griffith writes, risks 'setting itself up as another binary formation that only has meaning in relation to its more rigid counter-part'.[34]

1.2. Queer as sign in photography

As proposed in the previous section, identitarian and performative modes of making sense of queer, while convincingly questioning the naturalisation of normative positions, in relying on the very logic they claim to contest, fail to get further than negation.[35] Judith Butler's account of gender performativity, in which gender is addressed as 'a stylised repetition of acts', has frequently informed photographic practices. Translated literally, gender is presented as a parody of gender and sexuality norms through pose and costume for the camera, evident in JJ Levine's *Switch* (Fig. 6).[36]

[32] Butler wrote her doctoral thesis on Hegel, which was published as *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*. Mortensen proposes that '[d]espite the fact that [Butler] purports to elude binary, oppositional thinking and despite her efforts to embrace the rhetorical figure of paradox to describe her own thinking, the dominant mode of thought in her work remains […] the dialectic'. See Ellen Mortensen (2002), *Touching Thought: Ontology and Sexual Difference,* 1, 21. See also Judith Butler (1987), *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*, New York: Columbia University Press.

[33] Jackson Davidow (2016), 'Beyond the Binary: The Gender Neutral in JJ Levine's Queer Portraits' in Amelia Jones and Erin Silver (eds), *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 308.

[34] Mark R. Griffith (2002), *Queer in(g) Performance: Articulations of Deviant Bodies in Contemporary Performance,* PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 25.

[35] This Butler informed mode of addressing identity formation and its influence on critical theory as well as art will be looked at later in this chapter and in Chapter 3, where Karen Barad's and Barbara Bolt's use of performativity will be discussed.

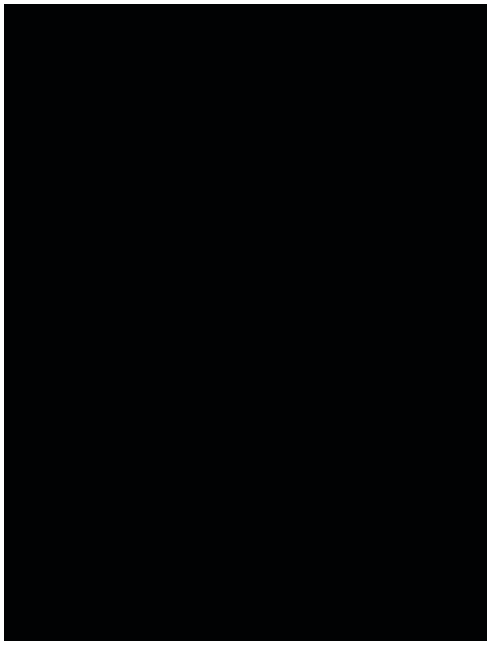
[36] Gender, Butler proposes, 'is performatively constituted by the very "expression" that are said to be its results'. Judith Butler (1999), *Gender Trouble.* See also JJ Levine's artist statement, available at: http://www.jjlevine.com/switch/ [Accessed 20.06.19].

Fig. 6. JJ Levine. *Switch*, 2012

With or without Butler's influence, an identitarian and performative approach to queer has come to shape the dominant approach to photography since the early 1990s.[37] Engaging with issues of societal and canonical visibility, the photograph has, in its dominant role of reaffirming identity, come to play a key role in the political aim of reclaiming visibility for LGBTQI+ individuals and communities. In his book *Queer*, art historian David J. Getsy comments on the progress of queer visual arts in the 1990s:

> As a recognizable queer politics coalesced, aesthetics were central. Because of the adjectival apparatus and performativity of "queer", it is fundamentally about *appearance,* in many senses. That is, how does something look *and* what are the conditions under which it appears in the cultural field?[38]

[37] To historically contextualise the rise of a queer visual vocabulary in the 1990s, see for example Jennifer Blessing (1997), *Rrose is a Rrose is a Rrose: Gender Performativity in Photography,* New York: Guggenheim Museum; Louise Downie (ed) (2006), *Don't Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, London: Tate Publishing, and Katz, J. D. and Ward, D. C. (2010), *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books.
[38] David. J. Getsy (2016), *Queer*, 16. Italics in original.



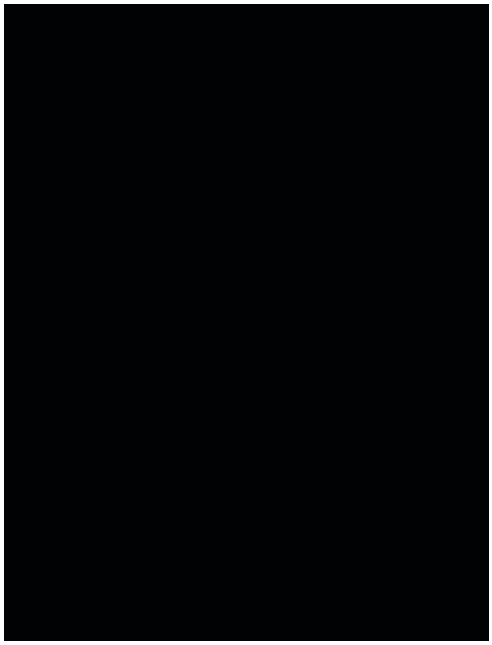


Fig. 7. Del la Grace Volcano, *Jax Back*, 1991
Fig. 8. Del la Grace Volcano, *Jax Revealed*, 1991

Fig. 9. Molly Landreth, *Ducky and Her Friends in Cedar Rapids, Iowa,* 2008
from *Embodiment: A Portrait of Queer Life in America,* 2004-2011

This is manifest through two key strands, first through the representation of queer as identity and/or as community using a documentary style of photography, and second through performative strategies through which the photograph records a declared staged and theatrical pose and/or costume. Getsy describes the latter as an 'in-your-face' strategy.[39] The photographers Catherine Opie, Del la Grace Volcano (formerly known as Della Grace), Tammy

[39] David. J. Getsy (2016), *Queer*, 18.

Rae Carland, Lyle Ashton Harris, and Tessa Boffin are some of the photographers named as pioneers.[40] One example of a photograph that operates through the 'in-your-face' strategy is *Jax's Back/ Jax Revealed* (Figs. 7 and 8) by Del La Grace Volcano, in which a person with defined muscles and cropped hair is being photographed in a studio location while undressing, the title referring to the (unexpected) revealing of a female torso.[41] Further to the declared staged; performative, photograph, queer identity has been depicted using a documentary approach, for example Opies' *Domestic* (1999), JJ Levine's *Queer Portraits* (2006-15), Zachary Drucker's and Rhys Ernst's *Relationship* (2008–13), Elle Perez' *The Outliers* (2011-), Zanele Muholi's *Faces and Phases* (2006-14), and Molly Landreth's *Embodiment: A Portrait of Queer Life in America* (2004-2011) (Fig. 9).[42]

Photography used to represent identity and to record the performing of identity has come to render queer through body language, clothing, hairstyles and other physical attributes. While these photographs poignantly seek to reclaim a visibility historically controlled by the normative gaze and deeds, the role as image is instrumental. In other words, the task of the photograph comprises of making visible what is in front of the camera. Consequently, while the photographic image plane is sidestepped in favour of an assumed transparency, queer, inscribed in the body of the depicted person, is accessed by unpacking the photograph as an assemblage of signs. This semiotic operation is particularly evident in Opie's *Self-portrait/Cutting* (Fig. 10), where, as Amelia Jones writes, the photograph 'is literally *inscribed* with the signs of a non-normative gender formation'.[43]

This semiotic model of sign, signifier, and signified, developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, has come to shape the ways in which meaning is appropriated, not just in identity-oriented photography, but also in the traditional theories of photography that have been developed from

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[40] See for example Deborah Bright (ed) (1998), *The Passionate Camera: Photography and Bodies of Desire.* London and New York: Routledge; Cherry Smyth (1996), *Damn Fine Art by New Lesbian Artists*, London: Cassell Academic and Amelia Jones (2012), *Seeing Differently*.

[41] This 'in-your-face' strategy has been employed by many photographers whose work is concerned with lesbian, gay, transgender, and other nonconforming sexual and gendered identities. See for example Della Grace (1991), *Love Bites,* London: Gay Mens Press; T. Boffin and J. Fraser (eds) (1991), *Stolen Glances: Lesbians Take Photographs*. London: Pandora Press; Cathrine Opie and Kate Bush (ed) (2000), *Catherine Opie*, London: Photographers Gallery and Harmony Hammond (2000), 'The 90s: Lesbianising the Queer Field and Other Creative Transgressions' in her *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History.* New York: Rozzoli: 111-185. For two more recent example, see Yishay Garbasz (2010), *Becoming: A Gender Flipbook*. New York: Mark Batty Publisher and Cassils' *Advertisement: Homage to Benglis* (2011), available at http://cassils.net/portfolio/cuts/ Accessed [15.01.2019].

[42] Landreth writes that the aim with her *Embodiment: A Portrait of Queer Life in America (2004-2011)* was to 'create forms of gender expression and the ever-changing anatomy of a family. It is my hope that these photographs will become a lasting archive for generations to come'. See Molly Landreth, 'Embodiment: A Portrait of Queer Life in America', available at https://www.lensculture.com/articles/molly-landreth-embodiment-a-portrait-of-queer-life-in-america [Accessed 11.06.2018]. See also Zanele Muholi (2010), 'Faces and Phases: Our Queer Black Aesthetics in South Africa' in her *Faces and Phases*, London and New York: Prestel, 5-7.

[43] Amelia Jones (2012), *Seeing Differently*, 208-9. Italics in original.

the 1970s onwards.[44] For example, Victor Burgin writes in his 'Art, Common Sense, and Photography' (first published in 1975), that '[t]he photograph is a sign, or, more correctly speaking, a complex of signs, used to communicate a message'.[45] The two terms *photograph* and *queer*, through the law of semiotics, have in this way come to feed each other as signifier and signified, reducing queer to a definable unit and the photograph to instrumentality.

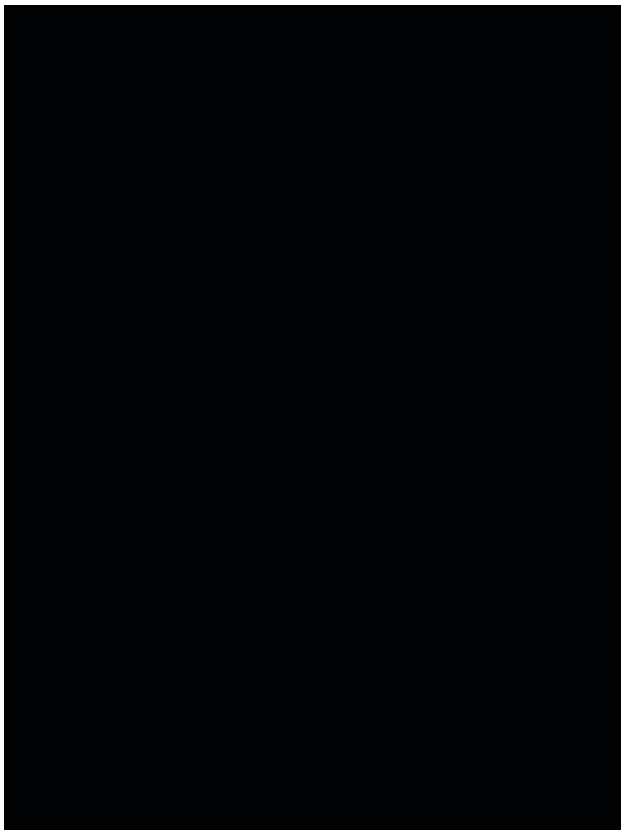

Fig. 10. Catherine Opie, *Self-portrait/Cutting,* 1993

Jean-François Lyotard refers to the semiotic model of 'making sense' as a mode of thinking that 'replaces something for someone'.[46] When something operates as a sign, Lyotard writes, it

[44] Saussure introduces semiotics as a system of thought where the sign denotes the relation between signifier and signified. While the photograph would operate as the signifier, the referent or depicted thing would operate as the signified. See Ferdinand de Saussure (2011), *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, New York: Columbia University Press. For semiotics in photography see particularly Victor Burgin (1982), *Thinking Photography*, London: Macmillan and Roland Barthes (1981), *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang. For further reading, see Roland Barthes (1991), *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc.; Jacques Lacan (2007), *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company and Stuart Hall (1992), 'Encoding, Decoding' in Simon During (ed), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 90-101.

[45] Victor Burgin (2018), 'Art, Common Sense, and Photography' in his *The Camera: Essence and Apparatus*, London: Mack Books, 22. The role of semiotics in the dominant theories of photography will be developed further in Chapter 2.

[46] Jean-François Lyotard (1993), *Libidinal Economy*, 43. In his *Discourse, Figure*, Lyotard proposes that 'what separates legibility from plasticity is the fact that in the former the eye needs to register only signals'. Lyotard writes that, according to Saussure, 'the saving of time in ordinary reading reflects the larger economic principle that regulates the usage of linguistic communication, finding its most exemplary model in the fact of language'. Jean-François Lyotard (2011), *Discourse, Figure*, 210-211.

'stands for something else, and it is *less* than what it represents'.[47] In other words, using photography to communicate queer as a codified message may succeed in raising awareness of diversity. However, it is ontologically limiting, as it forces existence to reveal itself through recognition; through already existing units; through symbols and categories. This semiotically driven form of photography is problematic not only because it presupposes meaning-making, nor because it relies on the viewer's ability to 'crack' the codes, but because it only allows the photograph to, as Lyotard puts it, 'stand for something else': in other words, to be a copy of an (already existing) model. This dialectical structure fails to allow any room for the photograph itself to take an active role within a queering process. Reduced to reporting, the photograph becomes a mere mediator, sidestepping any photographic agency. The photograph addressed as an assemblage of signs in this way forms a totalised system where the photograph has no place beyond its role as a *provider* of signs that leads to already existing entities.

Commenting on the identity-rooted visual arts, Prem Sahid suggests that it is not the case that 'the use of queer aesthetics […] necessarily secures any political capacity' as its declaration of its political stance could 'be problematic in the sense that you are inadvertently defining the parameters for how it can operate'.[48] Operating as a visual symbolism, queer has gradually been borrowed by visual cultures outside of queer politics, extensively so since the rise in mainstream media interest in 2015, which was prompted by the American former Olympic champion Bruce Jenner coming out as transgender, with her new name Cathleen.[49] The period from 2015 to 2019 has witnessed a rapid rise in queer visibilities, for example, television documentaries and sitcoms embracing nonbinary gender or transgender identified characters and model agencies signing up trans identified persons.[50] The term queer, while being brought to public attention, has in this way been hijacked by commerce, generating a recognisable queer aesthetics that risks reducing queer to a neatly packaged commodity. This removal from its self-affirming context of political transgression to the mainstream raises questions about the

[47] Jean-François Lyotard (1993), *Libidinal Economy*, 71. Italics in original.
[48] Paul Clinton and Prem Sahib (2014), 'Queer Time and Place' *Frieze*, no.163 (May 2014), 190.
[49] Jenner came out as transgender in an interview with journalist Diane Sawyer for the television programme *20/20*, which followed by having her new female identity declared to the public through having her photographic portrait taken by the renowned celebrity photographer Annie Leibowitz for the cover of *Vanity Fair.* See Kathleen Parker (2015), 'Caitlyn Jenner's Coming Out' in Washington Post Online. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/caitlyn-jenners-coming-out/2015/06/02/da17bb80-095f-11e5-95fd-d580f1c5d44e_story.html [Accessed 02.12.2015].
[50] Examples of recent queer visibility in mainstream media includes the television series *Transparent*, *Boy Meets Girl*, *The New Girls on the Block*, and *Orange is the New Black*. Examples of trans and nonbinary modelling include Casey Legler, Rain Dove, Hari Nef, and Andrej Pejic. See Eva Wiseman (2013), 'Model Casey Legler: is She the Perfect Man' in *The Observer,* available at: https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2013/mar/03/model-casey-legler-perfect-man [Accessed 03.11.2015]; Alex Morris (2011), 'The Prettiest Boy in the World' in *New York Magazine*, Fall 2011, http://nymag.com/fashion/11/fall/andrej-pejic/ [Accessed 03.11.2015] and Katie O'Malley (2016), 'Diesel Uses Teo High Profile Transgender Models for Latest Collaboration', available at: https://www.elle.com/uk/fashion/trends/news/a32729/diesel-uses-two-transgender-models-for-latest-campaign/ [Accessed 10.07.2019].

possibility of using aesthetics for political purposes. As Lorenzo Fusi suggests, this form of assimilation 'becomes no more than a branch of the dominant culture, losing radicality and efficacy through its own infiltration of the mainstream'.[51] So, while this recent mainstream media focus on queer has enabled a new level of visibility (and with this, acceptance) of identities beyond the binary positions 'man', 'woman', 'masculinity' and 'femininity' – and for the public eye, this paradigm shift in queer visibility has at the same time set clearly definable limits to queer – as identity and as image. This form of recognition, Dorothea Olkowski proposes, is key to grasping the limits of representation: as a system of logic only capable of registering established positions, it hinders what Olkowski terms 'a philosophy of change'.[52] Her quest for a 'ruin of representation' is developed from Gilles Deleuze's theory of difference, through which he describes the problem underpinning representation as follows:

> *...Everybody knows, no one can deny*, is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative. When philosophy rests its beginning upon such implicit or subjective presuppositions, it can claim innocence, since it has kept nothing back – except, of course, the essential – namely, the form of this discourse.[53]

As Deleuze notes, the inability to address the logic underpinning meaning-making limits the mode of thinking to recognition. Deleuze names this mode of thinking *the image of thought*. *The image of thought*, Deleuze writes, 'crucifies' difference: only 'that which is identical, similar, analogous or opposed can be considered different'.[54] Consequently, representation, as an *image of thought,* is, for Deleuze, dangerous as it hinders new thinking; it imprisons the possibility for difference to exist as something new, independent from recognition through which 'difference' is upheld by 'the same'.[55]

1.3. An open mesh of possibilities

Following these identity-bound practices, this thesis aims to move away from the polarisation underpinning queer as a category and photography as its representation. Rather than using queer as a way to blur or negotiate fixed positions, this thesis seeks to undo these, but without relying

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[51] Lorenzo Fusi (2012), 'Changing Difference: Queer Politics and Shifting Identities' in his *Changing Difference: Queer Politics and Shifting Identities,* Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 33. See also Nikki Sullivan who writes on assimilation politics as the 'theory of removing prejudice through promoting ordinariness. The aim to assimilationist groups is to be accepted into, and to become one with, mainstream culture: an essentialising, normalising emphasis on sameness.' Nikki Sullivan (2003), *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, New York: New York University Press, 23.

[52] Dorothea Olkowski (1999), *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2.

[53] Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 130-31. Italics in original.

[54] For Deleuze, difference gets crucified as it 'becomes an object of representation always in relation to a conceived identity, a judged analogy, an imagined opposition or a perceived similitude'. Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, 138.

[55] Deleuze proposes that 'the world of representation is characterised by its inability to conceive of difference in itself…' Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, 138.

on the principle of contradiction. Further, rather than making use of photography as a recording device: as a means to an end, the thesis seeks an approach that allows the photograph an active role. Consequently, this investigation into the queering of photography requires a methodology that can account for queer as what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls an 'open mesh of possibilities'.[56] This openness to the yet unknown, the incalculable, is addressed by Martin Heidegger in his 'The Question Concerning Technology', an essay concerned with how the modern human makes sense of the world.[57] The question concerning technology is for Heidegger not the mechanical technology as such but the logic underpinning modern thinking.[58] For something to exist for the modern human, Heidegger argues, it requires to be revealed in a certain form; a certain order. In other words, it needs to be recognised to acquire meaning; to make sense. Naming this system *enframing*, Heidegger proposes that truth (*aletheia*) is shaped by *enframing*, through which 'everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, so that it may be on call for a further ordering'.[59] Pointing out the limiting scope allowed through *enframing*, Heidegger warns that

> nature reports itself in some way or another that is identifiable through calculation and that it remains orderable as a system of information. This system is determined, then, out of a causality that has changed once again. Causality now [is] shrinking into a reporting […] of standing reserves that must be guaranteed either simultaneously or in sequence.[60]

Existence, as always already *enframed,* is in this way determined by humanity's own set of rules and consequently something unknown, uncategorisable, will be excluded from existence. As Heidegger writes: 'Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding-sway of truth'. This determinacy, what Heidegger describes as a 'pushing forward nothing but what is revealed in ordering', can be challenged by critically addressing how things come to make sense.[61]

Heidegger's theory of the limits enforced by modern thinking is relevant to the quest in this thesis for a way to undo that which is assumed to be fixed. However, while *enframing* explains the problem underpinning the limitations of queer as identity and photograph as representation, Heidegger's argument about art-making as an enabler of revealing allows the advancement of a productive research method in which photographic practice takes a central role. For Heidegger,

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[56] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994), *Tendencies,* London: Routledge, 8.
[57] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 3-35.
[58] Heidegger proposes that '[t]he question concerning technology is the question concerning the constellation in which revealing and concealing, in which the coming to presence of truth, come to pass.' Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 33.
[59] Enframing is humanity's relationship to the world. Enframing is in this way, for Heidegger, 'nothing technological, nothing on the order of a machine. It is the way in which the real reveals itself as standing-reserve'. 'Where Enframing holds sway', Heidegger proposes, 'regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing'. Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 19-27.
[60] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 23.
[61] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 34.

both nature and art are able to reveal through ways that are not limited to the calculable ordering of *enframing.* Pointing out that in ancient Greece the fine arts, referred to as *techne*, had an active position in society, Heidegger asks whether artists, also in modernity, in the name of *techne*, could be 'called to poetic revealing' (*poiesis*) of truth (*aletheia*) outside of the laws of *enframing*. *Techne*, Heidegger writes, as a mode of *aletheuein,* 'reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now other'.[62]

A PhD rooted in photographic practice, this research project takes Heidegger's understanding of *techne* and *poiesis* as its method. The queering of photography in this way comes to name not the representation of queer as identity but how queer and the photograph make sense, individually and together. While this approach enables what Sedgwick calls 'an open mesh of possibilities', it is also required to attend to the *logic* underpinning ontological conditioning. Chapter 2 develops from here by presenting an outline of how the photograph has been granted meaning, or, how it has come to make sense, in dominant theories of photography. In other words, how it has been ontologically conditioned. In so doing, the chapter seeks to establish to what extent the photograph has been granted agential movement outside of pre-established paths.

[62] This section of work comes from Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 13-26. '*Techne'*, Heidegger notes, '*brings forth* what is present as such *out of* concealedness and specifically *into* the unconcealedness of their appearance'. Martin Heidegger (2002), 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. and ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 35. Italics in original.

2. LOCATING PHOTOGRAPHIC AGENCY IN DOMINANT THEORIES OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The previous chapter addressed the ways in which the representation of identity conditions both *queer* and *photograph* within pre-set narratives. This chapter continues from here by focusing on the photograph's potential to make sense outside of pre-established paths. Presenting an overview of its dominant theorisation allows an assessment of any overlooked agential potentialities. The chapter does not seek to present a complete overview of the ways in which photography has been theorised as a discipline, but rather it focuses on *where* the photograph's meaning-making, or making sense, is located. In short, the chapter considers whether this process of making sense takes place within the photograph itself or elsewhere. The chapter proposes that the photograph's agential capacity has been limited due to its assumed *a priori* position as a guarantee for an objective truth. This has resulted in a simplified debate where the photograph is conditioned through counter-arguments. While recent, digitally attuned, theories have granted the photograph agency by complicating these binaries, this has come about at the expense of the image. This leaves questions of medium-specificity and its collapse as the most promising frameworks through which the photograph can obtain agency.

2.1. The invisible image

In contrast to other visual artworks, for example paintings and drawings, the photograph suffers from being looked through, not at. Framed as a window onto the world, the photograph has, literally, been overlooked. This looking-through-ness is evident also in theorisations that seek to complicate its resembling relation to its referent. For example, Shawn Michelle Smith and Sharon Sliwinski propose that 'photography has become one of the principal filters between the world and us' and Kendall L. Walton in describing Andre Kertesz's *Distortion 157* (Fig. 11), says that '[t]he "distortions" or "inaccuracies" of photographs are no reason to deny that we see through them'.[63]

[63] See Shawn M. Smith and Sharon Sliwinski (eds) (2017), *Photography and the Optical Unconscious*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1 and Kendall L. Walton (1984), 'Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism' in *Critical Inquiry,* vol. 11, no. 2, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 258. See also Peter Alward who suggests that '[s]eeing through an object through a photograph is not identical to seeing it face-to-face, […] it is an interest in the scene as it is seen through the photograph'. Peter Alward (2012), 'Transparent Representation: Photography and the Art of Casting' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* vol. 70, no. 1 (Winter), 12. André Kertesz's *Distortion no.157* was produced at a Parisian amusement park in 1933 using a 'funhouse' mirror. Available at: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/265734 [Accessed 15.06.2019].

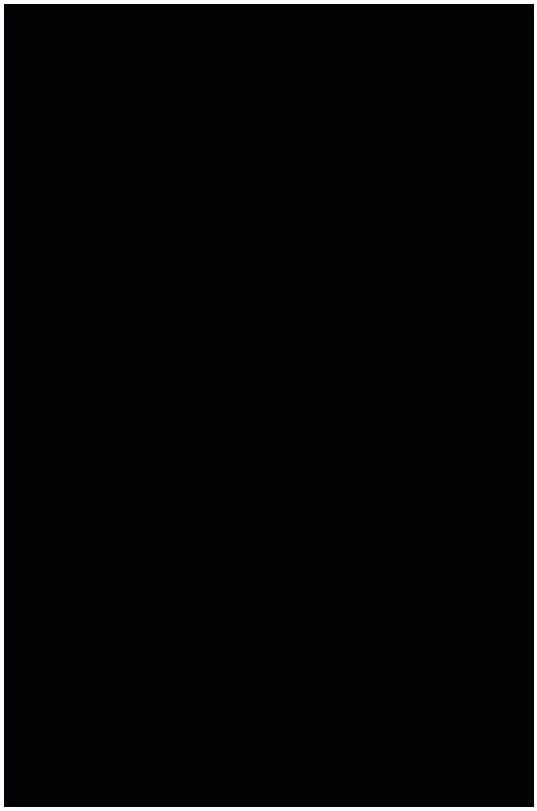

Fig. 11. André Kertész. *Distortion no.157*, 1933

This assumed transparency, the mistaking of the photograph as a window or a filter, eradicates any potential for the photograph to take an active role in its own ontological conditioning. As Vilém Flusser points out, addressing the photograph as transparent locates the focus not with the production of photographs but with the world 'as seen through them'.[64] The photograph is not, as Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen stress, a 'substitute for vision' – the viewer does not have access to the world that the photographer looked at through the camera's viewfinder.[65] Nigel Warburton effectively articulates the problem inherent in this supposed looking-through-ness: he proposes that one should

> dismiss once and for all the claim that we can really see through [photographs] to the objects that caused them. It would be nice to think that I could see my dead ancestors through old photographs of them, but this way of talking simply disguises the great and unbridgeable gap that lies between what the original photographer saw through his viewfinder and what I see when I open my family album.[66]

[64] Vilém Flusser (2014), *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, trans. Anthony Mathews, London: Reaktion Books, 4.
[65] Joel Snyder and Neil W. Allen (1975), 'Photography, Vision, and Representation' in *Critical Inquiry*. vol. 2, no. 1 (Autumn), 157.
[66] Nigel Warburton (1988), 'Seeing Through "Seeing Through Photographs"' in *Ratio,* vol 1, no. 1 (June), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 74.

Warburton is correct when he notes that this through/at interchangeability has generated a 'slippery slope variety' in the writing on photography. However, he falls into the trap himself as he proposes that 'we see through spectacles, mirrors, and telescopes, why not photographs?'[67] But, like the mirror, there is nothing behind the photograph but the wall or table it has been placed on. Or, if viewed on a digital screen, the inside of a computer. Even transparent presentations of photographs need to be looked at, not through. Equating the photographer's encounter with the world seen through the viewfinder with the viewer's encounter with the photograph not only flaws the debate on what a photograph is but it also eradicates the photograph's ability to be acknowledged at all.

2.2. Essence and agency

In her 'Introduction' to Walter Benjamin's *On Photography,* Esther Leslie notes that

> the word "lens" in various European languages is some form of the Latin word *objectus*, thrown, or put before or against – in German, *Objektive*, in French *objectif*, in Italian *obiettivo*. This 'objectivity', a technological by-product, acts as a guarantor of historical faithfulness, or fidelity to a moment or location.[68]

In line with Leslie, Joan Fontcuberta also locates photography as 'a technology historically in the service of truth'.[69] This claim to truth, what Roland Barthes names 'that-has-been', has been supported by arguments rooted in the photograph's ability to resemble, but predominantly by the trust in what Allan Sekula terms 'the objective powers of the machine'.[70] The trust in photographic technologies as an *objective* truth-provider is further evident in Andre Bazin's 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image'. Photography, Bazin proposes, 'enjoys a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to reproduction'. In this way, he claims that

> no matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model.[71]

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[67] Nigel Warburton (1988), 'Seeing Through "Seeing Through Photographs"', 67.
[68] Esther Leslie (2015), 'Introduction: Walter Benjamin and the Birth of Photography in Walter Benjamin and Esther Leslie (trans. and ed.), *On Photography*, London: Reaktion Books, 24. Italics in original.
[69] Joan Fontcuberta (2014), *Pandora's Camera, 7.*
[70] See Roland Barthes (1981), *Camera Lucida*, 76–77; Allan Sekula (1981), 'The Traffic in Photographs in *Art Journal,* vol. 41, no. 1, 15 and Carl Plantinga (2013), 'What a Documentary Is, After All' in Julian Stallabrass (ed) *Documentary (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 52-62.
[71] Andre Bazin (1960), 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', trans. Hugh Gray, in *Film Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Summer), 7-8. Italics in original.

Stanley Cavell names the photograph's ability to reveal objectivity *automatism*. Developing from Bazin's claim that 'only photography derives an advantage from [humanity's] absence', he proposes that the photographic technologies have overcome the subjectivity inherent in other art forms by 'removing the human agent from the task of reproduction'.[72] The photograph's role as truth-provider is thus paradoxical: while it is granted agency as the *revealer* of objectivity, it is simultaneously interlocked with an already existing 'original'. This paradoxical position has generated a discussion on photographic ontology in which its position as a truth provider is taken as a default; as an *a priori* to photography. Consequently, a debate shaped into counter-arguments has unfolded, locating both the photographer and the retoucher as potential threats to the photograph's objective quality. This is evident in Lewis Hine's note from 1909:

> The photograph has an added realism of its own; it has an inherent attraction not found in other forms of illustration. For this reason, an average person believes implicitly that the photograph cannot falsify. Of course, you and I know that this unbounded faith in the integrity of the photograph is often rudely shaken, for, while photographs may not lie, liars may photograph.[73]

This positioning of the photographer as an intervener in a photograph's objectivity is further evident in Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, in which she claims that '[t]o take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged'. So when the photographer 'chooses oddity, chases it, frames it, develops it, titles it', the status of photographs as 'pieces of evidence in an ongoing biography or history' is threatened.[74] Similarly, Barry M. Goldstein suggests that 'a large number of technical and aesthetic choices made by the photographer [introduce] subjective elements' into the production of a photograph, generating a photograph 'that deceives or misleads the viewer'.[75] On these grounds, for Goldstein, the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson's renowned motto of 'the decisive moment' is invalidated and should more accurately be described as 'the decided moment.'[76] 'Our task', Cartier-Bresson writes 'is to perceive reality, almost simultaneously recording it in the sketchbook which is our camera.' Cartier-Bresson consequently stresses that 'we must neither

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[72] Andre Bazin (1960), 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', 7; Stanley Cavell (1979), *The World Viewed*: *Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 105, 23.
[73] Lewis Hine (1909), 'Social Photography: How the Camera May Help in the Social Uplift' in Alexander Johnson (ed), *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction at the Thirty-sixth Annual Session held in the City of Buffalo, New York, June 9-16, 1909*, Fort Waine, IN: Press of Fort Wayne, 356-7.
[74] Sontag's position on the ontological condition of the photograph is however inconsistent as she later argues that the photograph, by being 'reduced, blown up, cropped, retouched, doctored, tricked out […] fiddle with the scale of the world'. Susan Sontag (1977), *On Photography*, New York; London: Anchor Books Doubleday, 12, 34, 166, 4.
[75] Barry M. Goldstein (2007), 'All Photos Lie: Images as Data', in Gregory C. Stanczak (ed), *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society, and Representation*, SAGE Publications, 65, 61. See also Roger Scruton (1981), 'Photography and Representation' in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 3 (Spring), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 594-5.
[76] Barry M. Goldstein (2007), 'All Photos Lie', 71.

try to manipulate reality while we are shooting, nor must we manipulate the results in the darkroom. These tricks are patently discernible to those who have eyes to see'.[77]

While the photographer is positioned as an interferer, any postproduction puts the photographic objectivity at further risk. While the question of image manipulation was convincingly brought to the table through the development of digital imagery in the 1990s, it has been present in photographic debates since its inception.[78] While Walter Benjamin proclaimed in 1936 that when photographers began 'touching up' their negatives, photography was in decline, Anne-Marie Willis, in 1990, describes digital image technologies as 'a process which is cannibalising and regurgitating photographic (and other) imagery, allowing the production of simulations of simulations'.[79] Consequently, she asks, 'will we still continue to believe in appearances?'[80]

Phillip Dubois, in his essay 'Trace-image to Fiction Image: The Unfolding of Theories of Photography from the '80s to the Present', names the concern of photographic objectivity 'ontological abuse'.[81] Dubois, in proposing that the inception of digital imagery was helpful in generating a 'suspicion' that could be applied to all photographs, suggests that '[i]f we admit' that the photograph 'has lost its genetic character as image-trace', the status of the photograph

[77] Henri Cartier-Bresson (1966), 'Introduction to the Decisive Moment' in Nathan Lyons (ed), *Photographers on Photography: A Critical Anthology*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 44.
[78] The invention of photography has remained an unresolved dispute: Louis Daguerre invented the photograph in the form of fixing an image to a metal plate, patented this process and thereby was legally named the inventor of photography. However, Nicéphore Niépce was first with creating a photograph in the form of a paper print. Further, Hippolyte Bayard, also in 1839, experimented with a camera obscura and the combination of paper and chemicals that would produce a direct positive print: a photograph without a negative. Bayard's invention was, however, in contrast to Daguerre and Niépce, not recognised by the French government as a patentable invention. See Victor Fouque (1973), *The Truth Concerning the Invention of Photography: Nicéphore Niépce, his Life, his Endeavours, his Works*, New York: Arno Press and Geoffrey Batchen (1999), *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 25.
[79] Walter Benjamin proposed that in 1931 that 'soon an advanced optics would be using instruments capable of overcoming darkness completely and of registering objects with the clarity of a mirror. Nevertheless, the photographers of the post-1880s period saw it as their task to simulate with the aid of all the arts of retouching, especially the so-called rubber print...' Walter Benjamin (2010), 'A Short History of Photography' in *Screen*, trans. Stanley Mitchell, vol. 13, no. 1, 18-20. See also the early twentieth century photographer Frederick Evans who asserted that '[m]y prints are all from untouched, undodged negatives. [...] Plain prints from plain negatives is, I take it, pure photographs'. Frederick Evans as quoted by Geraldine A. Johnson in Geraldine A. Johnson (ed) (1998), *Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 5.
[80] Anne-Marie Willis (1990), 'Digitisation and the Living Death in Photography' in Philip Hayward (ed), *Culture, Technology & Creativity in the late Twentieth Century*, London: John Libbery, 197-199. See also Fred Ritchin (1996), *In Our Own Image: The Coming Revolution in Photography,* New York: Aperture and Kevin Robins (1995), 'Will the Image Move Us Still?' in Martin Lister (ed), *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, London: Routledge, 29–50. For more recent writing on the digital turn, see for example Fred Ritchin (2009), *After Photography*, New York: W. W. Norton.
[81] Philippe Dubois (2016), 'Trace-image to Fiction Image: The Unfolding of Theories of Photography from the '80s to the Present' in *October,* 158, trans. Rosalind Krauss, Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press Journals, 160-61.

today is 'an *ontologically fictive* one'.[82] Geoffrey Batchen continues by asserting that the digitally produced image has generated a

> pervasive suspicion that we are entering a time when it is no longer possible to tell *any* instance of reality from its simulations. Sign and referent, nature and culture, human and machine; all their hitherto dependable entities appear to be collapsing in on one another…[83]

The development of digital technologies, by revealing the photograph as malleable – as not pre-determined – has certainly caused a stir in the taken-for-granted notion of photographic objectivity. However, the deep-rooted claim to truth remains a solid foundation, also for theories that advocate for its invalidation. While Dubois positions his argument between 'trace' and 'fiction', thereby suggesting a truth/falsehood logic, Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis, while naming the 'digital turn' as 'shattering the privileged status of the photograph as "objective" truth', similarly fail to abandon the assumed *a priori*. In using an 'incorrectly' performed or interrupted photographic process to prove their point, they inadvertently suggest a move away from a default truth:

> Consider […] what will happen to the adherence to the referent (the index by other name) if the film chemistry will not be at 20C but at 90C – instead of adherence there will be porridge! Or ask, what is the state of the indexicality if the photographic film contains only the latent image, i.e. it remains undeveloped in its film canister or in the dark slide. [84]

The point to be made here is that while the photograph's claim to truth has been widely contested, eradicating it requires a move away from it all together; to seek a different framework of measure that operates without negation.[85] This new approach would require a logic that instead of taking as its point of departure the objective position of the photograph, instead seeks to make sense of photography through a different paradigm. This shift is central to this thesis' argument and attempts to establishing a way to make sense of photography without

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[82] Philippe Dubois (2016), 'Trace-image to Fiction Image', 163. Italics in original. See also Hubertus von Amelunxen, (1996), *Photography after Photography,* Munich: Verlag der Kunst and Siemens Kulturprogramm, 126-129 and Robert Shore (2014), *Post-photography: The Artist with the Camera,* London: Lawrence King Publishing. 8.

[83] Geoffrey Batchen (1994), 'Phantasm: Digital Imaging and the Death of Photography' in *Aperture*, vol. 136, no. 47. Italics in original.

[84] Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis (2008), 'A Life More Photographic: Mapping the Networked Image' in *Photographies,* vol. 1, issue 1*,* 10.

[85] See also Julian Stallabrass who argues that the role of the photographer considered as a neutral observer is on a revival with art festivals for example the photography festival Mois de la Photo Festival in Paris, which in 2005 was titled *History, Histories: from Document to Fiction* (*Histoire, Histoires: du Document a la Fiction*) and the contemporary art festival *Documenta*. Julian Stallabrass (2013), *Documentary (Documents of Contemporary Art)*. London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 12-21.

negating already established positions will gradually develop throughout the unfolding of this thesis, moving towards a materially informed thinking.

John Szarkowski, with his seminal text *The Photographer's Eye* (first published 1966), offers glimpses of this: a more complex understanding of the photograph's ontological condition. Using Eadweard Muybridge' *Sallie Gardner at Gallop* (1878) (Fig. 12), as an example, Szarkowski – in line with Bazin and Castello – proposes that the technical progression of photography has positioned the photograph as the ultimate truth-teller. 'Not till Muybridge successfully photographed a galloping horse in 1878', Szarkowksi notes, 'was the convention [of previous speculations on a horse's leg movements while galloping] broken'.[86] Szarkowski takes the question of what a photograph is further by problematising its dominant truth/falsehood narrative. Expanding its specificity to five categories: 'the thing itself', 'the detail', 'the frame', 'time' and 'vantage point', Szarkowski repurposes Clement Greenberg's late Modernist quest to define the uniqueness of an artwork.[87] Szarkowski's ambition differs, however, from Greenberg's. While Greenberg sought to free the painting from its dependency on a referent, Szarkowski, as the photography curator of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, primarily wanted to secure the photograph a place on the gallery walls.[88]

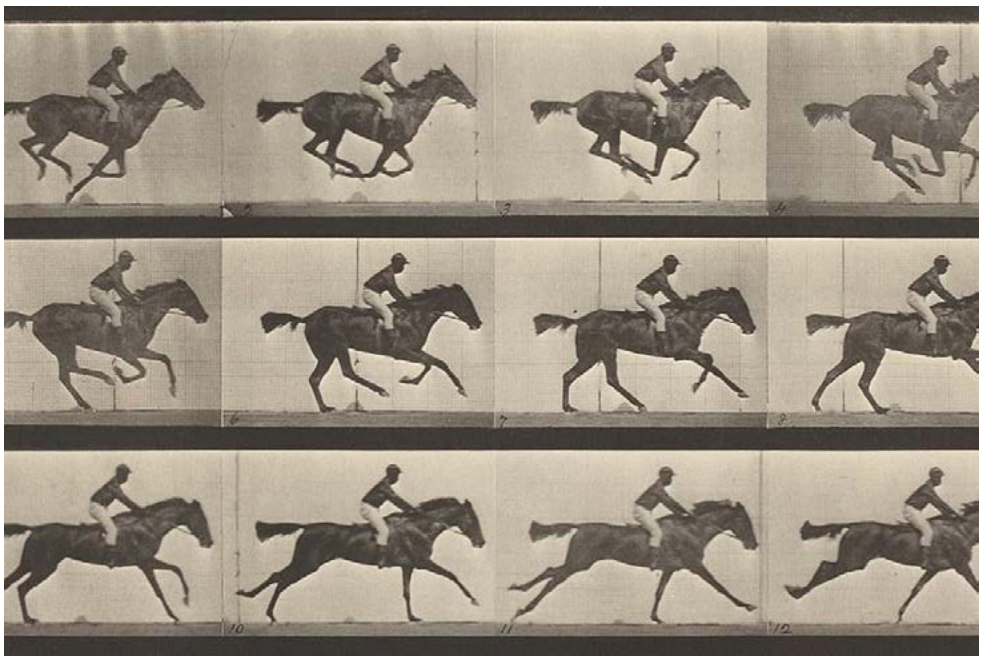

Fig. 12. Eadweard Muybridge, *Sallie Gardner at Gallop*, 1878

[86] John Szarkowski (2007), *The Photographer's Eye*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 10.
[87] John Szarkowski (2007), *The Photographer's Eye*, 8-11.
[88] In 1962 John Szarkowski was appointed the curator of photography at the Museum of the Modern Art (MOMA) in New York. Szarkowski's attempt to generate a paradigm shift for photography deeply rooted in a desire to provide it with a Modernist canonical value. For the Greenbergian proposal of medium specificity, see Clement Greenberg (1990), 'Modernist Painting' in James M. Thompson (ed), *Twentieth Century Theories of Art,* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 94-101.

Greenberg, in seeking to establish an identity for painting through a self-referentiality, stressed that each art form, instead of seeking to resemble the world, should seek to make present the properties unique to its discipline. 'What had to be exhibited and made explicit', Greenberg suggested, 'was that which was unique and irreducible not only in art in general but also in each particular art'.[89] 'Thereby,' Greenberg proposed, 'each art would be rendered "pure" and in its "purity" find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence'.[90] While excluding the photograph from the arts, or at least from materiality (Greenberg described the photograph as the 'most transparent of the art mediums devised or discovered by man'), his account of medium-specificity demonstrates a consistency not applicable to the fivefold account proposed for photography by Szarkowski.[91] While Greenberg, to paraphrase Stanley Cavell, took the paint and the canvas to be its muse, Szarkowski locates the photograph's specificity both within its material condition as image and in its referent.[92] In this way, he simultaneously supports and refuses the photograph the independence Greenberg granted the painting. For example, 'the thing itself' is not the photograph but the world it depicts.[93] Szarkowski continues by contradicting this claim, proposing that the photograph is 'a different thing' from the world it depicts: 'Much of the reality was filtered out in the static little black and white image, and some of it was exhibited with an unnatural clarity, an exaggerated importance'. He further defines 'time' as both as 'that period of time in which it was made' and as the duration inherent to the photographic exposure: '[t]here is in fact no such thing as an instantaneous photograph. All photographs are time exposures of shorter or longer duration, and each describes a discreet parcel of time'.[94]

2.3. The photograph as code

This quest to define a photographic medium-specificity, while flawed by Szarkowski, nevertheless allows the photograph agential ambition outside of its role as *either* true or false. However, the photograph's relation to its referent returned with the postmodern move in the late seventies and early eighties. In an attempt to overcome the essence and universality claimed by

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[89] Clement Greenberg (1990), 'Modernist Painting.' 95.
[90] Clement Greenberg (1990), 'Modernist Painting', 95. See also Marshall McLuhan (2005), 'The Medium is the Message' in his *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* London: Routledge, 13-14.
[91] Clement Greenberg (1986), 'The Camera's Glass Eye: Review of an Exhibition of Edward Weston', in John O'Brian (ed.), *Clement Greenberg: Collected Essays and Criticism (*Volume 2), Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 60.
[92] Stanley Cavell proposes that 'Modernism signifies […] that it has become the immediate task of the artist to achieve in his art the muse of the art itself'. Stanley Cavell (1979), *The World Viewed*, 103.
[93] The task of the photographer, according to Szarkowski, is to acknowledge the world's endless 'inventiveness' and through the photograph it permanent. John Szarkowski (2007), *The Photographer's Eye*, 8.
[94] This section of work comes from John Szarkowski (2007), *The Photographer's Eye*, 8-10. For a contemporising discussion on Szarkowski's fivefold definition of photography, see David Campany (2007), 'The Lens, the Shutter, and the Light-Sensitive Surface', available at: https://davidcampany.com/some-remarks-on-the-lens-the-shutter-and-the-light-sensitive-surface/ [Accessed 08.05.2019].

Modernism, photography theorists now sought to displace questions on photography from medium-specificity to questions of representation, subjectivity and viewership. In this way, questions on photographic ontology were relocated from the image itself to its role as a sign for power structures.[95] This introduction of psychological and socio-politically loaded semiotics into the photographic debate is evident in Victor Burgin's *Thinking Photography,* in which he proposes that 'the photograph is a *place of work*, a structured and structuring space within which the reader deploys, and is deployed by, what codes he or she is familiar with in order to *make sense*'.[96] John Tagg follows by claiming that '[p]hotography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it'.[97] So while Burgin makes sense of a photograph by letting the viewer unpack it, sign by sign, for Tagg it is 'not the power of the camera' that will tell us about the photograph, 'but the power of the apparatus of the local state which deploys it and guarantees the authority of the images it constructs'.[98] In other words, for Burgin and Tagg the photograph only makes sense if conditioned through its surrounding discourse.[99] This understanding of the photograph as a sign for power structures is evident in Allan Sekula's 'The Body and the Archive', in which he argues that the physiognomy-informed use of photography by the police, through the mug-shot, has come 'to establish and delimit the terrain of the *other*'.[100] This 'socially repressive' role of the photograph, Sekula suggests, explains the systematic logic underpinning the photographic archive's classification of people. While this critique of the use of photography to justify the categorisation of persons into generic archetypical social types raises crucial questions about the creation of stereotypes, Sekula's focus, consistent with that of fellow postmodern thinkers, is not primarily the photographic image or the camera, but the placement and organisation of photographs:

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[95] For critique of the aesthetically grounded late Modernism, see for example Hal Foster who suggests that 'abstraction tends only to *sublate* representation, to preserve it in cancellation…' Hal Foster (1996), *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 63-76. Italics in original. For photography specific critique, see Victor Burgin (1980), *Thinking Photography*; Allan Sekula (1984), *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983*, Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; Richard Bolton (ed) 1989), *The Contest of Meaning*: *Critical Histories of Photography,* Cambridge and London: The MIT Press and Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1991), *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[96] Victor Burgin (1982), *Thinking Photography*, 53. Italics in original. Burgin's suggestion that the photograph 'makes sense' through the viewer's individual ability to decode the image, develops from Roland Barthes' 'The Death of the Author'. See Roland Barthes (1977), 'The Death of the Author' in his *Image-Music-Text,* trans. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana Press, 142-148.

[97] John Tagg (1988), *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories,* London: MacMillan Education, 63. See also John Tagg (1989), 'Totalled Machines: Criticism, Photography and Technological Change' in *New Formations,* nol. 7 (Spring), 21-34.

[98] John Tagg (1988), *The Burden of Representation,* 64. For photography and surveillance see also Pauline Hadaway (2012), 'Escaping the Panopticum' in *Either/And*, available at: http://eitherand.org/protest-politics-community/escaping-panopticon/ [Accessed 23.11.18].

[99] See Michel Foucault's writing on discourse, power, and knowledge in Michel Foucault (2002), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

[100] Allan Sekula (1986), 'The Body and the Archive', 7. Italics in original.

> The camera is integrated into a larger ensemble: a bureaucratic-clerical-statistical system of "intelligence." This system can be described as a sophisticated form of the archive. The central artefact of this system is not the camera but the filing cabinet.[101]

The photograph's meaning is in this way dependent on its surrounding context. As Gil Pasternak notes, postmodernist photography theorists 'were not interested in the aesthetic value of the photographic image as much as they intended to understand by what means it serves the social institutions that sanctioned its legitimacy'.[102] While Roland Barthes, with his 'punctum', developed in the seminal *Camera Lucida*, introduces a mode of studying photographs that is affect-driven rather than simply sign-driven: 'that accident which pricks, bruises me […] its mere presence changes my reading […] I am looking at a new photograph, marked in my eyes with a higher value', Abigail Solomon-Godeau develops the question of viewership further by making it a feminist question.[103]
Referring to both photographer and viewer as 'highly gendered', Solomon-Godeau, like Barthes, stresses that the 'viewing situation' is inseparable from the viewer's own subjectivity.[104]

This approach, of addressing the ontological conditions of photography through their context, is also evident in recent digitally attuned theories of photography informed by posthumanism.[105] While semiotics has been abandoned, these theories, by focusing on the placement and dissemination of the digital image, have reinstated the question of photography as a code for power relations.[106] This is evident in Sarah Kember's 'The Becoming-Photographer in

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[101] Allan Sekula (1986), 'The Body and the Archive', 8, 16.
[102] Gil Pasternak mentions John Tagg, Allan Sekula, Victor Burgin, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau as key postmodern thinkers. See Gil Pasternak (2018), 'Popular Photographic Cultures in Photography Studies' in Ben Burbridge and Annebella Pollen (eds), *Photography Reframed: New Visions in Contemporary Photographic Culture*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 41.
[103] Roland Barthes (1981), *Camera Lucida,* 42.
[104] Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1991), *Photography at the Dock*, xxiii-xxiv. For feminist critique of viewership, see also Laura Mulvey (1999), 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings.* New York: Oxford UP, 833-44. See also Jack (formerly known as Judith) Halberstam who has criticised Solomon-Godeau for assuming a heterosexual gaze. See Judith Halberstam (2005), *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York: New York University Press, 83.
[105] Posthumanism is an umbrella term for thinking that questions the Cartesian humancentric subject/object division that has come to shape humanism as a school of thought. As Neil Badmington writes: '[p]osthumanism marks a careful, ongoing, overdue rethinking of the dominant humanist (or anthropocentric) account of who "we" are as human beings. In the light of posthumanist theory and culture, "we" are not who "we" once believed ourselves to be. And neither are "our" others'. Neil Badmington (2011), 'Posthumanism' in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Science*, Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini (eds), Abington: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 374. Posthumanist key texts include: Donna Haraway (1990), *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, London: Routledge, 149-182, Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway,* and Rosi Braidotti (2014), *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
[106] For writings on the new forms of dissemination made possible through digitally produced imagery, see for example Marco Bohr and Basia Sliwinska (eds) (2018), *The Evolution of the Image: Political Action and the Digital Self,* London: Routledge, Paul Wombell (ed) (2013), *Drone: The Automated Image,* Exhibition catalogue for the 13th edition of Le Mois de la Photo a Montreal, Saraj Kember and Joanna

Technoculture', where she addresses the way facial recognition technology, previously confined to governmental departments of defence and other high-security regimes, has become 'increasingly commercialised' through its integration with social media networks such as Facebook and Google. In this way Kember contemporises Sekula's and Tagg's study of the use, placement, and ordering of photographs.[107] This digitally attuned focus on the increasing sophistication of the effect of photographic technologies on both the use and operation of photography forms the primary focus for Joanna Zylinska and Daniel Rubinstein. Arguing for a new, 'nonhuman' agential ambition, Zylinska proposes that photography today, through CCTV, drones and satellite images, has become 'increasingly decoupled from human agency and human vision'.[108] Replaced by computers which decode and disseminate the photograph as algorithmic codes, the human, Zylinska notes, is no longer the obvious 'subject, agent or addressee'.[109] This trust in the ability of new technologies to capture, read, and distribute photographs outside of human vision is shared by Rubinstein, who notes that the photograph has become 'the product of the duplications, variations, transformations, and calculations which are part of the algorithmic and coded structure of the network'.[110] Pointing out that an image, once uploaded online, is no longer 'constrained to a single physical location', Rubinstein argues that the digitally produced photograph generates a new form of autonomy that comprises 'an alternative to the perspectival, ocularcentric and linear visual schemas inherited from the Renaissance'.[111]

Kember, Zylinska and Rubinstein, while sharing the postmodern approach to the photographic image as a code, nevertheless grant it agency: the photograph is no longer made passive as an object for an active (human) subject or as a sign for a referent. This agency does not, however, take into account a photograph's aesthetic specificity but locates the photograph's agency in its ability to disseminate as algorithm. Rubinstein explains this well when he proposes that the

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Zylinska (2012), *Life after New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process.* Cambridge MA London: MIT Press, and A. Kroker and M. Kroker (eds) (2010), *Code Drift: Essays in Critical Digital Studies*, Victoria, Canada: New World Perspective/ CTheory Books. See also The Centre for the study of the Networked Image (CSNI), available at: http://www.centreforthestudyof.net/ [Accessed 21.05.2019].

[107] Sarah Kember (2012), 'The Becoming-Photographer in Technoculture', available at: http://eitherand.org/reconsidering-amateur-photography/becoming-photographer-technoculture/ [Accessed 25.11.18]. See also Francesco Lapenta (2011), 'Geomedia: On Location-based Media, the Changing Status of Collective Image Production and the Emergence of Social Navigation System' in *Visual Studies*. Vol. 26, Issue 1, 14-24.

[108] Joanna Zylinska (2017), *Nonhuman Photography*, Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2.

[109] Joanna Zylinska (2017), *Nonhuman Photography*, 5.

[110] Daniel Rubinstein (2018), 'Post-representational Photography, or the Grin of Schrödinger's Cat' in Ben Burbridge and Annebella Pollen (eds), *Photography Reframed: New Visions in Contemporary Photographic Culture*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 9. For questions of photography and reproduction, see Walter Benjamin's seminal 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility;" Walter Benjamin (2010), "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility" in *Grey Room,* No. 39 (Spring), trans. Michael W. Jenning, Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press Journals, 11-38 and John Berger's 1972 publication *Ways of Seeing;* John Berger (2008), *Ways of Seeing*, London and New York: Penguin Modern Classics.

[111] Daniel Rubinstein (2018), 'Post-representational Photography, or the Grin of Schrödinger's Cat', 8-9.

'posthuman' photograph operates as a self-replicating rhizome. The rhizome, Rubinstein proposes, 'allows us to think of photography as a multiple, proliferating structure that reproduces itself through exponential multiplication, simultaneously engaging in visual, economic, social and political production'.[112] Like Rubinstein, Zylinska includes the image in her theories, albeit only as a mere by-product of the operations of new technologies.[113] The photograph's pictorial attributes are never addressed, as the focus is the *relations* that photography generates between photographic technologies, different online platforms, software programmes and human and nonhuman recipients.[114]

2.4. The collapse of medium-specificity

Further to the rethinking of agency in the digital landscape of photography, these recent theories, with their focus on algorithmic dissemination, have brought back to the table the question of medium-specificity, or rather, its collapse. As Rubinstein notes, the digitally produced image is mere 'calculable information, no different from other bits of calculable information that we quaintly refer to as songs, films, and books'.[115] This proposal that new technologies have erased the material-spatial parameters previously used to define a medium's specificity is developed from Lev Manovich's writing: he claims that 'all existing media are [through new technologies] translated into numerical data accessible for the computer'.[116] Manovich stresses that in contrast to the nineteenth-century inception of photography, which 'affected only one type of cultural communication – still images', new media 'affects all stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulating, storage and distribution; it also affects all types of media – text, still images, moving images, sound, and spatial constructions'.[117]

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[112] Daniel Rubinstein (2018), Posthuman Photography', 126. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write that '[a] rhizome has no beginning or end, it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be", but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunctions, and… and… and…' See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1-25.

[113] Zylinska particularly addresses the new vantage points made possible through new technologies, for example drones.

[114] According to Rubinstein, photographic agency comprises 'the relationship between humans, computers, and networks'. Daniel Rubinstein (2019), 'Fractal Photography and the Politics of Invisibility' in Jane Tormey and Mark Durden (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory*. London: Routledge, 337-356.

[115] Daniel Rubinstein (2018*),* 'Post-representational Photography, or the Grin of Schrödinger's Cat', 8. In line with Rubinstein, also Dubois suggests that 'the digital, as a *dispositif*, has flattened, erased, annulled the differences of nature between the different kind of image (painting, photography, film, video, etc.)' Philippe Dubois (2016), 'Trace-image to Fiction Image', 159. Italics in original.

[116] Manovich describes new media as 'The Internet, Websites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMS and DVD, virtual reality'. Lev Manovich (2001), *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 19, 25.

[117] Lev Manovich (2001), *The Language of New Media*, 19. See also Fred Richin (1996), *In Our Own Image:* The Coming Revolution in *Photography,* New York: Aperture; Jay. D. Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000), *Remediation: Understanding New Media,* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press and Martin Lister, Jon Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant, and Kieran Kelly (eds) (2008), *New Media: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

This digitally specific quest to make medium-specificity redundant suggests an extension from Rosalind Krauss' proposal of a post-medium condition, developed in her *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of Post-Medium Condition*.[118] Informed by Joseph Kosuth and with artist Marcel Broodthaers as her key example, Krauss claims that instead of defining artworks through parameters underpinned by medium-specificity, art is more productively addressed simply as art *per se*.[119] Reminding us that without '[t]he conventions in question […] there would be no possibility of judging the success or failure of such improvisations', Krauss suggests that an artwork exists in an entangled state – an 'aggregate condition' between materials and installation.[120] In naming these parameters an artwork's 'physical support' and 'technical support', she suggests an interdisciplinarity not applicable in medium-specific theories.

2.5. Agential potentialities for the photographic image

This chapter has presented an outline of key positions in the theorisation of photography: moves that have come to shape how the photograph grants meaning, or makes sense. It has suggested that while the photograph is allowed agential movement, this is limited to frameworks of measure that pre-establish its path. In other words, these strategies determine and define the photograph's ability to make sense, in advance. While Szarkowski, following Greenberg, troubled the binary truth/falsehood narrative, the account never quite abandoned the photograph's assumed *a priori* position as a truth-provider. Postmodern and recent, digitally attuned, frameworks of measure, in addressing the photograph as a code, sidestep the specificity of a photographic image which is only addressed instrumentally. In other words, the photograph's 'making sense' is located elsewhere – in its surrounding context, its viewership, or its algorithmic dissemination. In these photography-specific contexts, Krauss' proposal is helpful, as it highlights the inadvertent limitations necessary to any measure. It further collapses the separation between analogue and digital photography.[121]

Continuing from here, this thesis argues that the queering of photography, in order to operate outside of a pre-set destination, necessitates a way to make sense that is independent from positionalities outside of the photograph. The dominant theorisation has been lacking, with

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[118] Returning to the late Modernist question of medium specificity, Krauss presents a critique of the modernist insistence of separating different artforms through defining their essence.
[119] Rosalind Krauss proposes that '[t]he specific mediums – painting, sculpture, drawing – had vested their claims to purity in being autonomous, which is to say that in their declaration of being about nothing but their own essence, they were necessarily disengaged from everything outside their frames' Rosalind Krauss (1999), *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of Post-Medium Condition*, London: Thames & Hudson, 11.
[120] Rosalind Krauss (1999), *A Voyage on the North Sea,* 10, 6. Original text is in italics.
[121] See also Diarmund Costello's response to Krauss in relation to photography. Diarmund Costello (2012), 'Automat, Automatic, Automatism: Rosalind Krauss and Stanley Cavell on Photography and the Photographically Dependent Arts' in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 38, no. 4 (Summer). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 819-854.

accounts that allow the photograph to make sense for what it is: an image produced using a certain set of techniques and materialities. While Walter Benjamin's *optical unconscious* allows the photograph to exist as just this, its technical and material existence is conditioned through the human psyche:

> It is indeed a different nature that speaks to the camera from the one which addresses the eye; different above all in the sense that instead of a space worked through by a human consciousness there appears one which is affected unconsciously. Photography with its various aids (lenses, enlargements) can reveal this moment. Photography makes aware for the first time the optical unconscious, just as psychoanalysis discloses the instinctual unconscious.[122]

Henry van Lier, André Malraux and Rudolf Arnheim present three exceptions from the frequent sidestepping or diluting of photographic agency. Like Benjamin, they address the photograph as a materially complex image. However, while Benjamin uses this complexity to explain the (human) unconscious, these thinkers remain within the photograph. Henry van Lier, in his *Philosophy of Photography* (first published 1983) elaborates on the possibility of addressing photography outside of its relationship to a referent, proposing instead that that the photograph is an 'indice'. Indices, van Lier proposes, operate as a 'non-intentional' signs.[123] While indexes 'indicate objects much in the same way the index finger or an arrow might point to an object', indices are 'neither conventional nor systematic, but physical'.[124] For van Lier, examples of indices includes

> the darkening or brightening of certain parts of imprints during development. Or the choice of film, printing diaphragm, showing that one attempted to draw attention to morning or evening light, or to the grades of shade of the undergrowth. Or the specific enclosing of a motive through a certain depth (superficiality) of field.[125]

Van Lier's suggestion of a materially rooted autonomy for the photographic image is reminiscent of André Malraux's observations in his *Museum Without Walls* (first published 1967).[126] Suggesting that black and white photography 'imparts a family likeness to objects that have actually but slight affinity', Malraux proposes that the things photographs depict undergo a 'curious change' as they are being transformed into 'admirable photographs'. On a book-spread,

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[122] According to Benjamin, the optical and the psychoanalytic unconscious inform one another through their capture of that which lies 'outside the *normal* spectrum of sense impressions'. Walter Benjamin (2010), 'A Short History of Photography', 7-8. Italics in original. See also Walter Benjamin (2010), 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility', 30-31. For a contemporising of Benjamin's optical unconscious, see Shawn M. Smith and Sharon Sliwinski (eds) (2017), *Photography and the Optical Unconscious*.
[123] Henry Van Lier (2008), *Philosophy of Photography*, trans. Aarnoud Rommens, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 19.
[124] Henry Van Lier (2008), *Philosophy of Photography,* 17.
[125] Henry Van Lier (2008), *Philosophy of Photography,* 17, 9.
[126] André Malraux (1967), *Museum Without Walls*.

black and white photographs depicting 'differing objects as tapestry, an illuminated manuscript, a painting, a statue, or a medieval stained-glass window lose their colours, their texture, and dimensions'.[127]

Rudolf Arnheim also conditions the photograph through a self-referentiality. The 'fundamental peculiarity of the photographic medium', Arnheim proposes, is constituted as 'the optical and chemical action of light'.[128] This peculiarity, Arnheim stresses, should not be ignored or challenged, but celebrated. Arnheim poignantly points out that in a painting or drawing

> every stroke of the pen, every touch of colour, is an intentional statement of the artist about shape, space, volume, unity, separation, lighting, etc. The texture of the pictorial image amounts to a pattern of explicit information. If we approach photographs with an expectation trained by the perusal of handmade images we find that the work of the camera lets us down. […] The fault is not ours, of course, because we are looking at a photograph as though it were made and controlled by man and not as a mechanical deposit of light. As soon as we take the picture for what it is, it hangs together and may even be beautiful.[129]

Arnheim's and van Lier's approaches to the photograph are productive in their refusal to go anywhere with its agency other than to the photographic image itself. Similarly, while eliminating colour photographs from this equation, Malraux's valuing of the photograph as an image that generates difference provides a way of addressing photography through its own material constitution. Chapter 3: A Material Image, develops from here by exploring the photograph's material constitution as a way to condition the queering of photography – outside of pre-established paths. This material thinking allows questions on photography, agency, and queering to be relocated from the photograph's relation to the outside world to the inside of a photographic image.

[127] André Malraux (1967), *Museum Without Walls*, 84-86, 106.
[128] Rudolf Arnheim (1974), 'On the Nature of Photography' in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 1, 155.
[129] Rudolf Arnheim (1974), 'On the Nature of Photography', 158.

PART 2:
MATERIAL IMAGE

Fig. 13. *Untitled* from *Looking Out, Looking In*, 2015

3. A MATERIAL IMAGE

The previous chapter suggested that the dominant theories of photography's failure to grant the photographic image agency is caused by sidestepping the photograph's capacity to make sense outside of pre-set structures, or by instrumentalising the image's aesthetic and material ambition. In relocating questions of photography to a materially grounded logic, this chapter sets out to explore what has been overlooked in the dominant theories of photography: questions related to the process and constitution of the photographic image. While turning to the material properties that underpin the production of a photograph, the chapter does not primarily seek to define a photographic essence. Rather, the central focus is the photographic image's ability, through its material constitution, to account for its own agency. This shift from a pre-set position to an openness to the yet unknown is fundamental to the search in this thesis for a mode of queering able to account for its own becoming. The photograph's ability not only to account for its own existence but also to generate a queering sensibility forms the premise for what this thesis understands as the queering of photography. The chapter has developed through studio-based explorations, undertaken in London (photographing human sitters) and in Rome (photographing marble statues). This material approach to photography is further supported by Heidegger's writing on art-making as *poiesis*, Lyotard's notion of *the figural*, and aspects of New Materialism.

3.1. Initial studio explorations (I close the lens and cock the shutter)

The photography produced for this research project continues from a photographic practice rooted in portraiture, and is primarily informed by the notion of nonconforming gender. Situated as a case study, my practice in this way forms the starting point from which to begin the practice research. The initial photographic shoot for this PhD was accomplished in March 2015, using a large format camera in a studio location. Titled *Looking Out, Looking In*, these photographs initially addressed the encounter in the studio between the sitter, the camera, and the photographer (Fig. 13). While the sitter looks into the camera lens, the photographer looks through a frosted and gridded ground glass (the large format camera's 'view finder'). These portraits, produced between 2015 and 2018, have served an ongoing exploration, and reconsideration, of the ways in which a photograph operates materially, and how this materiality embodies agency, and thus queering potentialities. Taking the studio portrait as its premise, these explorations have resulted in a rethinking of both *queer* and *photograph*: in relocating queer from identity to the photographic process, the photograph is no longer approached as simply a document of identity but is valued for what it is: an image constituted through a particular set of material and technical properties.

Walter Benjamin famously referred to the photographic studio in the nineteenth century, with its palm trees and heavy draperies, as 'looking like a cross between an execution and a representation, between a torture chamber and a throne room'.[130] As Benjamin notes, the studio, through its self-conscious set-up, allows the photographer to gain a high level of control, from the composition to the background and the lighting. This control has been exercised by attending to the material and spatial parameters of the studio in relation to those of the photograph. The photographic studio, through its spatially fixed parameters, carries a reference to the spatial limitations of the photograph itself: the 'real' world is concealed twice, first by the backdrop and second by the rectangular photographic frame. At the same time, the backdrop, as well as the camera's rectangular frame, help to reveal the figure who is to be photographed.

Within this process of making a photograph, the large format camera has played a vital role. The large format camera lacks any automatic functions. In this way, the procedure of taking a photograph requires a certain level of skill, and also constant alertness: before the shutter is pressed, a sequence of technical directions need to be addressed. Prior to each shoot, the camera needs to be mounted: a metal monorail is fixed to a tripod, and onto this rail first the lens board is attached and then the ground glass. Placed between these two boards are the bellows, sealing the light-tight box that becomes the camera body. Lacking any automatic functions, the shutter, aperture, and focus need to be attended to throughout the shoot. For example, before composing the image, the shutter needs to be opened manually, and before pressing the shutter it needs to be manually closed. After assessing, using a light meter, an appropriate exposure setting – the relation between the light source, reflected light from the motif, shutter-speed and aperture, known as the 'law of reciprocity' – I disappear under a piece of fabric, my 'dark cloth,' in order to exclude any light but that which comes through the camera lens.[131] In order to retain a focused image on the ground glass I move the lens board slightly forward, then back again. When I decide that my composition is complete, I close the lens and 'cock' the shutter.

As the composition is set and the shutter is ready to be pressed, a film sheet, which is pre-loaded into a light-tight film-back prior to each shoot, is manually inserted into the camera, in between the ground glass and the bellows. I now no longer have access to the image that I have just finished composing. When I finally press the shutter, I am no longer underneath my cloth but standing next to the camera, the cloth slid down to my shoulders. 'Hold it', I say, before I remove the dark slide from the film back and press the shutter. This procedure, in forcing attention both to the photograph's technical parameters and to the sitter as composed within the

[130] Walter Benjamin (2010), 'A Short History of Photography', 18. See also Edmund de Valicourt who in 1845 proposed that 'the constraint imposed on the face under the still too lengthy influence of sunlight makes these portraits resemble real victims of torture'. Edmund de Valicourt as quoted by Daisuke Adachi in Daisuke Adachi (2015), 'Gesture of Trace: Rethinking "The Photographic" in Gogol's Writing' in *Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 56, issue 1, 64.
[131] See Nanette Salvaggio (2013), *Basic Photographic Materials and Processes*, London: Focal Press, 37.

camera's rectangular image frame, has increasingly made me aware of the peculiar task of assessing when a photograph *works* – when the shutter is ready to be pressed – but also of the forms of technical measures embedded within the photographic production.[132]

I mark the floor with a piece of masking tape to indicate the distance between camera, sitter, and backdrop. A figurative image, the portrait comprises the placement, pose and gaze of the sitter. Before the shoot begins, I explain to my sitter the procedure involved in a shoot. I explain that each photograph taken requires to be set up – composed, and that I will guide them throughout the shoot by giving instructions on gesture and where to look. Each photograph is in this way carefully composed – carefully *posed*. These poses were further informed by the slow, careful process required for each composition. While the large format camera is reminiscent of the camera used in nineteenth-century portraits, these operate under slightly different durational conditions. Whereas the often stiff and severe-looking faces in nineteenth-century portraits were the result of the long exposure time required by the chemical development process, today's photographic film stock makes possible exposures of a fraction of a second.[133] The procedure preceding the pressing of the shutter is, however, similar: the manual insertion of each film sheet into the camera, in between composing the image and pressing the shutter, requires the sitter to hold each pose for several minutes. In this way, the photographs produced for *Looking Out, Looking In* are the result of a durational presence reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's description of the nineteenth-century studio portrait: '[t]he procedure itself taught the models to live inside rather than outside the moment. During the long duration of these shots they grew as it were into the picture.'[134]

The pose is in this way addressed as a fundamental component of the photographic portrait, rather than as a performative act used to present ideas about the formation of identity. Situating the queering act exclusively in the body of the sitter can only serve photography a form of queering that is representational.[135] In this ongoing negotiation of the pose against the constitution of a photographic portrait, the photograph was not left to simply record but was allowed an agentially active role. Relocating the parameters from the formation of identity to

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[132] During a three to four hour shoot, typically 10 to 15 large format film sheets were exposed together with a few Polaroids.

[133] Mary W. Marien notes that portraiture in the nineteenth century was widely seen as too impractical due to the risk of a blurry face or blinking eyes. To allow for this long duration, a head-rest or a body-rest were commonly used to reassure that the sitter remained still. See Mary W. Marien (2002), *Photography: A Cultural History,* London: Laurence King, 61.

[134] Walter Benjamin (2010), 'A Short History of Photography', 17. See also Rudolf Arnheim who suggests that the slow duration of the nineteenth century photograph 'transcended the momentary presence of the portrayed objects', a phenomenon not applicable to modern photographic technique which, according to Arnheim, captures 'the spontaneity of action'. Rudolf Arnheim (1974), 'On the Nature of Photography', 154.

[135] The relationship between identity norms, performativity, representation and photography is further addressed in Chapter 1.

the formation of a photograph enabled the displacement of questions concerning queer from queer/heteronormative, male/female, trans/cis, and gay/straight to the photographic production. Addressed as a way to problematise the portrait per se, the pose of a sitter was continually explored through subtle tweaks, culminating in photographic portraits that were sometimes slightly awkward and sometimes confident. These negotiations of the pose have developed into portraits in which the pose sometimes appears seemingly conventional and at other times comes to question the portrait itself as genre (Figs. 14 and 15).

Fig. 14. *Untitled* from *Looking Out, Looking In*, 2015

Fig. 15. *Untitled* from *Looking Out, Looking In*, 2018

Whereas the nineteenth-century photographic studio sported, as Benjamin notes, painted landscapes and props, for example pillars and other ornaments, in contemporary photography the backdrop is traditionally a roll of paper that unfolds from the ceiling to the floor. Within my practice, the idea of using a fabric backdrop was an attempt to break with this conventionally bare studio aesthetic, but without introducing specific cultural or historical markers.[136]

[136] For Victorian studio portraiture, see for example Susan Holschbach (2008), *Street and Studio: An Urban History of Photography*, London: Tate Publishing and Elizabeth Heyert (1979), *Glass House Years: Victorian Portrait Photography 1839-1870*, London and Montclair: Allanheld and Schram.

Clipped to stands, this fabric backdrop, through its drape, came to embody different material shapes that differed for each shoot. These shapes were not only shifting with its own creased folds and its fall, but were further re-negotiated through the light and the aperture settings, which provided different focus planes or *depth of field*. Each photograph, in this way, came to embody different textures that were *generated* through the photographic process: while some of the backdrops exhibited perfectly flat surfaces, with the fabric's texture sharply present, the backdrops in other photographs were creased or out of focus. Other photographs presented within this thesis reveal shadow areas that were generated through the backdrop's folds. These new photographic materialities were further evident in the textural relationships between backdrop, skin and clothing. This material dialogue was enhanced by the monochrome aesthetic of the black and white film, a desaturation that Malraux described as a 'curious change'.[137]

The fabric backdrop came to play a fundamental role in this research project, not only by providing ways of addressing a photograph materially but also because it comprised the core component that made the studio set-up possible. For the studios used in this research were not always purpose-built for photography. I have mounted my camera on a tripod and set up my backdrop in classrooms, university corridors, museum halls, and in my garden. In this way, the studio in this research project has operated as what David Campany defines as 'a space to be kept clean and sparse, returned to neutral after the image-making has been done'. In contrast to the traditional artist's studio, the photographic studio could, Campany suggests, be likened to 'the blank canvas'.[138]

The large format camera further affects the process underpinning the composition of an image. Constructed without a mirror, it offers, according to the laws of light, a view of the sitter that is upside down and inverted. The use of this optical phenomenon: the depiction of an upside-down world, goes back prior to the invention of photography. The principle of capturing an image onto a surface through a hole, known as a *camera obscura*, was already known in the sixteenth century. While the "box" prototype of a camera obscura was invented by Johann Zahn in 1685, its technical principle – of capturing an upside-down image on a wall – goes back as far as Leonardo da Vinci, who in 1502 appears to be describing its optical phenomenon in his notebooks, together with an illustration (Fig. 16).[139]

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[137] André Malraux (1967), *Museum Without Walls*, 106.

[138] The photographic studio in this way serves the initial production of a photograph. Further image processing take place elsewhere: in the digital suite or in the darkroom. See David Campany (2010), 'The Scene of Photography and the Future of its Illusion: Photography's Blank Canvas' in *Photoworks,* Spring/Summer, 4. For writings on the role of the artist studio, see also Daniel Buren (1979), 'The Function of the Studio' in *October,* vol. 10 (Autumn), trans. Thomas Repensek, The MIT Press, 51-58 and Rebecca Fortnum (2013), 'Creative Accounting: Not Knowing in Talking and Making' in Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum (eds), *On not Knowing: How Artists Think*, London: Black Dog publishing, 70-87.

[139] See Leonardo da Vinci and Jean Paul Richter (ed) (1970), *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci,* Mineola, NY: Dover Publication and Sarah Kofman (1998), *Camera Obscura: Of Ideology*, trans. Will

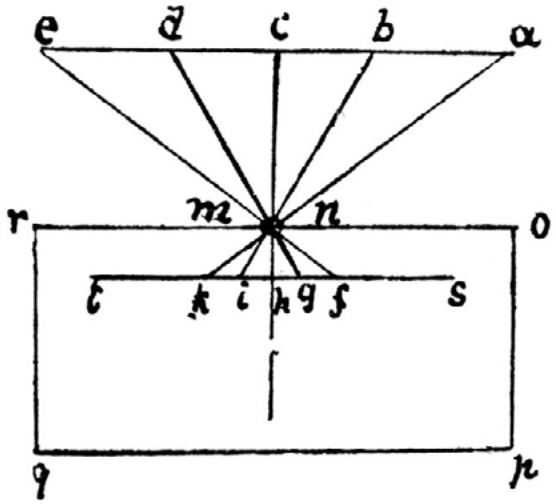

Fig 16. Leonardo da Vinci's diagram of the principles for a camera obscura, 1502

This principle of the camera obscura, as the foundation for camera technique, is addressed in *Looking Out, Looking In* (Fig. 17), which is presented according to the photographer's visual access when composing the image. This 'flipped' view makes present the photographer's vision of shapes, lines, and forms and how these begin to speak to one another, heightening the presence of the negative space: the backdrop that fills the space between the sitter and the photographic frame. Together, these explorations of pose and materialities have been productive in demonstrating the ways in which the photograph is an image of high complexity. In other words, the material conditions underpinning the photograph cannot be equated with those existing in the studio at the time of the shoot. The representational role of the photographic image as presenting the same (a referent) is in this way suggested to foreshorten the photograph's constitution and in so doing, sidestepping the photograph's potential to account for itself.

Straw, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. See also Eric Renner (2009), *Pinhole Photography: From Historic Technique to Digital Application*. London: Focal Press and Jim Stone (2016), *A User's Guide to the View Camera* (third edition.) New York and London: Focal Press.

Fig. 17. *Untitled* from *Looking Out, Looking In*, 2016

3.2. Queer textualities

The material properties embedded within a photographic production were further explored during a residency at the British School at Rome in 2016. While the explorations of pose and materialities through the production of *Looking Out, Looking In* made present a material condition, photographing statues in Rome and Naples advanced this exploration by revealing further layers to the photograph's material condition. A poetic and sensuous condition – or *queer textualities.*

During this residency, a selection of statues and busts housed at Musei Capitoline, Centrale Montemartini and Palazzo Massimo in Rome and at the Nazionale Archeologico in Naples were explored using the large format camera. Referred to as a copy of a (Greek) original*,* the Roman sculpture lends itself to photography: while ontologically distinct, both artforms share the burden of being addressed against their referent; as being reduced to something less than what they are in themselves.[140] This idea of the binary became the starting point for this residency.[141] During a typical two-hour time-slot, prior to public opening hours, I was escorted by a member of staff between statues and busts. These explorative shoots began with a focus on statues which queering were suggested by the Roman mythology, for example depictions of Dionysus. However, the photographic investigation soon foregrounded the technical process. Already fixed, the statue, in contrast to the slightly moving human sitter, enabled a much wider technical vocabulary. As Geoffrey Batchen notes, statues are generous targets for the camera, as they are 'immobile, uncomplaining, and easy to light'.[142] Static and already posed, the statue enables experimentation not only with longer exposure times, but with vantage points, depth of field, and re-takes of the same composition.[143]

While continuing to use black and white film, the instant, white-balanced colour film (Fuji FP100, also referred to as 'Polaroid') used prior to each exposure to assess the light-meter readings came to inhabit a primary role. Using ambient light as light source, the temperature of light shifted with the light available in each museum room and time of the day: while the shoots

[140] It is worth noting that in contrast to the negative/positive process, the daguerreotype is simultaneously a negative and a positive, shifting with the viewing vantage point. Further, the Polaroid nor the digital file require a negative.
[141] On the role of the Roman sculpture's role as a 'copy', see Patrizia de Bello (2018), *Sculptural Photographs: From Calotype to Digital Technologies*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 10, 76-8.
[142] Geoffrey Batchen (2010), 'An Almost Unlimited Variety: Photography and Sculpture the Nineteenth Century' in Roxana Marcoci (ed), *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 20.
[143] For further analyses of the intersection of photography and figurative sculpture, see Geraldine A. Johnson (ed) (1998), *Sculpture and Photography*; Jeffrey Fraenkel (ed), *The Kiss of Apollo: Photography & Sculpture 1845 to the Present*, San Francisco: Fraenkel Gallery, 9-23 and Arkady Ippolitov, Germano Celant, and Karole Vall (eds) (2004). *Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition: Photographs and Mannerist Prints.* New York: Guggenheim.

executed in the early mornings generated cold tones, evening light engendered warm colours.[144] Also, the artificially lit museum rooms caused a wide range of light qualities, shifting with each light source. These different light arrangements, in combination with the exposure time, drenched the white marble statues in blues and yellows, and any colours in between. The title of this body of work, *Figural, Figurative,* references Jean-François Lyotard's notion of *the figural.*[145] Developed in his *Discourse, Figure*, the figural names the process through which an assumed fixed structure has the ability to embody something beyond the structural; something plastic, poetic, and sensory. While *the figural* names the agency, *thickness* names its cohesion:[146]

> …the given is not a text, it possesses an inherent thickness, or rather a difference, which is not to be read, but rather seen; and this difference, and the immobile mobility that reveals it, are what continually fall into oblivion in the process of signification.[147]

As Lyotard introduces thickness into the sign, the colour-infused photographic process muddles the copy/original model underpinning both the Roman statue and the photograph. The use of white balanced film in relation to unknown colour temperatures becomes a productive move that allows for material movement and energies. In the case of the Dionysus busts, drenching these in pale blues and shades of pink (caused by the existing light sources at the museum) generates a more complex queering condition than what is already suggested by the statues' physical androgyny (Figs. 18 and 19).

[144] The temperature of light refers to the light source's quality of light. Measured in Kelvin (K), this ranges from warm to cold tones. While tungsten light and evening light generates yellow or orange tones, morning light generates a blueish colour. While photographic film requires neutral or, 'white light' (5500-6000K), in order to produce clear 'accurate,' colours, the digital camera offers a white balance synchronising, through which the available light, warm or cold, is processed as white balanced. See Michael Langford (2008), *Basic Photography*, 31-46.
[145] See Jean-François Lyotard (2011), *Discourse, Figure*.
[146] See Jean-François Lyotard (2011), 'Effect of Thickness in the System' and 'Thickness on the Margins of Discourse' in his *Discourse, Figure*, 90-115.
[147] Jean-François Lyotard (2011), *Discourse, Figure*, 3.

Fig. 18. *Untitled* from *Figural, Figurative*, 2016
Fig. 19. *Untitled* from *Figural, Figurative*, 2016

This unintended, but productive, use of lighting is touched on by Charles Baudelaire. Sceptical about the introduction of photography to the arts in the nineteenth century, he warned the sculptor of the risk involved in having their artwork photographed:

> All the sculptor's efforts to set up a single viewpoint are in vain; as the observer moves around the figure, he may choose a hundred different viewpoints, none of them the right one; and, humiliatingly for the artist, it often happens that an accident of light, the effect of a lamp, may uncover a different beauty from the one he was imagining.[148]

During the residency, which was extended in 2017, Baudelaire's 'accident of light' continually made present 'a different beauty'. While statues photographed in the early morning light were drenched in blues, the statues located under tungsten light exhibited, through the photographic process, warm tones of orange (Figs. 5 and 20). Tightly cropped, these two photographs leave heads and limbs out, instead depicting the groin, one belonging to a seemingly gender-ambiguous figure, partly covered with drapery, and the other belonging to a draped statue with its male genitalia removed, a legacy of the sixteenth century, when Pope Paul IV ordered that all male genitalia on statues should be removed or covered with fig leaves.[149] While these statues, with their pose and nudity, are already sexually charged, the cropping, together with the dense colouring, introduces new, *queer,* textualities. This process of 'colouring in', in revealing a

[148] Charles Baudelaire as quoted by Tobia Bezzola (2010), 'From Sculpture in Photography to Photography as Plastic Art' in Roxana Marcoci (ed), *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 29.
[149] See David Friedman (2001). *A Mind of Its Own: A Cultural History of the Penis*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 42.

sensuous condition not present in the white balanced photograph, came to embody what Joseph Litvack calls a *queer energy*:

> [I]f a lot of queer energy […] goes into […] practices aimed at taking the terror out of error, at making the making of mistakes sexy, creative, even cognitively powerful. Doesn't reading queer mean learning, among other things, that mistakes can be good rather than bad surprises?[150]

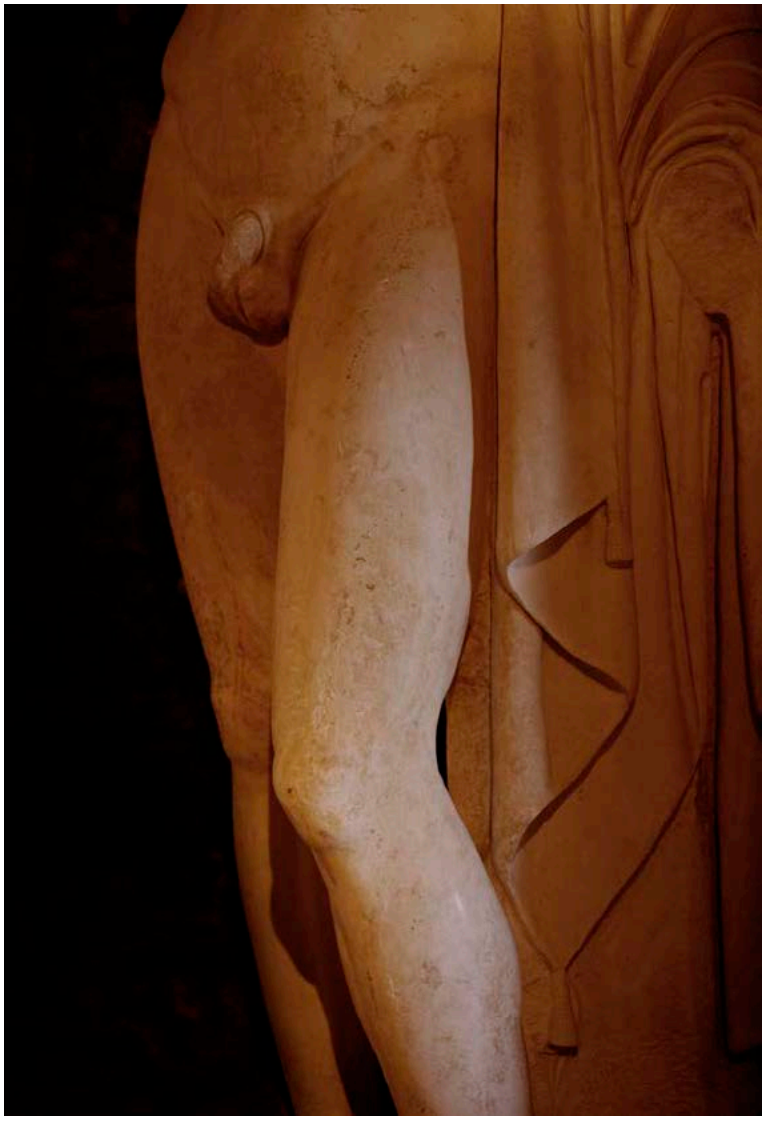

Fig 20. *Untitled* from *Figural, Figurative*, 2017

In addition to the temperature of the light source and the exposure time, the aesthetic quality of these Polaroids was further affected by the chemicals contained within each film pack. This effect on the photograph is evident in Fig. 21 and Fig. 22, created just minutes after one another,

[150] Joseph Litvack as quoted by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (ed) (1997), *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction (Series Q),* Duke: Duke University Press, 25.

under the same light conditions and camera settings, but produced with Polaroids from different film packs.

Fig. 21. *Untitled* from *Figural, Figurative*, 2016
Fig. 22. *Untitled* from *Figural, Figurative*, 2016

While the temperature of light in relation to the materialities embedded within the photographic film, in line with Lyotard's *figural* and Litvack's *queer energy*, enables what Lyotard names a 'mobilisation of what was implicitly stable', the black and white film also generated forms of material rendering.[151] While the production of *Looking Out, Looking In,* through its monochrome aesthetic, helped to generate new textures and textural relations, the black and white photographs of statues encompass a different set of material concerns. For while the humans, though desaturated, remained humans, the statues, in losing their subtle colour palette, were transformed into a more ambivalent state, that could be statue as well as almost-human (Fig. 23).

[151] Jean-François Lyotard (2011), *Discourse, Figure*, 96.

Fig. 23. *Untitled* from *Figural, Figurative*, 2016

3.3. Material thinking

Questions concerning art as agentially active are addressed by Barbara Bolt. In her *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*, Bolt's central question is whether a visual artwork can 'transcend its structure as representation'.[152] Highlighting the repetition and rhythm embedded within art practice, Bolt proposes that art inherently comprises a 'radical material performativity' that can challenge representation as the ground to visual arts. While her primary source of reference is Heidegger's writing on art-making as a mode of *poiesis*, a form of revealing that cannot be summed up using a representational logic, her notion of performativity builds on Butler's and Deleuze's theories rooted in repetition.[153] While for Butler performativity names the process of the reiteration of norms that underpins the constitution of a subject as gendered – 'a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame' – for Deleuze, repetition comprises difference. 'To repeat', Deleuze notes, 'is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent'.[154] Bolt's focus on the material layers and patterns underpinning the making of art productively displaces the focus from representation to causality, and in so doing operates similarly to the material generativity proposed in the previous section. However, while claiming that art 'transforms rather than produces the same', by focusing on the rhythm underpinning the *process* she overlooks the rhythm embedded within the final artwork.[155]

Like Bolt, Karen Barad also makes use of performativity as a way to address the agential capacity of materiality.[156] While for Bolt performativity informs the process in art practices, for Barad it informs the process in the practices of scientific theory.[157] Barad's materially informed theory of agency is commonly linked to the posthuman strand of New Materialism, with which the feminist thinkers Jane Bennett, Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Johnny Golding and Vicky Kirby, amongst others, are also commonly associated.[158] Attuning their

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[152] Barbara Bolt (2004), *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 4.
[153] Butler's and Deleuze's theories of repetition are informed by J. L. Austin's speech act theory. See Judith Butler (1999), *Gender Trouble*, Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press and J.L. Austin (2005), *How to Do Things with Words*.
[154] Judith Butler (1999), *Gender Trouble,* 33, Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, 1. Repetition-in-itself is for Deleuze linked to duration and its continual progress that generates "real" time. Repetition thus names not what it is in itself but how it becomes, again and again, through durational time. In this way, it is constituted not by sameness but difference as it names *how* it differs – through the process of duration. Repetition in this way comprises a new moment for each repetition. See 'Chapter II: Repetition for Itself in Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, 70-128.
[155] Barbara Bolt (2004), *Art Beyond Representation*, 146.
[156] See Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 34, 46.
[157] See 'Performativity and Materialisation' and 'A Radical Lingual Performativity' in Barbara Bolt (2004), *Art Beyond* Representation, 150-157.
[158] The term New Materialism was, according to Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, coined in the 1990s to describe a move away from the binary subject-object thinking that underpins both modernism and postmodernism in favour of an attuning to an agential thinking. See Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds) (2010), *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1-43.

approach to material agency, these thinkers stress that we need to move away from the human-centric mode that governs both modernist and postmodernist debate to include nonhuman agencies when considering the production of knowledge.[159] Describing her theory of *agential realism* as a 'posthumanist performative account of material bodies', Barad proposes that performativity as a term is productive in its 'call[ing] into question representationalism's claim that there are representations, on the one hand, and ontologically separate entities awaiting representation on the other'.[160] Through *agential realism*, Karen Barad addresses the production of knowledge as a multi-agential activity.[161] Drawing on Niels Bohr's quantum theory of the relation between matter, measuring, and meaning, Barad coins the term *intra-action*. For Barad, intra-action

> *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction", which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*.[162]

In other words, materiality, for Barad, is understood as always already entangled with knowledge. Agency, for Barad, is a material concern: 'a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has. Agency is doing/being in its intra-activity'.[163] Describing the outcome of intra-action as an 'ongoing flow of agency', she terms it *phenomena*.[164] Phenomena, Barad notes, 'do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of observer and observed, or the results of measurements; rather, *phenomena* are the *ontological* inseparability of agential components'.[165] Performativity, for Barad, refers to the agential activity, the causal relation, that generates *phenomena*, and it also stresses the importance of actual practical participation in the process beyond the theoretical reflection: 'a direct material engagement with the world'.[166] Consequently, while both Barad and Bolt use performativity and

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[159] See for example Rosi Braidotti (2006), 'Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology' in *Theory, Culture, and Society*, vol. 23, no. 7-8, 197-208, Donna Haraway (1988), 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectiv' in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Autumn), 575-599 and Karen Barad (2003), 'Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter' in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol 28, no. 3, 801-831.
[160] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 49.
[161] See 'Performativity and Social and Political Agency' in Karen Barad (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 59-66.
[162] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe* Halfway, 33. Italics in original.
[163] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe* Halfway, 235. Original text is in italics.
[164] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway,* 150.
[165] Barad describes *phenomena* as 'a specific intra-action of an 'object'; and the 'measuring agencies'; the object and the measuring agencies emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-action that produces them'. Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 33, 128. Original text is in italics.
[166] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 139, 90, 49. Original text is in italics.

materiality to escape the too-simplified subject/object causality of representation, Barad, in contrast to Bolt, also includes the outcome of the causality, *phenomena,* in her theory. However, while *phenomena* refers to the agential inseparability between outcome and causality (the methodology and the researcher), it does not primarily denote the generativity embedded within the process.[167] Borrowing from Donna Haraway, Barad instead addresses generativity – the production of something new, through the notion of *diffraction*. Noting that reflection or reflexivity 'invites the illusion of an essential, fixed position', Haraway suggests that in contrast, diffraction 'trains us to a more subtle vision', as it entails 'the processing of small but consequential differences'.[168] In this way, it opens up a way of thinking of difference as a 'critical difference within' rather than through the identitarian measure of difference/sameness.[169] Barad, following Haraway and drawing on the 'wave-particle duality paradox' in quantum physics, makes use of diffraction as a strategy to move away from determining and defining outcomes in advance.[170] Like Haraway, Barad emphasises the potential of comprehending a form of difference not simply as predicated on the binary logic but as a form of generativity. Diffractions, Barad proposes, 'are attuned to differences – differences that our knowledge-making practices make and the effects they have on the world'.[171]

While both Barad and Bolt employ the term performativity to name a process that produces difference, this thesis uses generativity. The preference of generativity over performativity is crucial. Generativity more clearly stresses that the primary focus – of the queering of photography – is the outcome: the photographic image. In other words, while the process is fundamental in embodying the causality underpinning the materialisation of the photograph, and with this its ability to generate, it is the image rather than the process, that reveals the queering.[172] As Heidegger notes, the underlying technique *as such* does not guarantee anything as '[i]t is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth'.[173] In photographic practice, the process of generating difference takes into account physical entities as well as dimensional and other, seemingly, immaterial forms of matter. While the sitters' skin, their clothing, the marble statues, and the backdrop are all ingredients of what will become a

[167] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 185.
[168] Donna Haraway (1992), 'The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for inappropriate/d Others' in *Cultural Studies*, New York: Routledge, 300, 318.
[169] Donna Haraway (1992), 'The Promises of Monsters', 299.
[170] The paradox of light behaving like a wave or a particle, never simultaneously, but caused by the observer's choice of measuring strategy. Barad stresses that a wave-particle comprise of both light and matter: '[w]aves can overlap (i.e. interfere) with one another and occupy the same position at any moment of time, unlike particles'. See Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 29-30, 99-100. See Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 29-30, 99-100.
[171] Karen Barad (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 71.
[172] Performativity would be a more appropriate term for research that values experimentation by itself. See for example Rubinstein, who suggests that the photographic process is a 'meaningful and creative activity, that has value in and of itself, above and beyond the image that might or might not be produced'. Daniel Rubinstein (2019), 'Fractal Photography and the Politics of Invisibility', 337-356.
[173] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 13.

photograph, they cannot 'queer' photography through their own 'thingness' as such – they can only do this in combination with the photographic process. In other words, the photograph's generative condition is not an entity *or* a mechanical/technical/optical process but, as Barad explains with her *intra-action,* comprises an entanglement of all these components; it cannot be explained through separating them from one another.[174]

With her *ana-materialism*, Johnny Golding provides a framework for a mode of thinking that more evidently accounts for a material condition outside of the obvious physicality of thingness. (Barad, while equating agency with matter, remains vague about material, non-entity, components). Describing *ana-materialism* as a 'neither-nor' materiality, Golding uses the term to address a form of matter that operates outside of vision. Defining 'image' as 'analogue, digital, mental', Golding proposes that *ana-materialism* encompasses a 'restaging' of materiality: it is neither physical nor immaterial; but it is also not visible. Operating as the glue that underpins the 'making sense', *ana-materialism*, Golding claims, 'figures the image and, in doing so, acts as an ontological "groundless ground" for image, text, pleasure, art'. While the image for Golding is not directly governed by technologies, image materiality, Golding suggests, is effectively *conceptualised* through technologies. She writes that

> it is via technologies of production, immersivity and expenditure that this ana-materialism can best be conceptualised. Irrespective of which technology is used, ana-materialism calls forth a whole new "truth" in representation, one that side-steps the Universal (and all this implies around totality, objectivity, identity).[175]

In line with ana-materialism, the photograph 'restages' different forms of materialities: already existing entities (human skin, marble surfaces, clothing, backdrop) entangle with durational time, different spatial qualities conditioned through the camera frame and lens optics, the film type used for the shoot, the chemical used for its processing, and the printing materials used for the final image materialisation. While Golding, in also including the 'mental' image in her account, proposes that technology does not govern the image as such, the photograph is unmistakeably a product of technology. Its revealing as image necessitates technology, and by this it complicates the quest in this thesis to account for the yet unknown. Heidegger explains the limits of technology when he writes that

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[174] In contrast, Jane Bennett addresses materiality as an entity. With her *Vibrant Matter* (2010) Bennet seeks to move away from the human centric subject/object, active/passive narrative, Bennett argues for an agency within nonorganic life, a 'vital materiality' that she names *thing-power.* Jane Bennett (2010), *Vibrant Matter,* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 20-24. For materiality addressed as thingness, see also Giuliana Bruno (2014), *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press and Elisabeth Edwards (2004), *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images,* Hove: Psychology Press.

[175] This section of work comes from Johnny Golding (2013), 'Ana-Materialism & the Pineal Eye', 68-69.

> [t]o set up an experiment means to represent or conceive [*vorstellen*] the conditions under which a specific series of motions can be made susceptible of being followed in its necessary progression, i.e., of being controlled in advance by calculation.[176]

A product of technology and the arts, photography is at the same time what Heidegger refers to as 'the herald of Enframing' in that it is 'calculable in advance', and *poiesis* – a revealer of something new.[177] This locates the queering of photography as part of the ability to generate the new and within a calculable measure simultaneously. Chapter 4 continues from here by addressing this paradox.

[176] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Age of the World Picture' in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, New York, London: Garland Publishing, 121.
[177] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Question Concerning Technology', 21-22.

PART 3:
ENCOUNTER

4. MEASURE

The previous chapter suggested that the queering of photography is more appropriately addressed through the 'how' of the generative than through a representational or performative logic. The photographic experiments undertaken through studio explorations opened up a way of understanding photography's relation to queering in the sense of generating something new. This form of difference, rather than making sense through its comparison to the scene that was photographed, is conditioned through its own complexity as a multi-material, multi-dimensional image. While Barad's Haraway-informed notion of *diffraction* and Golding's *ana-materialism* are productive in addressing photography outside of representation, attuning instead to a dimensional materiality, Heidegger's account of the relation of technologies to the arts, and his scepticism towards science, highlights the ontological concerns at the heart of the queering of photography. This chapter will develop this argument by addressing the paradoxical relation between photography as a calculable technology and as a poetic artform. While photographic dimensionality is addressed in relation to Henri Bergson's and Gilles Deleuze's writings on duration and difference, the chapter is grounded in photographic technologies.

4.1. Exactitude

This thesis argues that the primary aim of queer is to overcome determinism, to enable ways to access other modes of thinking, other modes of existing, that do not rely on pre-established positions and structures to make sense. In this context, the photograph embodies a paradoxical role. As Heidegger points out, the scientific measure allows only one mode of access: there is no room for other forms of interpretation than the law underpinning the equation in question.[178] In photography, the mathematical law underpinning the exposure of the image is named 'the law of reciprocity'. The law of reciprocity accounts for the relationship between the light source (artificial or daylight), the depicted thing's ability to absorb or reflect light (its illuminance), the aperture diameter, shutter duration, and the photographic film's or digital sensor's sensitivity to light (ISO).[179] These factors are all ingredients of the photographic exposure, and as such they exist in relation to one another. For example, if the shutter time is increased, to maintain the exposure setting the aperture, ISO, or light source needs to be decreased in value. This calculable measure comprises the catalyst for the materialisation of the image. Governed by a definite, pre-composed measure, the photograph's generativity is in this way grounded in a causality that Heidegger describes as 'controlled in advance by calculation.[180] Like Heidegger,

[178] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Age of the World Picture', 118.
[179] ISO is short for the International Organisation of Standardisation and comprises the governing body for the standardisation of the sensitivity of film and digital camera sensors. See Michael Langford (2008), *Basic Photography,* 9th edition. Oxford: Focal Press, 202.
[180] Martin Heidegger (1977), 'The Age of The World Picture', 121. One of the most established photographic measures of light is photographer Ansel Adams' zone system. Developed in the 1930s, this explains how to measure the grey-tones from white to black in order to control the contrast – to achieve a

Barad also highlights the reductivity existing in the unquestioned causality and the assumed truth value of the outcome. Turning to Isaac Newton's classical mechanics, she proposes that

> [t]he hallmark of Newtonian physics is its strict determinism: given the "initial conditions" (i.e. the position and momentum) of a particle at any one instant in time and the full set of forces acting on a particle, the particle's entire trajectory (i.e. its entire past and future) is determined.[181]

In other words, governed by the Newtonian measure, the photographic image is generated through *telos*, a pre-established path, where, as Johnny Golding notes, 'systematic change is understood within the logic of its unfolding'. In this way, as Golding highlights, the goal 'becomes both the basis of its true meaning, the guide posts for its becoming [and] the emergence of the changed object into that which it was always supposed to be'.[182] The paradox thus consists of the peculiar situation in which the queering of photography cannot simply overthrow the pre-established measure, as it relies on the metric system for its generative occasioning. A blurring, or rather, a *simultaneity*, is caused between exactitude as numerical and as poetic. This simultaneity undermines the clear-cut separation between scientific logic and the logic of art.[183]

While the photograph's metrical cut is Newtonian, its ability to generate something materially poetic, a queer sensibility, could be addressed through Italo Calvino's *vago.* According to Calvino, exactitude is not found in that which is calculable, but in the poetic sensibility, what he describes as 'the beauty of the vague and indefinite'. While for Newton exactitude comprises a form of precision governed by metrics, Calvino defines it as the sensibility embodied within the artist's 'meticulous attention'. Through this sensibility, Calvino suggests, '[t]he poet of vagueness can only be the poet of exactitude, who is able to grasp the subtlest sensations with eyes and ears and quick, unerring hands'. Following Giacomo Leopardi, Calvino proposes that

> the more vague and imprecise a language is, the more poetic it becomes. I might mention in passing that as far as I know Italian is the only language in which the word *vago* (vague) also means "lovely, attractive". Starting out from the original meaning of "wandering", the

'balanced' photographic print. See Ansel Adams (2005), *The Camera,* New York: Little, Brown and Company and Ansel Adams (2006), *The Print*, New York: Little, Brown and Company.

[181] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe* Halfway, 107.

[182] Johnny Golding (2009), 'The Assassination of Time: (or the Birth of Zeta-physics)' in Hanjo Berressem and Leyla Haferkamp (eds), *Deleuzian Events: Writing History.* Münster: Lit Verlag 134.

[183] See for example Jim Mooney who, developing from Lyotard, proposes that '[s]cientific knowledge requires that only one language game, namely that of denotation, be retained and all others excluded. This exclusion is intrinsically unsympathetic to the often polyvalent, multivocal, open character of the contemporary work of art'. Jim Mooney (2013), 'Research in Fine Art by Project: General Remarks towards Definition and Legitimation of Methodology' in Rogers Henry (ed), *Queertexturealities*, Birmingham: Article Press, 26. See also Lyotard (1986), *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

> word *vago* still carries an idea of movement and mutability, which in Italian is associated both with uncertainty and indefiniteness and with gracefulness and pleasure.[184]

Vago, as a framework of the poetic, Calvino suggests, opens up ways of reassessing the 'logical, geometrical, and metaphysical procedures' that to a great extent have governed both the figurative arts and literature. In this way, *vago* refers to both the break with representation and the latent poetic quality inherent to the technicality of photography.[185]

4.2. Duration

Whereas the measuring devices, for example the camera, the light meter and the type of film used, *deliver* units of numerical exactitude, the materialisation of the image depends on further underlying components. The 'law of reciprocity' only measures the exposure – the density of the image. It does not take into account the ways in which the image is affected by the shutter's duration, the aperture's relation to depth of field, the optical condition of the lens and the light source used. While the temperature of light was addressed in Chapter 3, this chapter continues to address generativity in photography through further reconsidering time and space. In his *Confronting Images*, Georges Didi-Huberman addresses the camera shutter's role in the production of a photograph, noting that

> If you want to photograph a moving object, you can and even must make a choice: you can shoot a single moment, even a series of moments, or you can leave the shutter open through the whole movement. In one case you will obtain crisply defined images of the objects and a skeleton of the movement […] in the other you will obtain a tangible curve of the movement but a blurry ghost of the object…[186]

The time Didi-Huberman is referring to is duration, the length that the shutter stays open during an exposure.[187] Duration, as the form of time that underpins photographic production, is a complex form of time that affects the materialisation of the photographic image. Whether the shutter is left open for several hours or set to a fraction of a second, shutter time comprises what Szarkowski describes as 'a discrete parcel of time'.[188] Duration does not only blur or freeze movements: it also enhances saturation (colour intensity) and it erases matter: while a long

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[184] Italo Calvino (1988), *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 57.
[185] This section of work comes from Italo Calvino (1988), *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, trans. Patrick Creagh, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 59-70.
[186] Georges Didi-Huberman (2005), *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 32-33
[187] The full shutter stops are 1/1000, 1/500, 1/250, 1/125, 1/60, 1/30, 1/15, 1/8, 1/4, 1/2, 1," 2," B, and T. While B is short for 'bulb,' denoting that the shutter is left open as long as the shutter is pressed, T, short for 'time,' denotes that the shutter is left open until manually closed. See Michael Langford (2008), *Basic Photography,* 169.
[188] John Szarkowski (2007), *The Photographer's Eye*, 10. See also Chapter 2 of this thesis.

exposure heightens the intensity of the light source's colour temperature, extremely long exposures only record entities that are immobile: moving entities are not recorded. This phenomenon is evident in one of the earliest daguerreotypes, Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre's *Boulevard du Temple* (Fig. 24).[189]

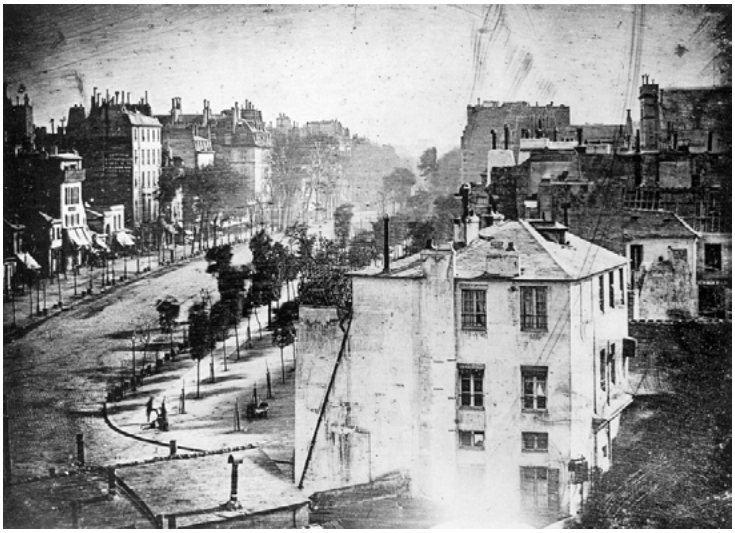

Fig. 24. Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, *Boulevard du Temple*, 1838

Depicted from a high vantage point, this daguerreotype depicts a street that is empty except for a tiny figure that is just visible: a man having his shoe polished. This man was the only mobile entity that remained in the same place during the long exposure. In contrast, with an extremely short shutter speed the depicted world is frozen, seized by duration. This is evident in Eadweard Muybridge's *Sallie Gardner at Gallop* (Fig. 12), addressed by John Szarkowski in Chapter 2. Duration is in this way not the same time as that which existed at the time of the shoot. It is a time never before witnessed by the human eye, but that nevertheless encapsulates past time. Duration makes evident the fact that photography does not simply capture an already existing time but generates a new form of time.

These two forms of time, an exact measure and something that *becomes,* are central to Henri Bergson's philosophy of time, first developed in his *Time and Free Will.*[190] While in photography duration is spatialised, for Bergson it only exists in the human mind.[191] According to Bergson, time needs to be lived in order to be real. This makes duration, as the 'immediate data of consciousness', the only real time.[192] Comprised of ongoing moments in one's

[189] Daguerre's *Boulevard du Temple* is further addressed by Geoffrey Batchen in Geoffrey Batchen (1999), *Burning with Desire*, 127-143 and Joan Fontcuberta (2014), *Pandora's Camera,* 105-8..
[190] Henri Bergson (2001), *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness,* trans. Frank L. Pogson, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.
[191] Henri Bergson (1998), *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 164–65.
[192] 'The Immediate Data of Consciousness' comprises the subtitle to Henri Bergson's *Time and Free Will*.

consciousness that build on one another, Bergson refers to time as a flow of time, or a qualitative multiplicity.[193] Duration's qualitative nature is evident in the ways in which memory continually changes; what was remembered a year ago will be recalled differently today. With its temporal qualities, duration is not pre-established and it is not scientifically calculable – it comprises what Bergson calls a 'pure mobility'.[194] 'The universe', Bergson reminds us, is not static but 'endures'. Consequently, 'the more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the new'.[195] Addressing time as duration is for Bergson the key to understanding both humanity and the world as ever-expanding and shifting states of being.

In contrast, Bergson's second form of time, simultaneity, is a time expressed in space, a segmented form of time, or simply 'clock time'. As a measurable time, for Bergson simultaneity is not real; it does not operate through human consciousness, and as such it does not endure.[196] Space, Bergson proposes, cannot comprehend duration, it can only represent it. Space turns temporality into quantitative multiplicities, measurable entities that remain distinct from each other, 'in the sense that one has ceased to exist when the other appears'.[197]

Bergson's ontological investigation of time is closely related to the ways in which duration operates in photography, and particularly how generativity operates. Like Bergson's theory of duration, the queering of photography is also concerned with the possibility of breaking free from determinacy.[198] Duration, for Bergson as well as for photography, allows for change to take place: it addresses the future as something unknown. Due to the nature of duration, it can never be known until it happens, and as such it allows for difference. However, while Bergson's durational time demonstrates how to make sense of differentiation outside of determinacy (for example identity and negation), his theory sits uneasily with the question of the photograph which is both technically and spatially constituted. Unsurprisingly, Bergson critiques science for only being capable of comprehending time as measured (as simultaneity), and thus failing to grasp the notion of time as duration.[199] In this way, Bergson invalidates the photographic duration, which is composed of a scientific measure.

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[193] Henri Bergson (2001), *Time and Free Will*, 224, 230.
[194] Henri Bergson (1998), *The Creative Mind*, 165.
[195] Henri Bergson (2003), *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 11.
[196] Bergson writes that '[t]o put duration in space is really to contradict oneself and place succession within simultaneity'. Henri Bergson (2001), *Time and Free Will*, 227.
[197] Henri Bergson (2001), *Time and Free Will*, 91-2.
[198] For Bergson, freedom requires mobility: 'To act freely is to recover possession of oneself, and to get back into pure duration'. Henri Bergson (2001), *Time and Free Will*, 231-2
[199] Bergson writes that 'science retains nothing of duration but simultaneity, and nothing of motion itself but the position of the moving body, i.e. immobility'. Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 228-9.

The Bergsonian duration as a form of time existing within human consciousness further separates it from the photographic duration, which has nothing to do with the human psyche. These two modes of conditioning the photograph, through the human psyche or through the photograph itself, is reminiscent of the seminal debate on the ontology of time between Bergson and Albert Einstein. While Bergson argues that time only exists as a temporality experienced through the human consciousness, Einstein proposes, in accordance to his relativity theory, that time and the existence of time is independent of any observer. In short, the generation of existence occurs without the human as the onlooker. Einstein further points out that Bergson's account on duration is relative as he nevertheless acknowledges and relies on the separation from simultaneity as a second form of time. Einstein's relativity theory, through his mass-energy equation $E=mc^2$, speaks in this way to this thesis' quest for a photograph conditioned through its own constitution – both in terms of a nonhuman agency but also through its entanglement of time and space.[200]

4.3. Spatialities

Gilles Deleuze repurposes Bergson's duration, together with Friedrich Nietzsche's eternal return, in the development of his theories of time and difference.[201] Addressing time as a form of repetition that continually overlaps, backtracks, and in so doing, generates what he calls 'the new', he breaks the identitarian understanding of difference, as well as reconsidering the linear order of causality. Deleuze writes:

> We speak […] of an operation according to which two things or two determinations are affirmed *through* their difference, that is to say, that they are the objects of simultaneous affirmation only insofar as their difference is itself affirmed and is itself affirmative. We are no longer faced with an identity of contraries, which would still be inseparable as such from a movement of the negative and of exclusion.[202]

Deleuze's philosophy, in articulating ways of thinking difference outside of contradiction, is productive for a queer methodology. However, he reduces the photograph to a scientific measure of time and space. While valuing the moving image of cinema for its non-linearity and

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[200] Bergson, when asking Einstein whether the physicist's time is the same as the philosopher's, received the following answer: 'there are no grounds for extending the simultaneity without duration to the simultaneity of events. Thus, while there is indeed a psychological time and a time of physics, the notion of a philosophical time, that is to say, a single time which is both the time of consciousness and the time from which the objective temporality of physics is derived, is illegitimate: "There is therefore no philosopher's time"'. Albert Einstein as quoted by Robin Durie in Henri Bergson (1999), *Duration and Simultaneity: Bergson and the Einsteinian Universe*, trans. Mark Lewis and Robin Durie, Manchester: Clinamen Press, xiv.

[201] For Deleuze's writing on time and difference, see Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition* and Gilles Deleuze (1990), *The Logic of Sense,* trans. Constantin V. Boundas, London: The Athlone Press. See also Friedrich Nietzsche (1974), *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufman, New York: Vintage.

[202] Gilles Deleuze (1990), *The Logic of Sense*, 197. Italics in original.

lack of determinacy: as a cut-up, mashed-up form of time presented as one, the photograph is deemed to be an instrumental illustration.[203] In other words, while the former is addressed as a break with linearity and truth/falsehood, the latter, for Deleuze, is inherently representational. Referring to the photograph as a cliché, he proposes that 'the photograph tends to reduce sensation to a single level, and is unable to include within the sensation the difference between constitutive levels'.[204] The photograph, referred to by Deleuze as a 'ready-made perception', materialises the scientific measure, what Bergson called the spatialisation of time, and in so doing suggests that it cannot encompass more than *the image of thought*.[205]

While reducing the still image to representation, Bergson's and Deleuze's understandings of time make present possibilities of the new – a generative thinking applicable to photography. In photography, generativity includes not only time but also space: like duration, the photograph's spatial conditions also remould past moments. The photographic image's materialisation is affected by the optical quality of the lens. The size of the aperture's diameter – its f-number or f-stop – does not only control the amount (strength) of light that reaches the light-sensitive surface (film or digital sensor); it also affects the photograph's spatial volume: its plane of focus, or depth of field. The depth of field controls what is captured as sharp (in focus) or blurry (out of focus). The rule is that the larger the aperture, the shallower the depth of field.[206] The spatial qualities generated through a shallow depth of field is explored by John Hilliard in his *Raising the Camera Towards Her Familiar Profile, He Prepared to Release the Shutter* (Fig. 25).

Fig. 25. John Hilliard, *Raising the Camera Towards Her Familiar Profile, He Prepared to Release the Shutter*, 1977

[203] See Gilles Deleuze (1986), *Cinema 1: The Movement-image*, trans. Hugh Tomlison and Barbara Habberjam, London: Athlone Press and Gilles Deleuze (1992) *Cinema 2: The Time-image*, trans. Hugh Tomlison and Barbara Habberjam, London: Athlone Press.
[204] Gilles Deleuze (1983), *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation,* Translated by Daniel W. Smith. New York: Continuum, 91.
[205] Deleuze's *image of thought's* 'crucifixion' of different is addressed in in Chapter 1. See also Gilles Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*,138. For further writings on Deleuze's philosophy and its relation to photography, see Mieke Bleyen (ed) (2012), *Minor Photography: Connecting Deleuze and Guattari to Photography Theory*, Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press.
[206] See Michael Langford (2008), *Basic Photography*, 92-113.

The photograph's spatial condition further shifts with the size of the lens, its focal length (for example wide angle, standard, portrait, telephoto) and the camera format to which the lens corresponds.[207] For example, a large format 50mm lens at f8 generates a shallower depth of field than f8 of a 50mm lens produced for a 35mm camera.[208] The spatial 'warping' caused by a wide-angle lens is evident in Bill Brandt's *Nude, East Sussex Coast* (Fig. 26).

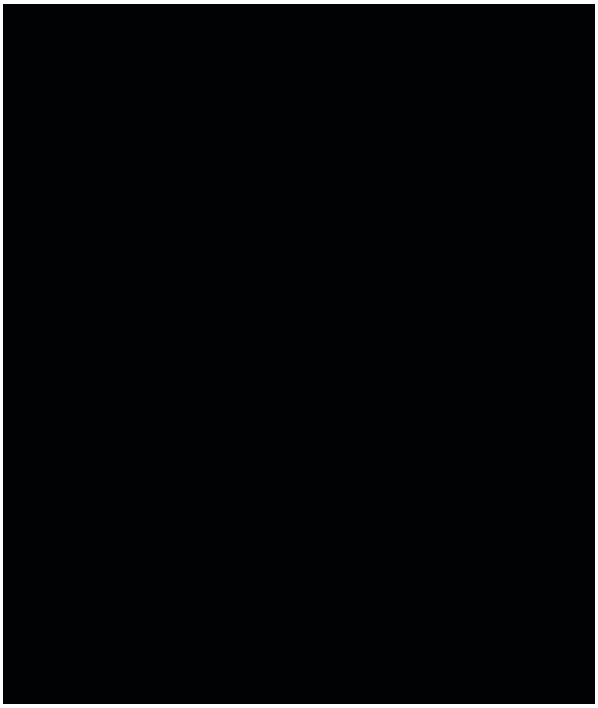

Fig. 26. Bill Brandt, *Nude, East Sussex Coast*, 1958

While these photographs produced by Hilliard, Brandt, Daguerre, and Muybridge pedagogically displace the photograph from its illustrative role as a record of linear time and space, it should be stressed that this material spatio-temporality as the marker of photographic generativity is applicable to all photographs, regardless of spatial and durational expression. In other words, the photograph inherently generates difference, if only very slightly.

Through the work *Turn* (Figs. 3, 27, 28, 29) I explored the photograph's relation to its durational and spatial conditions. Depicted from behind, these humans appear to be turning away from the camera, or at least setting out to do so. Or, perhaps, they are turning towards it. The faceless figure suggests a complicating of both the notion of identity and the portrait as

[207] The full aperture stops that controls the aperture size are: 0.7, 1.0, 1.4, 2.0, 2.8, 3.5, 4, 5.6, 8, 11, 16, 22, 32, 45, and 64, going from a large, *open* aperture, to a small, *closed down* aperture. The aperture is calculated through the focal length divided by the aperture diameter: f-stop = lens focal length/aperture diameter. See Nanette Salvaggio (2013), *Basic Photographic Materials and Processes*, 39 and Michael Langford (2008), *Basic Photography*, 51-52.
[208] See Nanette Salvaggio (2013), *Basic Photographic Materials and Processes*, 38.

genre. However, the primary aim with *Turn* was not to create a negation, a non-face, but to generate a dialogue with time and space, and to do so without illustrating the photographic technique's capability to transform. This meant making photographs without representing technical ability (what both Hilliard and Brandt risk). Instead, I set out to create photographs where this concern was inherently embedded within the production. *Turn* further addressed the photographic image's rectangular frame as a second form of spatial parameter. As a scaffold for composition, the thing depicted is placed according to its spatial relation to this frame.[209] In contrast to the fixed marble busts depicted in Rome, these humans are mobile; malleable. Consequently, the shapes that the photograph generates, the lines and creases of skin and the shadow areas, shift with their movement. The shallow depth of field generates a softness around the contours of cheek or neck, material conditions that reveal the queering textures inherent to photographic production.

Fig. 27. *Untitled* from *Turn*, 2017

[209] While the image frame marks its margins, this rectangular shape is a cut-out from the fuzzy and rounded shape initially provided by the lens, referred to as the circle of illumination. In order for the light to fill the entire frame of the rectangular film or the sensor, the aperture diameter needs to be larger than the diagonal of the film or sensor. Consequently, there is a spatial discrepancy between the (round) lens and the (rectangular) frame. If the diameter of this circle is smaller than the diagonal of the film, it will be visible as it replaces the sharp rectangular frame with hazy round edges.

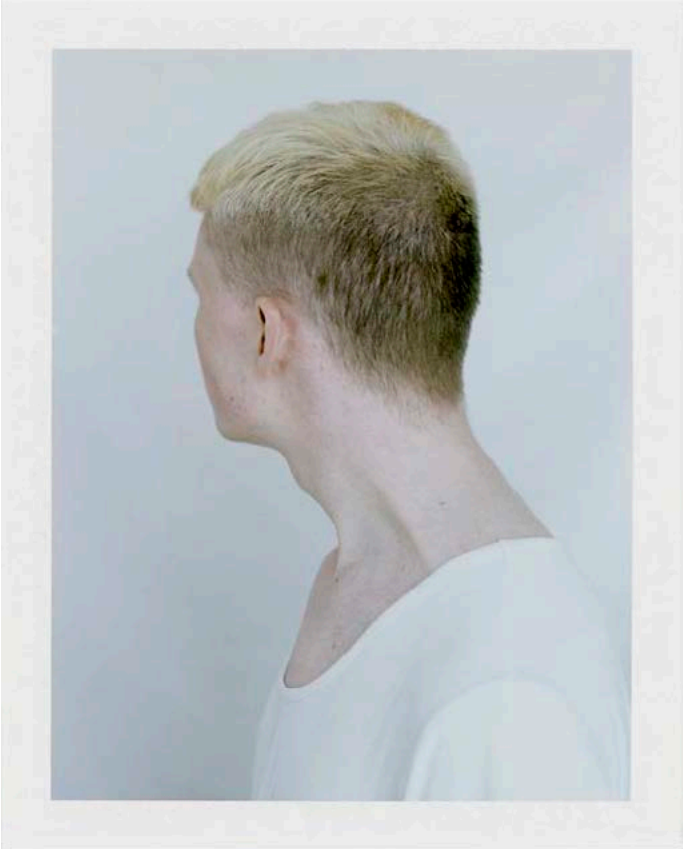

Fig. 28. *Untitled* from *Turn*, 2017

Fig. 29. *Untitled* from *Turn*, 2017

The spatial parameters set by the rectangular frame has been explored further through the work *Frame* (Figs. 4 and 30). Here the fabric backdrop (used throughout the PhD) is displaced from background to foreground, from supporting act to central figure. Fixed to a wall with a single nail, the fabric droops towards the studio floor, suggesting a centrally posing figure, and with two nails, it creates a rectangular shape, evoking the frame it is itself framed within. Exploring a performative or theatrical strategy that – in contrast to previous examples of practice research – is self-consciously declared, allows testing out new ways of addressing queering in relation to photograph. These strategies underpinning *Frame* inevitably brings up Michel Fried's account on art and objecthood, albeit the 'object' is here presented for the camera and not for a viewer. In this way, rather than suggesting that the fabric as such is 'art', the fabric serves an aspect of the photograph's materialisation as image.[210] These theatrically rooted ideas underpinning *Frame* were reconsidered in 2019 (Fig. 31). Photographed close-up and intended to be printed large-scale, this piece was an attempt to accentuate the backdrop's role as the (co)-provider of shadows and textures in *Looking Out, Looking In*.

Fig. 30. *Untitled* from *Frame,* 2017

[210] See Michael Fried (1998), 'Art and Objecthood' in his *Art and Objecthood,* London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 148-172.

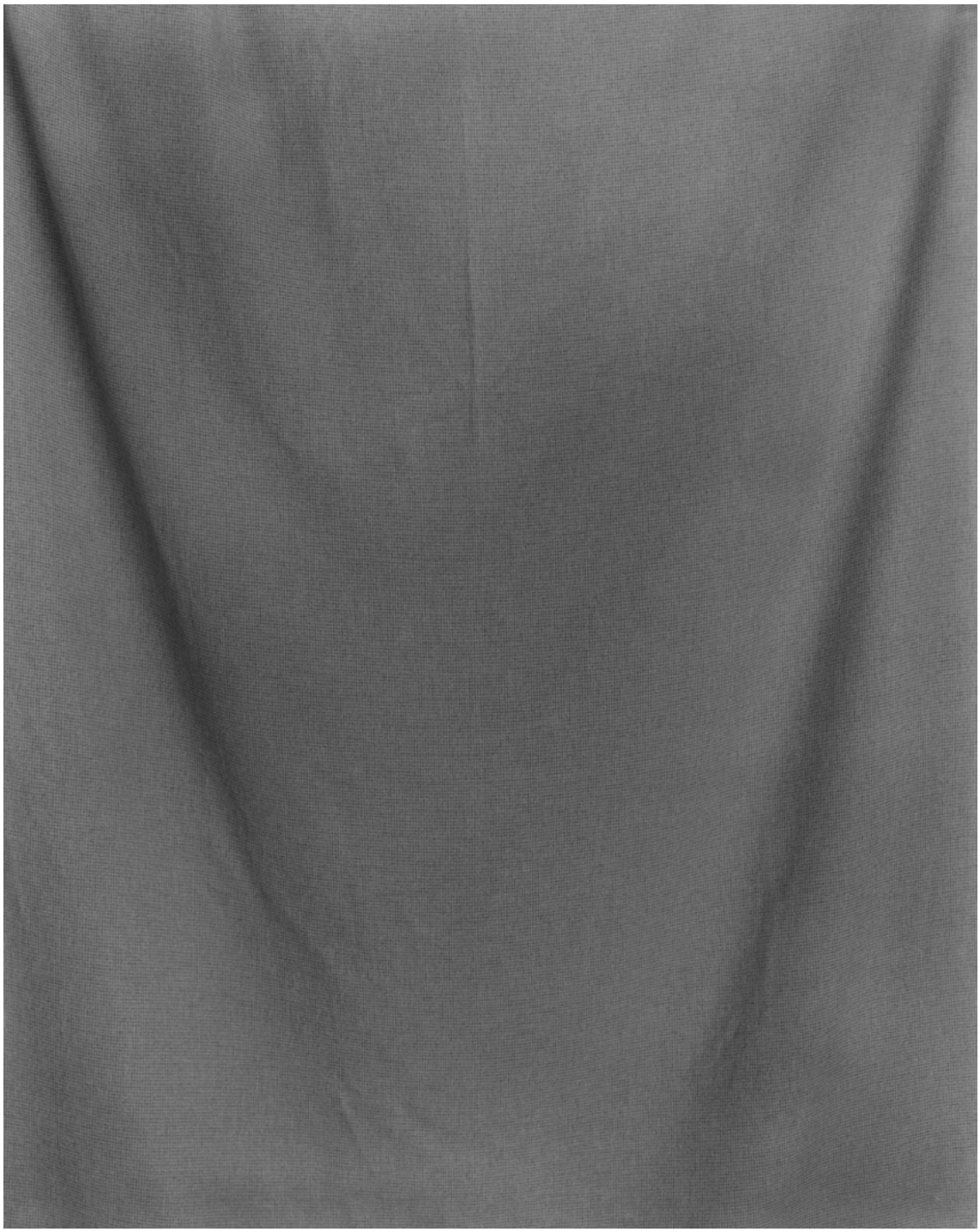

Fig. 31. *Untitled* from *Frame,* 2019

4.4. Smuggling in a queer code

The exactitude of the poetic, according to Calvino, 'knows only itself'.[211] The photographs produced through this research project are at first glance not easily categorisable as queer. Exercising a formal visual language and using muted hues or monochrome tones, they do not aesthetically conform to the dominant look of the queer photograph which frequently exercises strategies of a declared performance that asks the viewer to decode queer as a semiotic sign. This subtlety is not quite a new methodology but is rather the result from an ongoing photographic art practice that was existing and breathing also before this PhD commenced. Its slowness, or 'vagueness', has been productive to this research project as it has allowed to develop a self-referential method – a dialogue with photographic material and technical parameters, but without literalising these. In other words, while the photograph's material, dimensional, and metric conditions are central to this thesis' argument – in relocating the photograph's 'making sense' from both viewer and referent to its own constitution as image – its complexity is teased out rather than spelt out.

This separation from both referent and viewer situates the photograph as what Jean-Luc Nancy calls a 'distinct image'. According to Nancy, an image that operates outside of the image/referent embodies violent forces that disrupt that which is recognisable and thus already available. The distinct image is a poetic image through which the poetry itself forms its materialisation. This internal operation is for Nancy a process outside of a viewer's *model* – outside of the references that we bring with us when we look at an image. For Nancy, its separation from the viewer and the world makes the meaning of an image groundless – a temporal 'non-place' as 'poetry itself' forms the *is* of the image:

> The image is separated in two ways simultaneously. It is detached from a ground [*fond*] and it is cut out within a ground. It is pulled away and clipped or cut out. The pulling away raises it and brings it forward: makes it a 'force', a separate frontal surface, whereas the ground itself had no face or surface. The cutout or clipping creates edges in which the image is framed...[212]

Like Nancy's distinct image, the photograph, addressed through the queering of photography, violates the law of traditional, binarily rooted theories of photography, as it not only claims existence outside conventional categories but is doing so through strategies rooted in the photograph's material and poetic qualities. The queering generated through the metric cut – the

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[211] Italo Calvino (1988), *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 76.

[212] This section of work comes from Jean-Luc Nancy (2005), *The Ground of the Image,* trans. by Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 9-12. It is worth noting that while Nancy's articulation of the image as operating outside of the viewer and the world it depicts is helpful, he nevertheless separates the photograph from other images (paintings). Photographs are by Nancy addressed as 'snapshot' conditioned through a different measure than the distinct image. See the chapter '*Nous Autres'* in his *The Ground of the Image*, 100-107. Italics in original.

mathematical measure's entanglement of light, duration and spatialities opens up a productive tension that reclaims the former understanding of queer: an odd, strange, and weird form of exactitude that can't be summed up to a neat totality. However, the photograph cannot be reduced to the components from which it is made: it is always more than this. A material transcription and rupture, the photograph's queering can only make sense as image.

4.5. Human agency, machine agency

The photographic image is, however, not just composed of time, space, and light. As Barad stresses with her *intra-action,* the causality underpinning an experiment and its outcome, *phenomena*, is complex, and it is important to address all the agencies involved. The photograph, as phenomenon, consists of the 'ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting agencies.[213]

The materialisation of the photographic image is affected by the photographer's, processer's, and printer's technical and conceptual skills and decision-making. The photographer, after choosing the film type or attuning the digital camera settings, decides the location, height, and camera angle when composing the image. While the light meter will generate a combination of shutter, aperture, and ISO measure that would ensure a mathematically 'correct' exposure, this exposure reading depends on the area used for the measure, and its numerical value will vary with the highlight, mid-tone or area of shadow that has been measured, accordingly. Further, while this measure exists – whether 'correctly' measured or not – the photographer is free to disregard this when setting the shutter and aperture.

Once exposed, human and material variables are also present in the film processing: through the skill, technique, and decision-making of the person executing the developing process, through the measuring devices used (for example, the thermometer and any processing machines). While the type of chemicals used would have a further impact on the condition of the image, so would the duration and agitation applied during each chemical bath (developer, stop, and fix), and the duration and quality of the water comprising the 'wash' after each processing session. Variables in the processing of a digital image file include the skill, colour perception, and decision-making of the person undertaking the software processing, any film scanning undertaken, the type of image software programme used, the type of screen used, and the colour calibration of the screen and, if printed, this calibration's relation to the printer's calibration. While the photographic image, if digitally produced, does not need to be printed but can remain on a screen, printing would affect the image through the type of chemicals, papers, and

[213] Barad continues: 'apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices – specific material (re)configurations of the world – which come to matter'. Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 139-140. Original text is in italics.

darkroom/digital printing facilities used, and in the context of the printer's skills and decision-making.

The point to be made here is that the photographer, processer and printer (if applicable), whether human or not, while participating as agencies in the process underpinning the materialisation of a photographic image share their agential participation with the measuring devices and the material conditions embedded within the process. As Barad suggests with her theory of *agential realism*, 'these *entangled practices* are productive, and who and what are excluded through these entangled practices matter: different intra-actions produce different phenomena'.[214]

This process that governs the materialisation of the photographic image provides two important outcomes for this thesis. First, it provides the underlying logic for a photograph to make sense, and second, it comprises the ground for understanding queering as generative. The question of the ground of photography will be addressed further in Chapter 5.

[214] Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 58. Italics in original.

5. GROUND

This thesis has so far proposed that the queering of photography is better served by attending to the constitution of the photograph as a material image than through strategies that operate through pre-set positionalities that enforce determinacy (queer/heteronormativity, truth/falsehood), or through approaches only applicable to certain forms of techniques (digital dissemination). It has also aimed to move away from expressing queer concerns through performative strategies that instrumentalise the photograph's agency (representation). This chapter addresses the queering of photography's refusal to negate, to oppose existing positions. However, in so doing it also raises questions on the risk of advocating a photographic essence. Through considering both process and shape as heterogeneous conditions, the chapter problematises the queering of photography and its relation to dimensionality, essentialism, transcendence, and accountability. While rooted in photographic practice, this chapter is informed by Luce Irigaray's writing on air as a forgotten form of matter in relation to Martin Heidegger's ontological difference. Lastly, Michel Foucault's *parrhesian* truth-telling opens up to positioning photography and the consideration of its ground in relation to commitment, courage, risk, and accountability.

5.1. The forgetting of a photographic ground

Luce Irigaray, with *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, introduces the idea of matter in the form of air as an ontological necessity for existence. According to Irigaray, Heidegger's philosophy, along with the dominant history of male Western philosophers, necessitates a 'clearing of air' to operate. It has been forgotten, Irigaray writes, that air 'secretly nourishes' thinking. By asking 'what consistency does the essence of Being have?' Irigaray reminds us that we are made of matter and that we breathe in order to be and to think: '[t]o recall that air is at the groundless foundation of metaphysics amounts to ruining metaphysics through and through. To conning it out of everything'.[215]

Irigaray's proposal of air as a forgotten form of matter is close to this thesis' argument of the photograph as a forgotten material image. Like air, the photograph's materiality is forgotten as we (think that) we can't see it. However, Irigaray's primary target of critique, Heidegger's theory of identity and difference, is equally valuable to this thesis. Irigaray's critique aside, Heidegger's argument is important as it demonstrates how identity, which through the 'principle of identity' is articulated as A=A, is better understood as A *is* A.[216] This shift is productive for

[215] This section of work comes from Luce Irigaray (1999), *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, 4-6.

[216] 'The principle of identity' or 'the law of identity,' comprises one of the key questions in philosophy. As Heidegger notes: '[t]he usual formation of the principle of identity reads: A=A. The principle of identity is considered the highest principle of thought'. Martin Heidegger (2008), *Identity and Difference*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 23.

Heidegger, who seeks to explain that while A=A implies two positions to explain identity, A *is* A implies only one. With the *is* as the primary focus, Heidegger suggests that identity is better served through Being (to be) than through being (to be a being). Developing from the work of the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, Heidegger proposes that Metaphysics, as the modern Western form of thinking, has forgotten how to comprehend Being without thinking being.[217] Modern Western thinking, Heidegger argues, has instead developed a philosophy rooted in being: in the elements or entities involved in thinking. It is this focus on entities and their relation to one another that has forced difference to make sense only as the relation between two entities. As Heidegger notes, '[w]e speak of the *difference* between Being and beings. The step back goes from what is unthought, from the difference as such, into what gives us thought. That is the *oblivion* of the difference'. [218] The *ontological difference* is Heidegger's name for the forgotten form of difference – a difference that can be revealed first when the relationship between Being and being is removed from its representational logic: Being needs to be understood outside of its role as the ground for beings. To do so, Heidegger proposes a temporal move, a move he calls *perdurance.*[219] *Perdurance* is explained by Heidegger as a form of *overwhelming* of Being and an *arrival* of beings, and offers a way to rethink instead of escaping Metaphysics: revealing Being and concealing beings simultaneously. Heidegger explains:

> In our attempt to think of the difference as such, we do not make it disappear; rather, we follow it to its essential origin. On our way there we think of the perdurance of overwhelming and arrival. This is the matter of thinking, thought closer to rigorous thinking – closer by the distance of one step back: Being thought in terms of the difference.[220]

Heidegger's concern with a forgotten non-dialectical difference, and his urge to present a way to think 'the is' as a form of revealing rooted in its own coming into being rather than as a representation or contradiction, speaks of the queering move suggested in this thesis. However, there is no photograph without materiality. Irigaray's insistence on acknowledging air as the forgotten matter not only highlights how the photograph's materiality has been forgotten, but also how this assumed invisibility has helped to facilitate the process of making it passive as an object – as a mediator or as a metaphor for other discourses.

While both Heidegger and Irigaray seek to articulate a groundless ground – Heidegger with his *perdurance* and Irigaray with her air – the move in this thesis to the photograph's own material

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[217] Joan Stambauch explains this clearly: 'The oblivion of Being is not something omitted in the history of philosophy, something left out. Metaphysics has asked the question of Being, but only to bring Being into a relationship with being as their *ground*'. See Martin Heidegger (2008) *Identity and Difference*, 7. Italics in original.
[218] Martin Heidegger (2008), *Identity and Difference*, 50. Italics in original.
[219] 'The difference of Being and beings, as the differentiation of overwhelming and arrival, is the perdurance (Austrag) of the two in *unconcealing keeping in concealment*'. Martin Heidegger (2008), *Identity and Difference*, 65. Italics in original.
[220] Martin Heidegger (2008), *Identity and Difference*, 65.

constitution, if not groundless, has freed it from its instrumental role of representing. It has freed the photograph from being less than what it represents and without the expense of the image. However, the queering, located in the photograph's capacity to generate, while operating through a nonbinary and poetic logic, requires further attention.

5.2. Photograph is a photograph is a photograph

'Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose' is a quote by Gertrude Stein from her poem 'Sacred Emily'. Stein, when asked to give this line some context replied that 'the poet could use the name of the thing and the thing was really there', proposing that the modern use of language no longer refer to things as are they are, as words instead operate through associations.[221] This thesis' proposal of the overanalysed yet overlooked photograph, resonates with Stein's rose. Addressing the photograph as a material image helps overcoming this associative and thus distant approach. It further facilitates a heterogenous conditioning of the photograph. While the causality underpinning the materialisation of the photographic image actualises the queering move in this thesis, the queering of photography is not simply understood as process but as generativity. This locates the photographic image at the forefront of the discussion, as it becomes the marker not only of difference, but of a materially grounded, queering sensibility. A sensibility that the process cannot account for in itself. In other words, the image is crucial: while the process can explain the queering of photography, the image reveals it. This is critical, as the photographic causality is not a homogeneous process. Accepting it as such would risk essentialism. While a photographic image can be produced using different procedures (analogue, digital or both; post-production; scanning, printing), its queering takes on different forms and shapes. These concerns about essentialism will be addressed here in relation to the risk of negation in a transcendental move.

The photographs produced through the experimentations *Looking Out, Looking In*; *Figural, Figurative*; *Turn* and *Frame* are sharp, exposed according to the light meter readings, and *flat*. In this way, they obey the technical process and form of traditional photographic production. The process underpinning the work *Skin* is not flat, nor is its process linear. *Skin* makes present the fact that photography can generate in many different ways; that generativity as such is not limited to the subtle moves presented through the photography discussed so far in this thesis. *Skin* (Figs. 32 and 33) addresses questions of causality, agency, and dimensionality by re-appropriating the so-called 'emulsion transfer' – the lifting of the top layer of a photograph, relocating it from its original (plastic or paper) backing onto a new surface. The initial idea for this experiment was rooted in the linearity of the workflow underpinning traditional

[221] Gertrude Stein as quoted by Will Abberley in Will Abberley (2015), *English Fiction and the Evolution of Language, 1850-1914,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 170. See also Gertrude Stein (1993), *Geography and Plays,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

photographic causality.[222] The workflow, as Michael Langford explains in his seminal *Advanced Photography*, refers to '[t]he order in which you perform certain operations and therefore the path that the image takes through the image chain'.[223] Made out of the Polaroids produced as exposure tests for *Looking Out, Looking In,* these were cut out from the Polaroid's white border and placed in warm water, one by one. Once the emulsion was separate from the backing, it was left to dry. In this way, *Skin,* as an incomplete emulsion transfer, troubles the neat path with a beginning and an end, as it instead comes to make sense on its own, without the backing that the photograph traditionally requires to be a photograph.

Skin speaks also of the photograph's dimensional condition. No longer attached to its sturdy backing, its thin, transparent emulsion generates curled edges that twists, warping the image into something no longer flat but not quite a three-dimensional entity, and sporting a black frame. Its status as image questioned, and, literally, groundless, *Skin* literalises the queer desire to break free, to seek autonomy outside of the restrictions of conventions. The queering, injected into the process itself, becomes a physical mark of both violence and fragility. However, this tampering with what has traditionally been understood as photographic dimensionality, its flatness and its rectangular frame, raises critical questions on the essence of photography. The strategies underpinning *Skin,* and the experimental result of a not-quite image, not-quite object, while presenting an unnecessary excess in terms of what the queering of photography necessitates for its operation, nevertheless generates a queering sensibility. While the incomplete emulsion transfer and groundless materiality suggest a break with *telos*, its twisted form raises questions about using dimensionality as a method for escaping conformity and norms. However, the most prominent queering sensibility is perhaps present in the specificity of its peculiar materiality. *Skin* unsettles recognition (sameness) and activates the uncategorisable (difference).

[222] As proposed in Chapter 4, the photograph, traditionally framed as a 'capture' of linear time and space, is comprised of a dimensionality much more complex than what the Barthean 'that-has-been' can account for. Addressing the photograph through its durational, multi-spatial, and metric qualities enables a way to clarify its constitution as image through accentuating its underpinning causality.
[223] Michael Langford (2008), *Advanced Photography,* 7th edition. Oxford: Focal Press, 229.

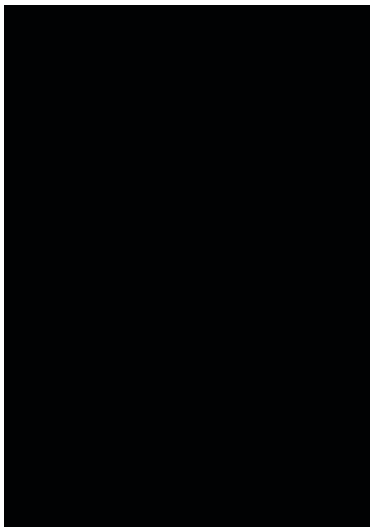
Fig. 32. *Untitled* from *Skin,* 2017-18

Fig. 33. *Untitled* from *Skin,* 2017-18

Skin evokes a queerness that in its material texture and photographic strangeness is reminiscent of Mark Morrisroe's photographs, depicting himself, his friends and his lovers and produced using a materially multifaceted process referred to by Morrisroe as a 'sandwich technique'.[224] This technique is described by Fiona Johnstone as 'a complex process that involved copying the colour negative onto black and white film', cutting out the resulting negative and overlaying it

[224] Fiona Johnstone (2012), 'The Explosive of Subjectivity: Mark Morrisroe's Plastic Photographic Practice' in Fusi, Lorenzo (ed), *Changing Difference: Queer Politics and Shifting Identities,* Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 125-137. See also David Joselit (1998), 'Mark Morrisroe's Photographic Masquerade' in Deborah Bright (ed), *The Passionate Camera: Photography and Bodies of Desire,* London and New York: Routledge, 195-203.

with the original colour negative (Figs. 34 and 35). This 'sandwich' would then be exposed onto photographic paper, generating 'a luscious, velvety textured print with an aura of otherworldliness'.[225] This 'otherworldliness' not only refers to a queering sensibility; it also suggests a transcendental move. While both Morrisroe's photographs and *Skin* break with the expected causality of photographic production, *Skin* also breaks with the photograph's expectation of flatness.



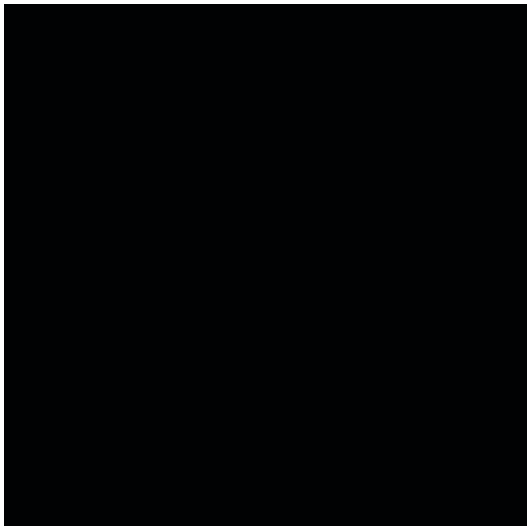


Fig. 34. Mark Morrisroe, *Janet Massomian*, 1982
Fig. 35. Mark Morrisroe, *Boy Next Door Beautiful but Dumb*, 1983

These strategies resonate with the recent material and dimensional interest in photography practices. Using analogue as well as digital techniques, photographic works that emphasise the photograph's image plane by muddling it or presenting the photograph as a three-dimensional object have come to dominate contemporary photography. As Geoffrey Batchen notes:

> There has been a cavalcade of variations on this proposition of late, with artists burning, scratching, staining, blurring, folding, draping, and painting pieces of photographic paper, thereby turning them into both pictorial structures and obdurate things in the world.[226]

[225] Fiona Johnstone (2012), 'The Explosive of Subjectivity', 129.
[226] Geoffrey Batchen (2014), '"Photography": An Art of the Real' in Carol Squires (ed), *What is a Photograph?*, New York: International Center of Photography and DelMonico Books, 47. For examples of photography practices that are informed by materiality and/or installation, see for example Richard Mosse, *Infra* (2012), available at: http://www.richardmosse.com/projects/infra [Accessed 30.08.2019], Kensuke Koike's *Across the Universe* (2009), available at: https://www.kensukekoike.com/project/across-the-universe/ [Accessed 30.08.2019], Mariah Robertson's *Photography Lovers' Peninsula* (2015), available at: https://www.mbart.com/exhibitions/129/ [Accessed 30.08.2019], Anastasia Samoylova's *Landscape Sublime* (2015-16), available at: http://magazine.landscapestories.net/en/archive/2016/altered-landscapes/projects/anastasia-samoylova [Accessed 30.08.2019], and Liz Deschenes's *Gallery 7* (2015), available at: https://walkerart.org/magazine/liz-deschenes-gallery-7 [Accessed 30.08.2019].

These materially and dimensionally rooted strategies are evident in Dafna Talmor's *Constructed Landscapes* (Fig.36), Clare Strand's *The Discrete Channel with Noise* (Fig. 37), Alix Marie's *Orlando* (Fig. 38), and Barry X Ball's *Purity* (Fig.39). While Dafna Talmor's *Constructed Landscapes* series is produced by making analogue prints from assemblages of cut-up negatives, a process she describes as generating photographs that 'are a conflation, "real" yet virtual and imaginary', Clare Strand's *The Discrete Channel with Noise* is produced through a process by which pixel values of digital images from her personal archive are numerically translated to greyscale. This code is then applied by using paint on paper.[227] Both Alix Marie and Barry X Ball make use of photography to create three-dimensional artworks. While Marie's work explores memories of a lover's skin by photographing human skin and crumbling these prints into sculptures, Ball uses 3D techniques to appropriate classical Roman marble busts. While for Marie photography comprises the key medium of production, for Ball it is only one of many: the original marble bust (*La Purità Dama Velata* by Antonio Corradini) is photographed meticulously from numerous angles, before being cast and digitised. This rendering is then computer-lathed in marble and hand-finished by Ball.[228]

The point to be made here is that experimentation in photography through various techniques can generate strong and poignant artworks, whether addressed in relation to what a photograph *should look like,* or within the post-medium condition proposed by Krauss. The problem is not the appearance of the works as such but the risk they take to make sense by contradicting the claim to truth which is assumed to be inherent to the flat and transparent photograph. Patrizia Di Bello names this attitude the 'slavish copying' of photography, and consequently situates Ball's *Purity* in contrast to this:

> Materially and conceptually, Ball's work embody both sculpture and photography as arts of mechanical reproduction, where the act of copying – starting the work by reproducing something already there in the world, whether a person or work of art – is demonstrated as not "slavish", but as endowed with a rich potential to rethink the original at every stage of the re/production…[229]

This risk of assuming an equation between truth value and traditional photographic techniques and shapes was evident in the recent symposium and group exhibition *Moving the Image: Photography and its Actions*, curated by Duncan Wooldridge at Camberwell Space, Camberwell College of Arts in 2019. This exhibition stated that 'the contemporary conditions of

[227] Artist statement from Talmor's website, available at: http://www.dafnatalmor.co.uk/constructed-landscapes-text.html [Accessed 20.05.2019]. See works and statement on Clare Strand's website, available at: https://www.clarestrand.co.uk/works/?id=361 [Accessed 15.06.2019].
[228] Ball describes the process underpinning Purity on his website, available at: http://www.barryxball.com/works_cat.php?cat=1&work=37 [Accessed 20.04.2019].
[229] Patrizia de Bello (2018), *Sculptural Photographs*, 116. See also Robert Shore who proposes that 'the "materiality" tendency in contemporary photographic practice – which stresses the work's physical, even sculptural presence in space' comprise a 'direct challenge' to the assumption that the photograph is invisible. Robert Shore (2014). *Post-photography,* 177.

photography might be best understood through an expanded conception of its actions, gestures and performativities'. Despite claiming a post-medium position, in limiting the scope of the photographic works exhibited to those that were materially and dimensionally experimental, the show took as its point of departure the assumption that the traditionally produced photograph, in contrast, is not capable of emerging 'as a complex, contradictory and challenging object, acting with us and upon us'.[230]

Current photographic practices that tamper with the traditionally produced photograph thus suggest an urge to escape photography – and its deep-rooted true/false paradigm. Consequently, while *Skin* makes present the fact that the queering of photography can reveal itself in many shapes and forms, the proposal in this thesis of a queering move rooted in material generativity does not require to escape elsewhere in order to make sense. The queering already makes sense because it is embedded within the constitution of a photograph: its condition is both non-Euclidian and Euclidian; it simultaneously comprises a measurable flatness (with edges) and an unmeasurable multi-dimensionality (without edges).[231]

This non-transcendental move recalls Lyotard's command in his *Libidinal Economy*: '[t]he first thing to avoid, comrades, is pretending that we are situated elsewhere. We evacuate nothing, we stay in the same place, we occupy the terrain of signs'.[232] The queering of photography does not seek to go elsewhere but to reveal what has been forgotten. This revealing of the photograph as an always already material and multi-dimensional image (that inherently embodies the potential to queer) presents the truth 'as it is' and in so doing suggests a parrhesian move.

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[230] Exhibition statement from *Moving the Image: Photography and its Actions,* 2019. The Full statement is available on Photo London's website, available at: https://photolondon.org/event/moving-the-image-photography-and-its-actions/ [Accesses 05.06.2019].See also the talk *The Exhibition as Medium*, curated by David Campany at Paris Photo, 2018, available at: https://programme.parisphoto.com/en/programme-2018/platform/saturday-10-november.htm [Accesses 08.06.2019]. See also *What is a Photograph?,* curated by Carol Squiers, 2014, an exhibition that historically anchors current photographic interest in materiality and installation. Available at: https://www.icp.org/exhibitions/what-is-a-photograph [Accessed 08.06.2019]. See also Chris Wiley (2011), 'Depth of Focus' in Frieze https://frieze.com/article/depth-focus [Accessed 04.03.2019], Lyle Rexer (2013), *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography.* New York: Aperture and Ben Burbridge (ed) (2015). *Revelations: Experimentations in Photography.* London: Mack in Association with Media Space.

[231] Euclid's fifth postulate reads: 'That, if a straight line falling on two straight lines make the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced indefinitely, meet on that side on which are the angles less than the two right angles'. This space that would be created, which is not flat and which embodies curvature, does not hold with regard to the Euclidian geometrical law(s) and is consequently named non-Euclidean space. Examples of non-Euclidian space includes elliptical and hyperbolic space. See Euclid (2002). *Euclid's Elements,* trans. Thomas L. Heath. Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, xi-2.

[232] The task, Lyotard writes, is not to escape signification but to localise the sign's energetics, its 'libidinal force'. Jean-François Lyotard (1993), *Libidinal Economy*, 50.

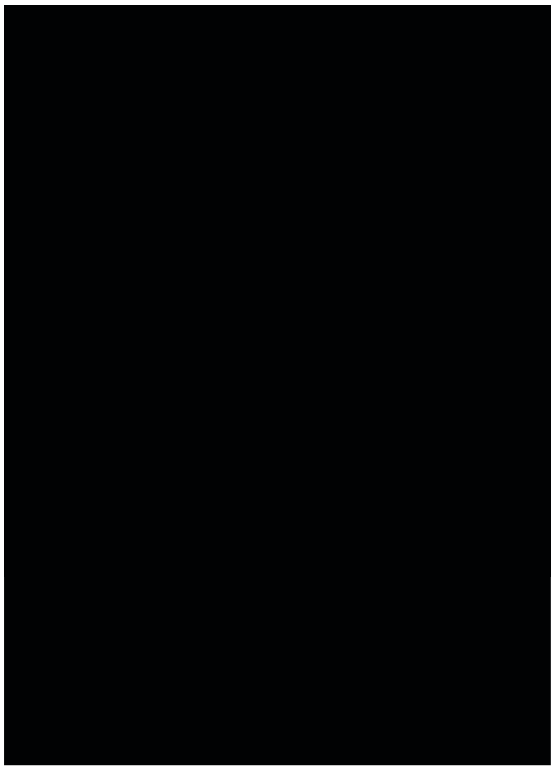

Fig.36. Dafna Talmor, *Untitled (NE-040404-1)* from *Constructed Landscapes*, 2015

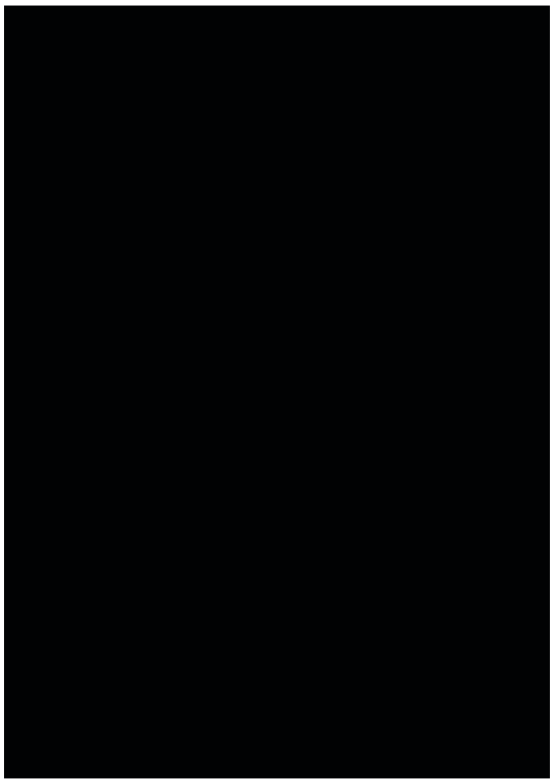

Fig. 37. Clare Strand, Installation documentation of *The Discrete Channel with Noise – Algorithmic painting: Destination #7*, 2018

Fig. 38. Alix Marie, Installation documentation of *Orlando*, 2014

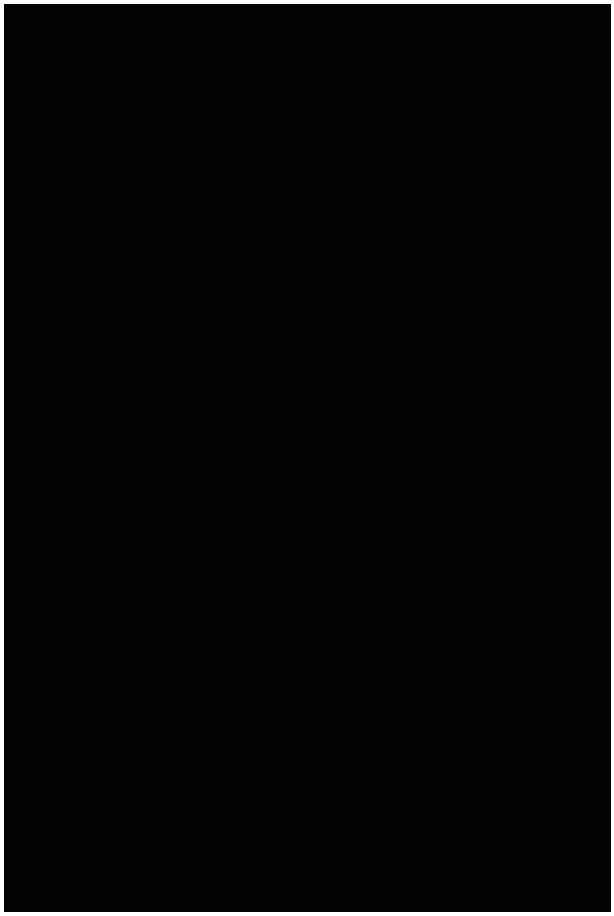

Fig. 39. Barry X Ball, *Purity*, 2008-12

5.3. A parrhesian ground

The (now abandoned) claim to truth comprises what Michel Foucault calls a *veridiction.* Coined in his *The Courage of the Truth*, veridiction describes a statement that is accepted as true by the established discourse and the ways in which this discourse understands a subject. Foucault stresses that a veridiction cannot be objective, as its acclaimed truth is the product of a maker. Reminding us that Western philosophy predominantly focuses on 'the relation between subject and truth', he proposes that rather than examining 'the forms by which discourse is recognised as true', we should instead remain critical by examining 'the form in which, in [their] act of telling the truth' a person constitutes themselves and is also constituted 'by others' as 'subject of a discourse of truth'. Foucault names this a *parrhesian* analysis. *Parrhesia,* Foucault writes, is a particular form of truth-telling that involves commitment, courage and risk.[233]

The prophet and the parrhesiast, Foucault asserts, share the act of helping people 'in their blindness', a form of inattention. However, the parrhesiast differs from the prophet in that they speak using their own voice (they do not speak on behalf of someone else), they do not claim to foretell the future, and also do not speak in riddles but with the frank intention of telling the truth without any concealment: 'the parrhesiast leaves nothing to interpretation'. It 'is the activity that consists in saying everything […] of "telling all"' (parrhesiazesthai). Rather than a technique, like rhetoric, parrhesia is a modality of truth-telling. Foucault refers to the manifestation of a parrhesian analysis as a 'parrheisastic game'. A parrhesian act, Foucault writes, requires risk-taking: 'For there to be *parrhesia*, in speaking the truth one must open up, establish, and confront the risk of offending the other person'. Like Foucault's parrhesia, the queering of photography is not solely a game of matter and mathematics but a 'parrhesiastic game'.[234]

The proposal that this thesis offers of the queering of photography as an inherent possibility leaves the photograph's traditional claim to truth, rooted in the *veridiction* of photography, redundant. However, with the evacuation from the truth/falsehood binary, while revealing the photograph 'as it is', I risk my own position as a photographer. While this thesis has demonstrated that the traditional claim to truth as the axiom of photography is highly conditional, it remains the dominant logic of making sense of a photograph. In this way, as a photographer, I put my own work at risk, as I am making redundant the discourse through which my own photography is, predominantly, grounded.

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[233] Michel Foucault (2011), *The Courage of the Truth*: *The Government of Self and Others,* trans. by Graham Burchell, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 3.
[234] This section of work comes from Michel Foucault (2011), *The Courage of the Truth*, 1-16.

The queering of photography, as a material, dimensional, and metric understanding of the photograph, highlights the dubiousness, but also the possibilities, of any system of logic. It reveals the traditional claim to truth as an irrational ground altogether. Addressing the photograph through its own constitution enables a frankness that suggests the queering of photography as a parrhesian truth. This mode of rethinking photography also makes present the photograph's dependency on human-made paradigms: in contrast to nature and its self-referentiality; its *self-blooming*, the photograph is a human design. Irigaray writes on the rose:

> And its very flowering requires no design – a simple spontaneous blooming/unconcealment. Visible with the unclosing of the rose's gathering, an exposition with no preliminary objective or lens. With no *a priori* frame that would produce this flowering as such. With no project that might will it so.[235]

While a ground for photography rooted in its constitution as image allows for autonomy and thus, nonbinary thinking, this approach also reveals how photography depends on the metric measure made possible through photographic measuring devices. In so doing, it locates the photograph as a reminder of the accountability to be held in creating systems through which thought is governed and controlled.

[235] Luce Irigaray (1999), *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, 144.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore the photograph with reference to the term queer. The first part, Binary, started by proposing that *photograph* and *queer* share a similar foundation to make sense: binary logic. With the binary as its point of departure, the objective in this thesis was not simply to *expose* the ways in which queer potentialities become interlocked with heteronormativity, and photographic agency gets diluted through representation, but to *enable* an approach that can account for difference; for existence to make sense outside of binary structures. The queering of photography would refer to this approach.

The thesis developed by exploring the ways in which the photograph has been granted agency when addressed through dominant theories of photography. In presenting an overview of the key arguments, positions, and ontological turns, the thesis does not seek to provide a complete overview of the canon, nor does it seek to provide a summary of dominant claims. Rather, by focusing on the logic underpinning the arguments of key thinkers, the aim is to identify the possibilities and limitations for an agentially active photograph. It is suggested that the photograph's lack of agency is rooted in the taken-for-grantedness by which the photograph *inherently* guarantees an objective truth. This claim to truth, as an accepted *a priori* position, comprises a false move that is responsible for the reduction of the photographic image to sameness, to copy, to objectivity and neutrality. It is further responsible for the counter-arguments that discuss ideas (of truth/falsehood, objectivity/subjectivity, sameness/difference), but that, through its negational presupposition, have limited the grasping of what the photograph can be. While more recent photography theories, developed after the digital turn and informed by Posthumanism, have sought to break with this assumed default representationalism, it has come about at the expense of the specificity of the photographic image, which is addressed instrumentally, for example as an algorithmic code or through its nonhuman vantage point.

Part two, Material Image, presents the first queering move of the thesis by situating the photograph as a material image. By turning to its material constitution, it is possible to allow the photographic image agency. No longer made passive as an object, or instrumentalised as a code, the image ceases to be less than what it represents. Its ability to make sense is now accounted for through a self-referentiality that leads back to the photographic process instead of a referent, viewership, or questions of dissemination. This material move evokes new questions; of agency, causality, and generativity. In this way, the scope is brought in from the outside of the photograph to its inside. It addresses the complexity involved in the photographic causality, a process often foreshortened to copy/original, human/machine, active/passive. Conducting the practice research using a completely manual (and analogue) large format camera has been central in this material-agential focus. While the slowness required by this apparatus demanded

careful attention to the relation between technique and the formation of a photographic image, Jean-François Lyotard's notions of *the figural* and its thickness, Karen Barad's *agential realism* and Johnny Golding's *ana-materialism* have enabled a productive way to address photographic agency, outside of the jargon of photography-specific theories. While this material focus has helped to free the photograph from its passivity as object, the queering of photography has required further definition; it has required a position of specificity but without essentialism. Positioning the queering of photography as generativity enables this. The generative account is established in Material Image and developed further in the third part of the thesis, Encounter. Generativity refers to the complex entanglement of materialities, duration, spatialities and metric measures – a paradoxical encounter where calculability generates the unmeasurable and where space and time, entangled through their generation of photographic materiality, can only be comprehended together. This paradoxical generativity is material, poetic and sensuous, and as such it reveals a queering texture or energy that representation of identity cannot account for.

This generative materiality is evident in the monochrome aesthetic and new textural relationships revealed through the photographic experimentation *Looking Out, Looking In*. This photographic generativity has been explored further by photographing Roman marble statues, experiments that generated the work *Figural, Figurative*. While the humans moved, and in so doing put limits on the camera settings (shutter speed and its relation to aperture), the statues, already fixed, opened up a wider technical vocabulary. These experimentations, undertaken using black and white film and colour Polaroids, make evident the *figural* potential of light sources and their relation to white balanced film.

Addressing photographic works produced using more experimental strategies than previously addressed in this thesis allows questions of medium-specificity and its risk of essentialism to be confronted. By stressing that a photograph is not bound to its flatness or its rectangular shape, it is suggested that process is a heterogeneous affair. However, the thesis also points out that situating a photograph as a form of subversion risks oppositionality, and through this, negation. In this way there is no need to go elsewhere; to cut up, scratch, paint over, fold, or otherwise muddle the image plane. While these strategies, like the traditionally produced photograph, contain a queering capacity, this thesis stresses that the photographic image is material, multi-dimensional, and with this, weird, odd: queer. Consequently, the queering of photography does not necessitate an escape from the flat, sharp, and 'correctly' exposed photograph. The only escape required is the relocation from the photograph's traditional claim to truth to a (parrhesian) truth that can account for the photograph *as it is*. In this way, the queering of photography does not necessitate an escape from the image, nor from its traditional production and shape. The queering of photography speaks of the latent queering potential in that which is (thought to be) already known.

The contribution to existing knowledge consists of the proposal that queer in photography is better served by the ability of the photographic image to generate (something new) than by its ability to represent identity. This move, by which queer and photograph are addressed together, has resulted in a rethinking not only of what is entailed in a queering of photography, but also of the logic that underpins the photograph's 'making sense'; its ground. Lee Braver, paraphrasing Ludwig Wittgenstein, compares modern humanity to 'a man desperately trying to get out of a room without realising that an exit lies behind him; he must simply turn around to see that he is not actually locked in at all'.[236] While dominant theories have been pointing elsewhere and while queer clings on to heteronormativity *to make sense*, this thesis not only 'turns around' in terms of its use of old-school, manual photographic techniques, but it also suggests that queer does not require to occupy oppositionality to make sense.

This reconsideration of what we think we know in contrast to the unknown (normal/abnormal) is served well by refusing to reduce the photograph's content to 'subject matter'. The queering of photography reveals that the content is not simply the depicted thing. Rather, while the thing provides matter in terms of thingness, the photographic process generates matter in the form of a multi-dimensionality. Together they entangle into a photograph. Consequently, the content does not provide access to the place and time of the photographic shoot, nor to the thing depicted. The content is always already an entanglement of different forms of materialities. The photographs depicting humans, statues, and fabric – in deep blues, textured greys, pale softness, and twisted transparency – seduce through this temporal complexity. However, this complex generative capacity does not have one face. The numerous forms the photograph can take makes the queering uncategorisable.

Situating the queering within the photograph's ability to be generative as image not only takes the question of queering away from truth/falsehood and representation; it further eradicates the clear-cut distinction between figurative and abstract, analogue and digital, 'straight' photography and manipulated, 'staged' photography and the snapshot. In attending to practice and theory in a non-linear, overlapping and sometimes supporting mode, I hope to muddle their frequent oppositional relation further.

The suggestion of a ground to photography that can account for its material constitution is crucial, as it makes apparent that the queering of photography inhabits at the same time the scientific measure of exactitude and a poetic, unquantifiable, sensibility. The 'open mesh of possibilities' anticipated in the outset of this thesis is thus not completely unbounded. The

[236] Lee Braver (2012), *Groundless Ground: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 33.

parameters of the queering of photography are not solely philosophical but technical; photographic. However, as this thesis proposes, the photograph's queering possibilities, in operating *through* the metric cut, feeds from rather than is reduced by the calculable measure. The method of addressing the photograph through its own constitution in this thesis retrieves what has been forgotten in the binary ridden logic of Western thinking: the continual production and existence of difference – outside of contradiction and pre-set attributes or categories. In introducing into the study of photography (not only 'queer' photography) new ways of addressing the photograph ontologically, I hope this will not simply present new answers to what a photograph or what a queering *is*, but instead initiate new questions and identify new problems in the undoing of binary structures and categorisation. With regard to photography, it is its overlooked generativity that displaces the photograph from the binary as its queering is revealed through its own constitution as image.

CODA

The Queering of Photography

I explain that I do not wish to represent you. That I will ask you to pose and to look at the camera. That I will make a portrait. Sometimes you nod, other times you look puzzled. I tell you that you will need to pause, to hold your pose, your poise. That I will instruct you where I want you, your body, in the frame.

You warn me that you have not been photographed like this before. That you may be a bad sitter. A bad poser. Sometimes you ask me to make you look good. Bending my head, disappearing under the cloth, I see you. In the frame. Through the frosted, gridded ground glass. You are upside down.

Like mine, your skin is your largest organ. I am not mine but you are yours. The skin is you. I cut you out, skinning you from the back that grounds you. Curled up you are fragile and thin. Your existence in doubt, see-through and groundless. Yet still Photograph.

I am told that I cannot touch you. I remain at a distance as I set up my tripod and mount my camera. I am being watched by an Institutional Member of Staff. Fixed to the ground you exist in this room. I cannot move you so I move myself. Around you, to frame you. You are beautiful. You are carved out of pale marble. Sometimes you are damaged and then you show gentle signs of fixing. A material fixing. A putting-together-again. Rome is hot. I wish I could touch you. I imagine that you are cold. That you would cool my palm right down.

Clammy hands are not allowed in the darkroom. Clammy hands interfere with the photograph to be. Before I load the film sheets into the film back I have to remember to wash my hands. With soap and to dry them. Clammy hands leave traces. On the film that will become a photograph. Like the light that flows through the lens, an imprint onto the film > negative > photograph.

You used to be made of glass. Dialectically named, you are nothing on your own. You require The Move to make sense. Before you were

transparent you were a solid plate of metal. As daguerreotype you were positive and negative at the same time. Two things simultaneously you existed in one singular move, yet shifting with the gaze of the viewer. Back to front, silver whiteness & matt darkness. Superpositionality.

Your label informs me that you are a copy of an original. I look at you. You were once carved out of a block of marble. Perhaps casted. From your original – like a photograph becoming a positive from a negative but without the light. Positionality. An estimated placement on the line of time. I set up my camera in front of you. You are to become a photograph.

I instruct you to turn your head towards me. Your head on the bottom row of the grid. Of the ground glass that is my frame. One eye, two eyes. Stop, I tell you. And chin up. You are upside down. I hold you with my eyes. But I remain behind the camera. I do not touch you.
But sometimes I walk up to you. To the piece of masking tape on the floor. That marks where I want you. That marks the distance between you and the film plane. Onto which you will be fixed, via light. I stroke a lock of hair from your face. With my hand, tying it behind your ear. I try to flatten your creased shirt. Sometimes, when I cannot shape you through speech and gesture, I take your chin gently between my index finger and thumb. Tweaking your head to the deadpan point from where you might become the photograph I want.

Queer doesn't come like a punch line. Queer is everywhere. Going through and within rather than oppose. Not against, not from the other side. Queer is the photograph: an entanglement of dimensions and matter. In a world of heteronormativity. In a world of Newtonian precision. The entanglement that the photograph is cannot be quantified. The photograph is the faggot, the queen, the butch. The photograph is the is: difference without negation.

A mash-up of spatiality and duration, of palette and density. Yet refined, you exist. Wiping transparency away. Wiping away representation. Enframing: the loop back to the same. Instead: photograph: a world arranged, shuffled, twisted, flat. Not a copy though. Photographic matter. Metric cut. Entangled dimensionality. The queering of photography.

APPENDIX 1:

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

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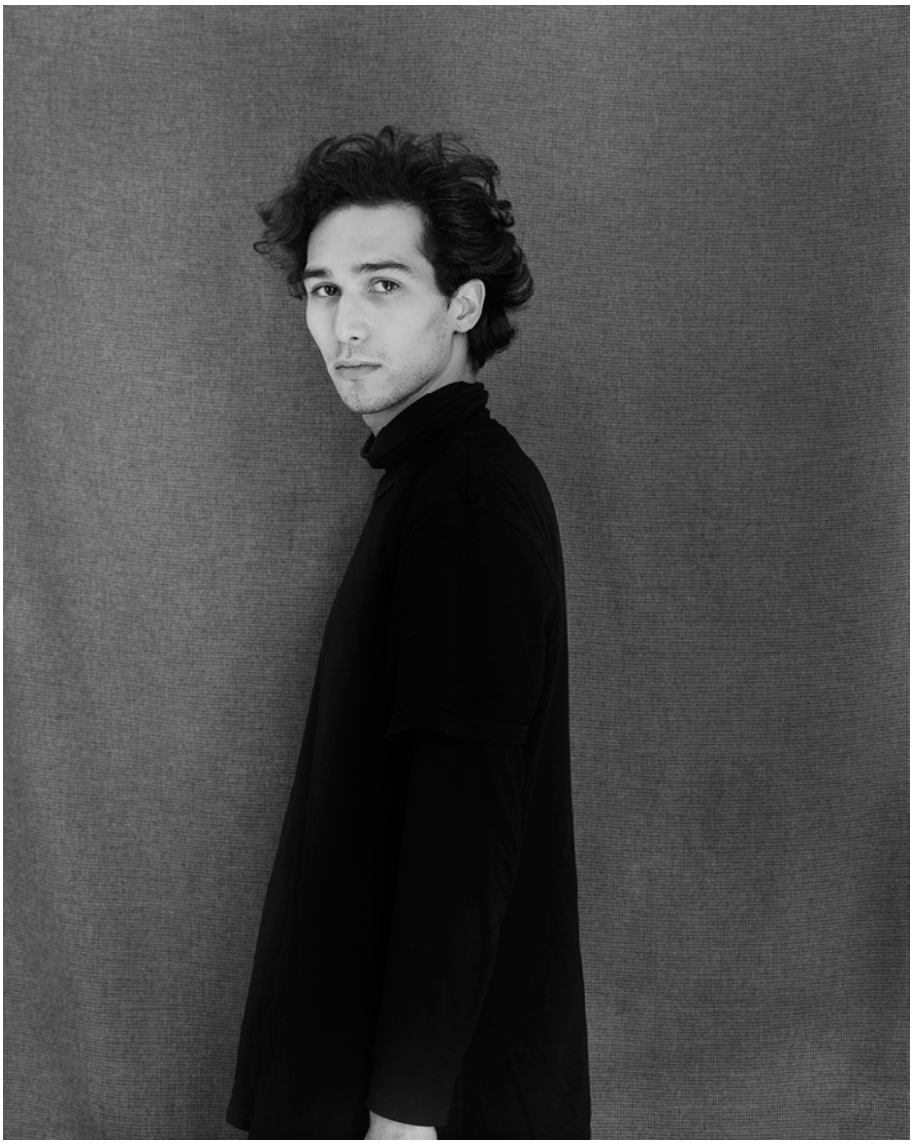

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Untitled from *Skin*, 2017–18

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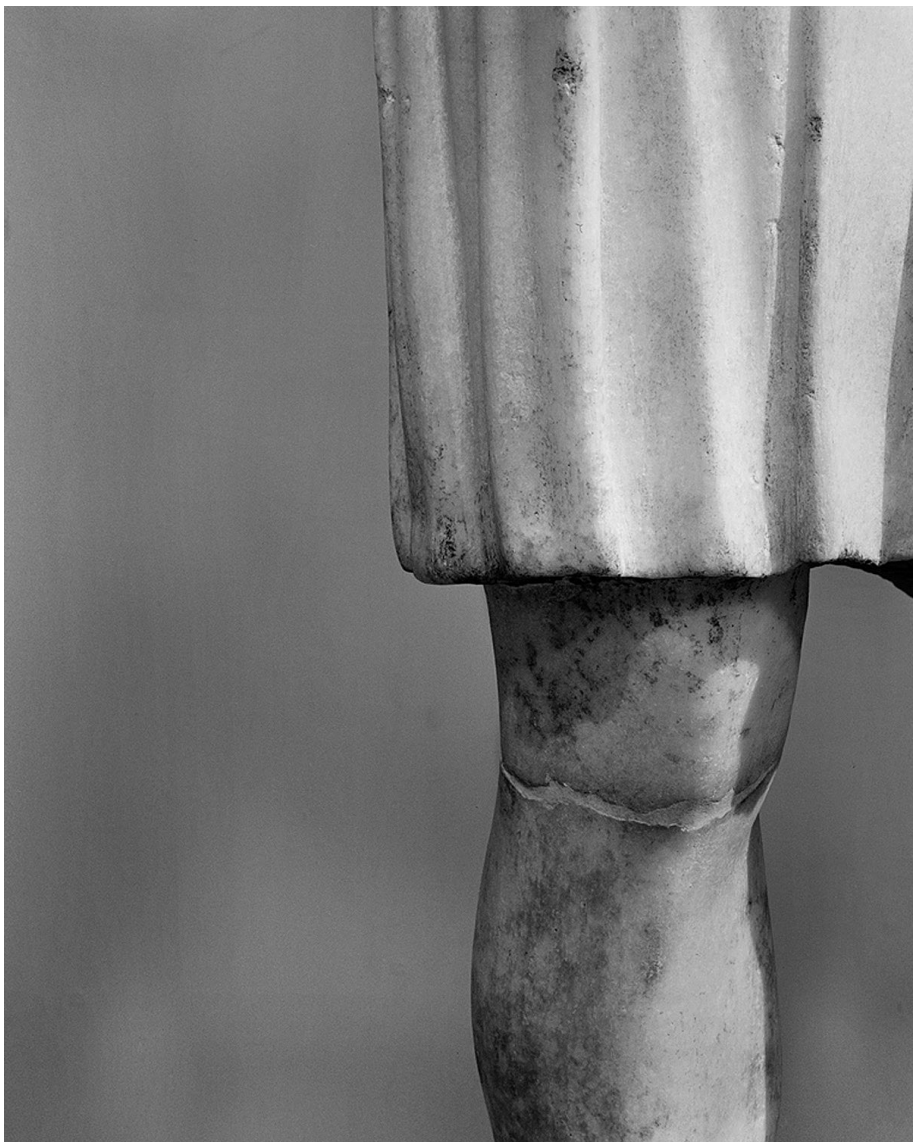
Untitled from *Looking Out, Looking In*, 2015

Untitled from *Looking Out, Looking In*, 2015



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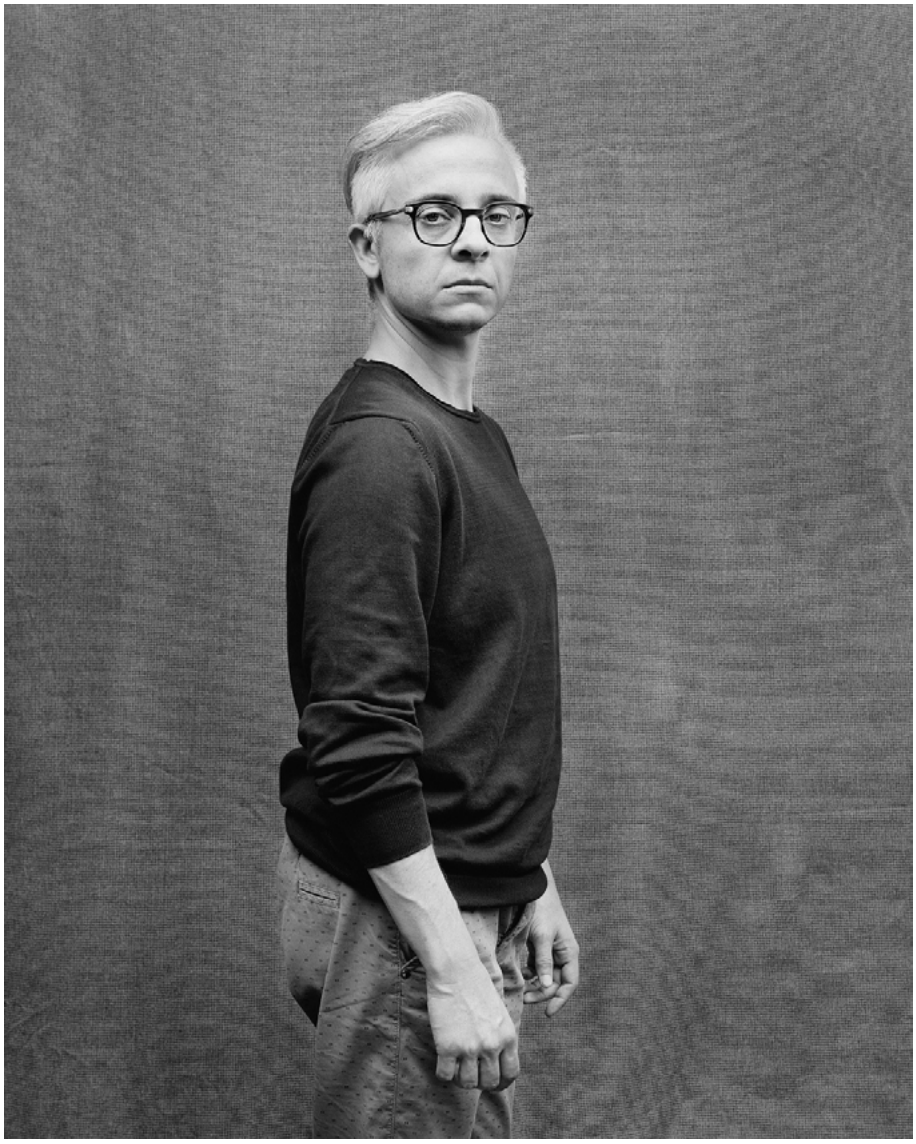

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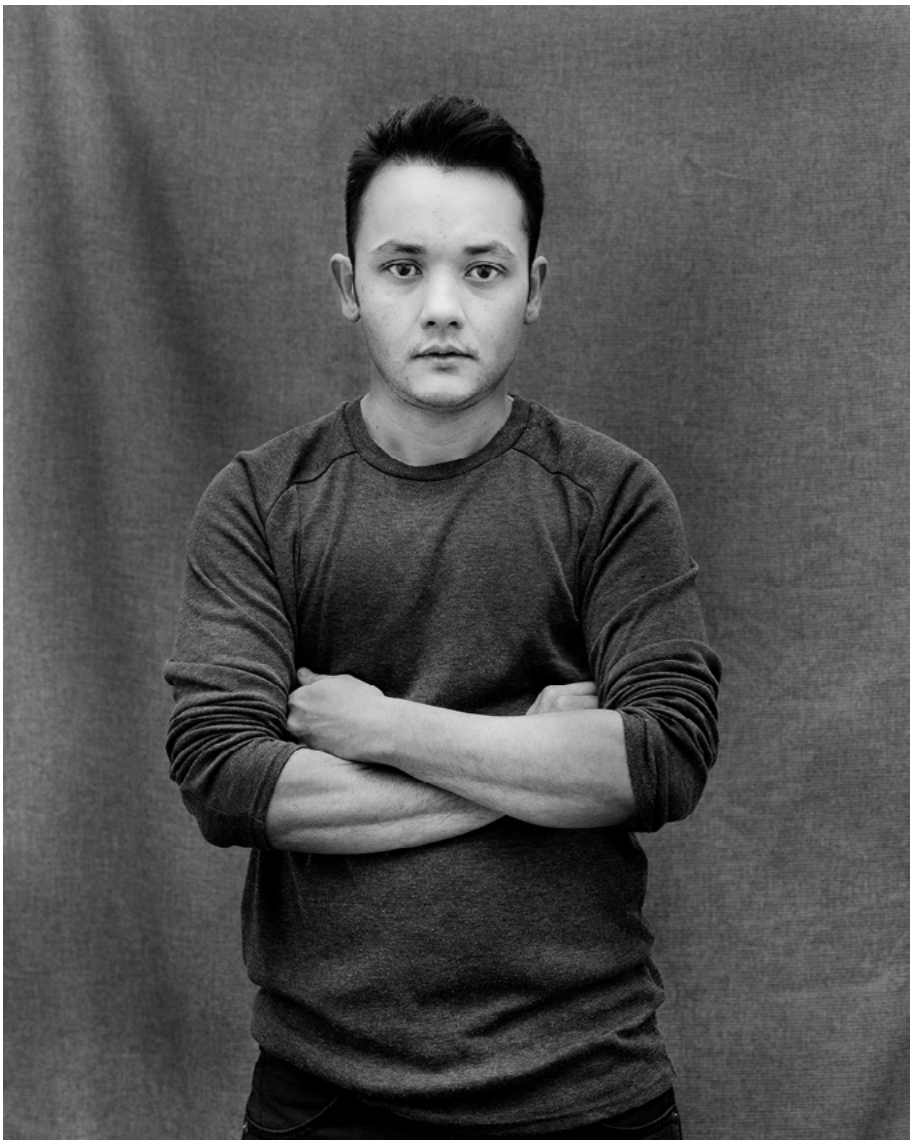

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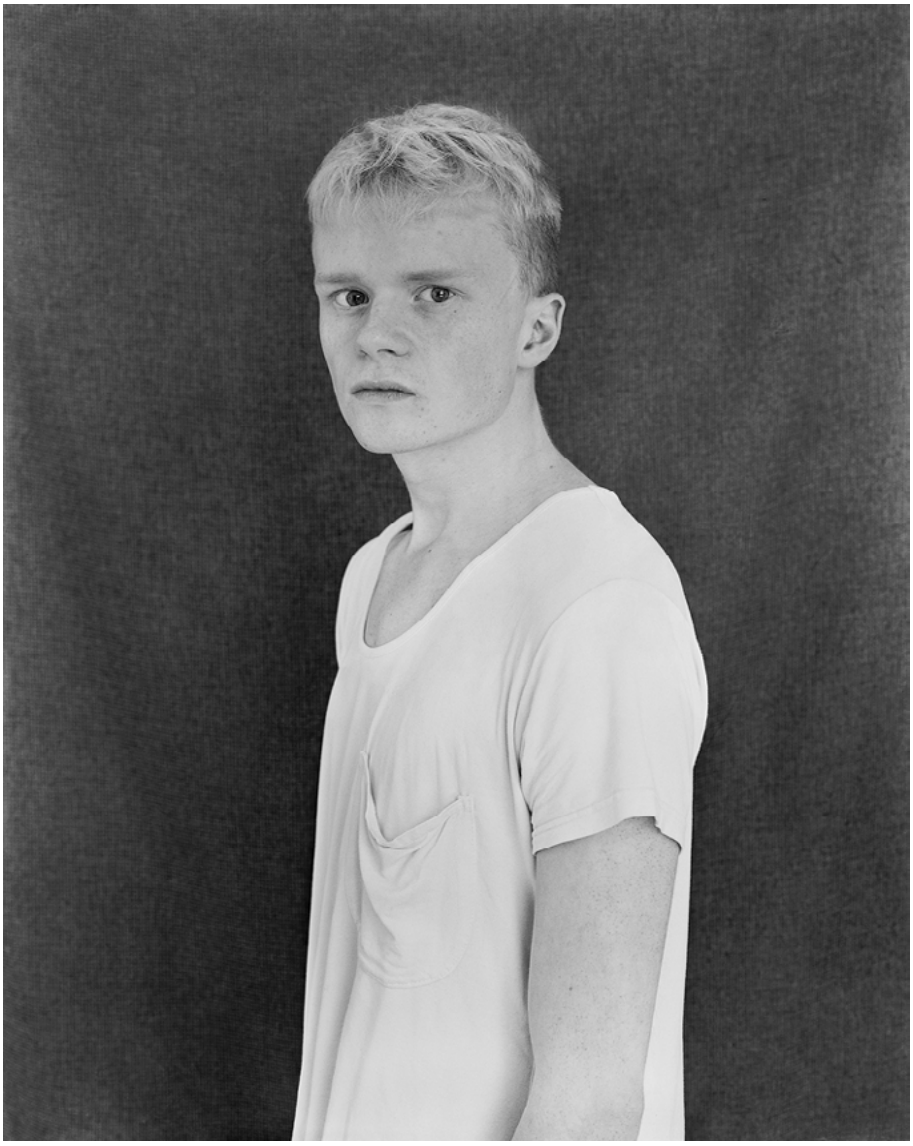

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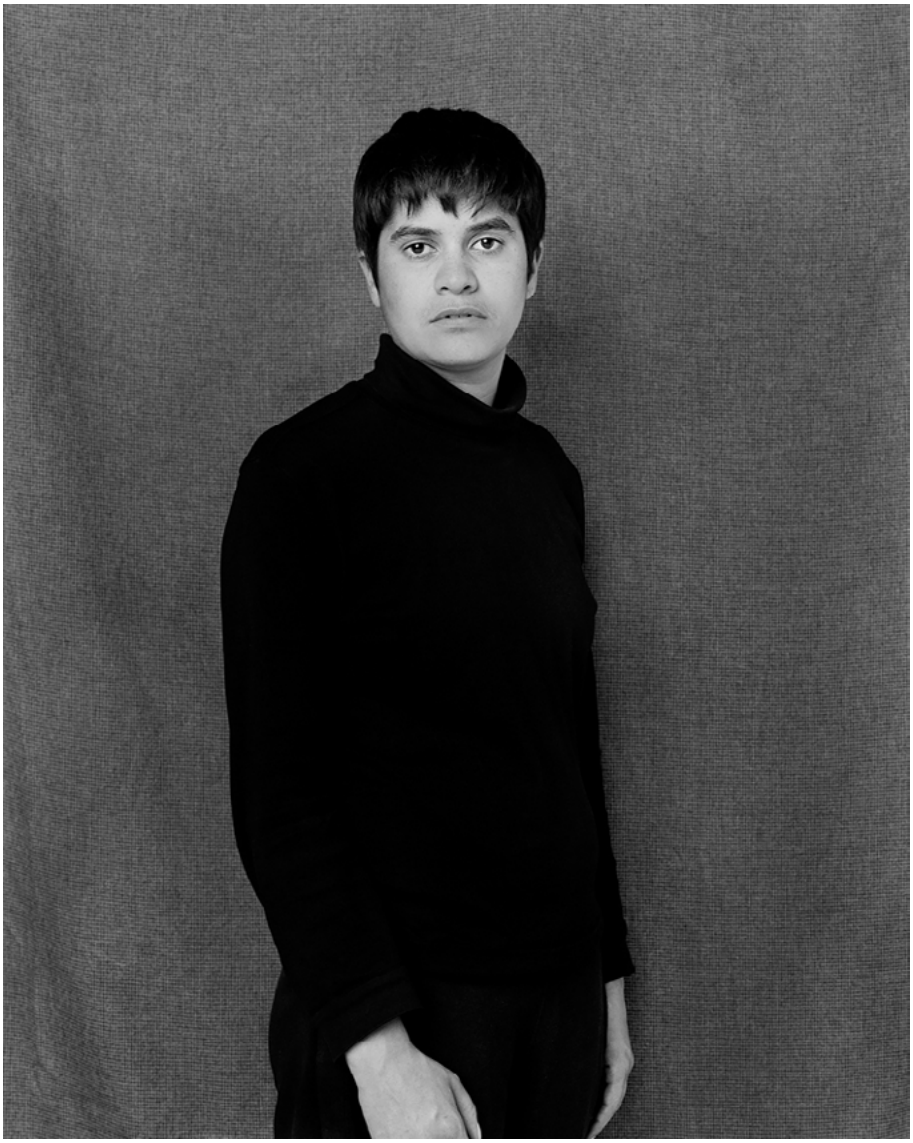
Untitled from *Looking Out, Looking In,* 2018

Untitled from *Figural, Figurative,* 2016

Untitled from *Looking Out, Looking In,* 2016



Untitled from *Looking Out, Looking In,* 2018

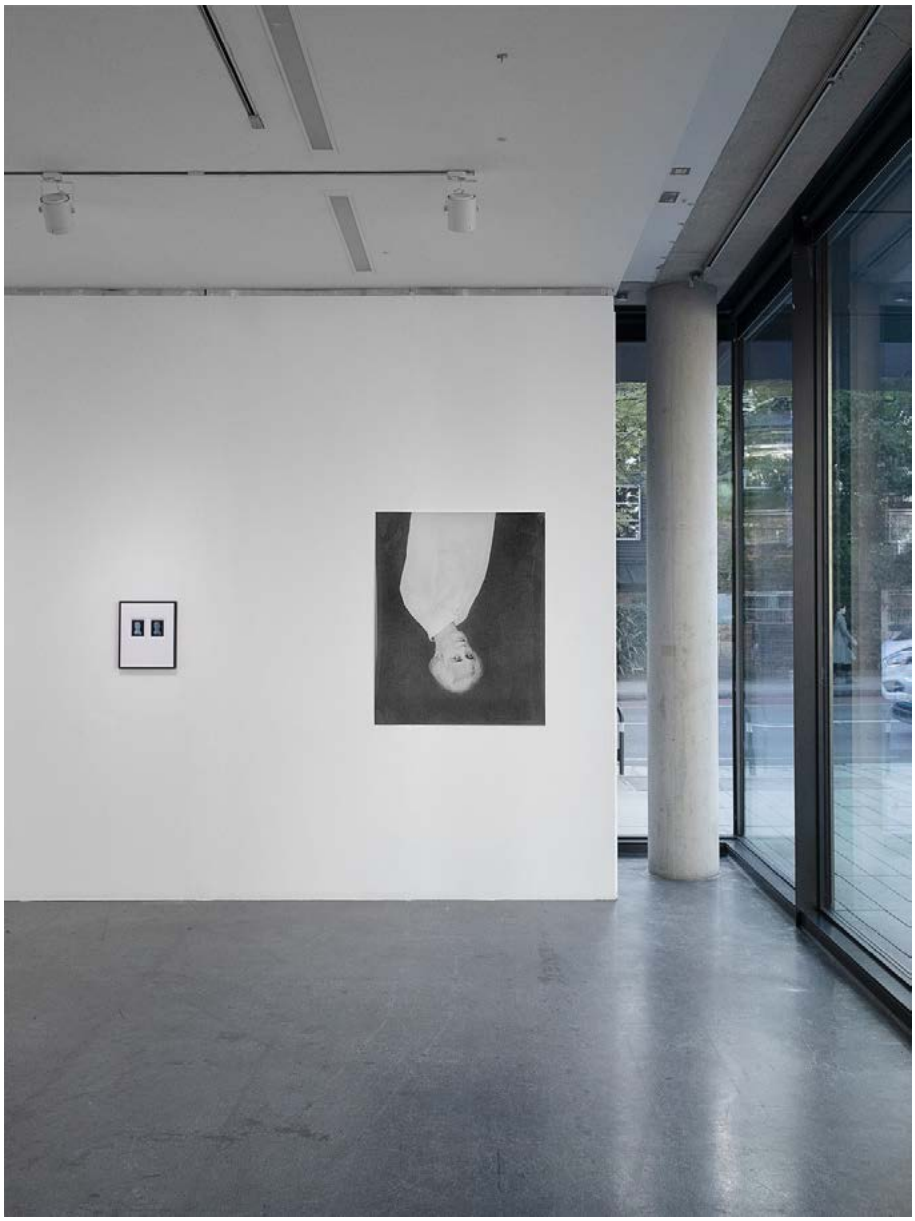
Untitled from *Turn,* 2017

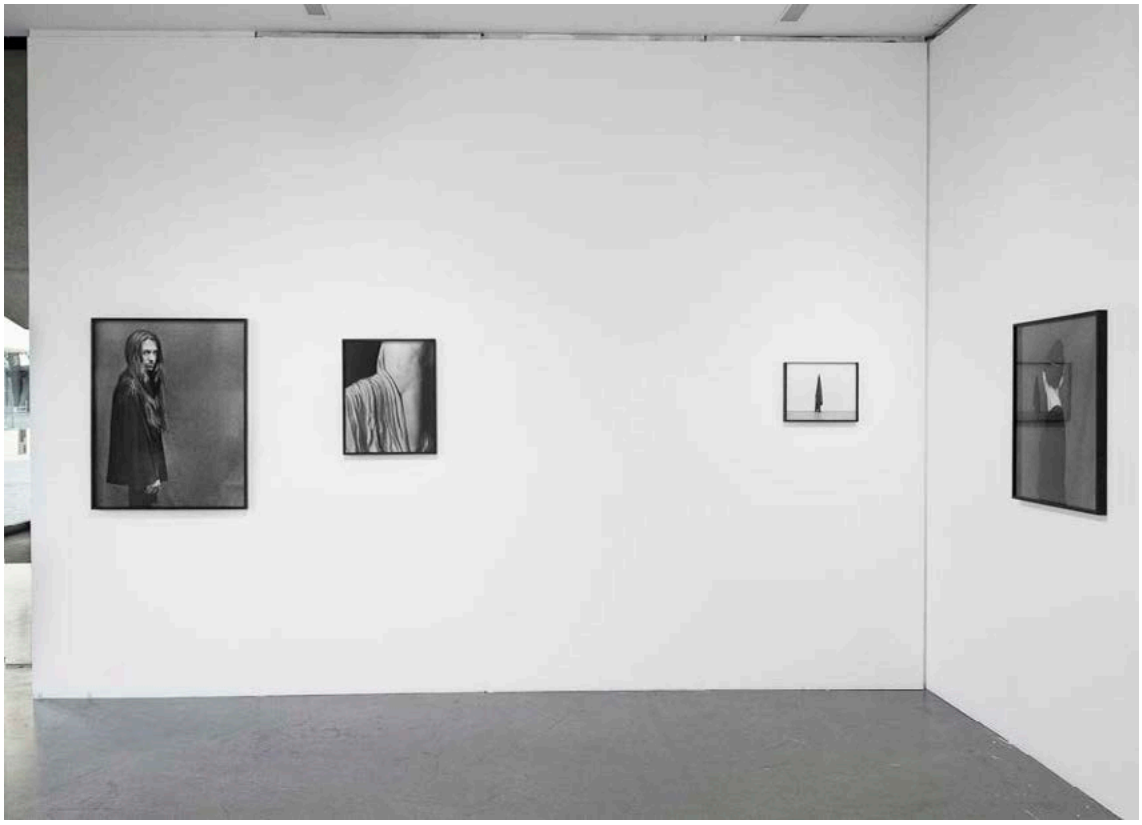
APPENDIX 2:

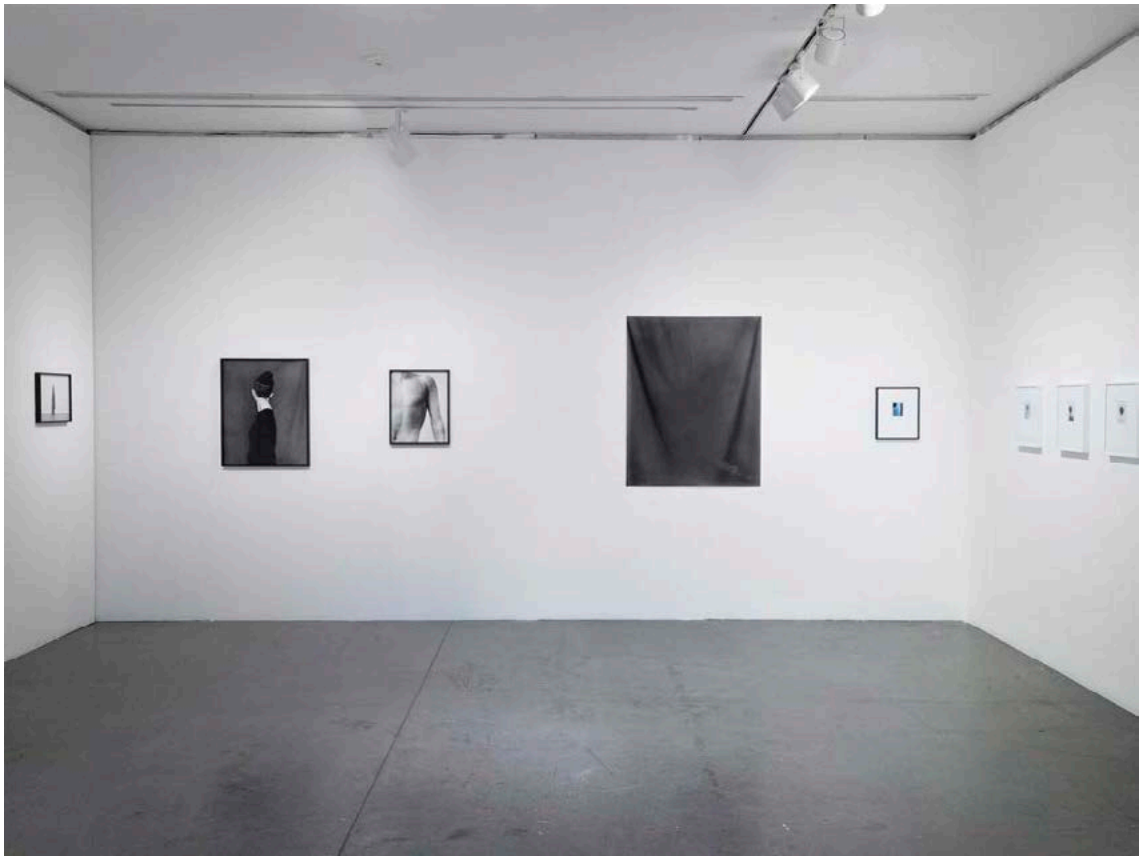
INSTALLATION OF VIVA EXHIBITION

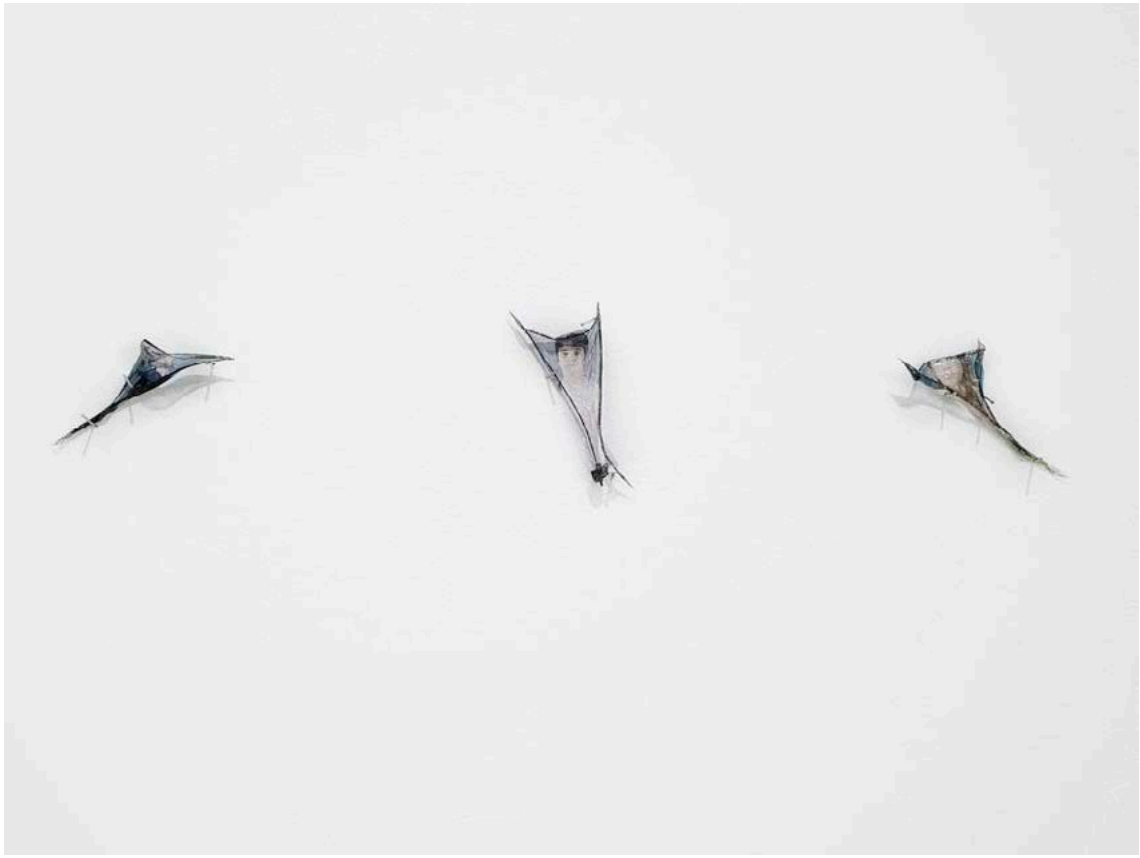
The Queering of Photography

Dyson Gallery 19-23 October 2019









APPENDIX 3:

ETHICS APPROVAL

Royal College of Art

Asa Johannesson <asa.johannesson@network.rca.ac.uk>

Research Ethics Application

RCA Ethics <ethics@rca.ac.uk> 9 August 2019 at 12:23
To: Asa Johannesson <asa.johannesson@network.rca.ac.uk>
Cc: Johnny Golding <johnny.golding@rca.ac.uk>

Dear Asa,

Thank you for submitting your amended Participant Information and Consent forms. These have now been reviewed by the Ethics Committee and we are pleased to inform you that, based upon the information supplied, your ethics application has been approved and you can progress with your research.

Please note that should you make any changes to this research project or your methodology, you may need to apply for further ethics approval.

Good luck with your future research.

Kind regards,

Research Ethics Team

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