

A photograph is made, not taken.

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Introduction

Many people consider that photographs are taken: a quick press of a button and the process is complete. However, whether it be a large-scale fashion/art shoot by respectable artists or a grandfather taking a family 'snap', there are indicators of photographs being made and not just taken; the setups, planning, concept and creating of a scene can be obvious with conceptual artists, but even the amateur offers evidence of Ansel Adams famous quote.

At what we could determine as *base level* there is evidence of an evaluative notion of a subject by the camera operator; a parent assembles the family in order to send a photograph to loved ones, a tourist takes a step left to capture a place visited or an item is rotated for a clearer perspective to sell online are all examples of collaboration and/or planning. This one single act informs us that the objective/subjective view of the photographer has elevated the act of *taking* into *making* a photograph.

Light & Tools

Before we can consider the human aspect of taking/making a photograph we have to be aware that there is a foundation in place far away from the subjects and the photographer. This is the mechanical process of the device that captures light reflected from subject onto a plate, film or sensor. No matter what method there still has to be the physical action of triggering the lever/button gathering light through an aperture to create an image.

'A photographer uses a camera which "captures" a "trace" of the object itself. The photographer does not intervene in the process of representation. The world delivers itself to the film in the form of the image of nature, and the act of exposure allows the world to trace or impress itself in a purely natural way' **Joel Snyder - Picturing Vision - Critical Inquiry, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring, 1980) P504**

Snyder's quote reminds us that without controlled light falling upon a sensitive medium there can almost be no photography as we know it today. The act of creating an image is utilising a tool to capture transverse electromagnetic radiation waves in the form of light reflecting from a chosen subject. As photographers we test to balance film sensitivity, shutter speed and aperture according to our own requirements and, complex calculations are being carried out within high spec cameras set on automatic modes. Therefore within the cameras inner workings an image is being painted upon the chosen media; not simply taking but most certainly making an image on a chemical/electrical level no matter the skill level of the user.

'The Becher's imprint on the late 20th century photography practice, both through the influence of the photographic topologies and their pedagogy, was vast...They spent years methodically recording various manifestations' **Juliet Hacking (2012) Photography the whole story — Thames and Hudson**

The artist must ready his own tools such as camera, tripod and lighting and then place themselves within the scene they have created; there are also considerations to be made in respect of how weather, sun position and time of day influence the outcome. The Becher's topographic style is an excellent example of creating space within a place; their systematic approach with each subject closely framed in a series where the subject is the same distance and elevation from the lens throughout. This dedication to each individual photograph within each piece of work can only be achieved by complete control over their working environment, therefore exhibiting that their photographs are created not made. **Fig1**

I love my camera, it's just a tool it could be a paintbrush to make the pictures I would want to make, so this way is a split second and I get the picture. I used to when I painted in college laboriously copy things, it took a lot of time and this way I can spend it on what the picture should be and then use the

camera to just capture it. **Cindy Sherman (1994) Nobody is here but me. Arena; BBC Executive producer, Ron Orders; Producer, Robert McNab.**

As we move from the basic principles of photography (desired amount of light upon media) and now interpret the camera as a tool as Sherman does, we consider the process of artists like her, Wall and many others that lead up to Cartier-Bresson's decisive moment; *that fraction of a second, moment of genius or creation/observation that a photographer has or does that leads them to capture an image...*

As discussed, an amateur has inspiration by seeing a loved one and collaborates to make an image of that scene by posing or holding people in a position, the same is said for conceptual artists also but perhaps on a larger/deeper scale.

Inspiration/Concept

As we now understand the importance of the camera as a tool, let us remove it as the post-modernists do;

'Begin by not photographing, by noticing something that might lend itself to the making of a successful picture; then comes the 'preparation and collaboration'. **Jeff Wall (2014) Concreta magazine no. 4**

As Jeff Wall states, the starting point of a photograph for him is in the observing without the use of tools, seeing the world around and allowing him to be open to inspiration long before a camera becomes involved. Regardless of the time spent between inspiration and shutter release the processes are the same; developing ideas during the observation/research process as the image concept develops within our mind, that development can be seconds to months, but the procedure shows us that no photograph is just 'taken' it is conceived and then created.

'The wind that blows all the land surveyors papers and he sat up into the air – a spiralling moment of chaos, loss and disorder frozen into the stilled durational field of the tableau.' **Fiona Lowry (2010) Time and photography. Edited by Jan Baetens, Alexander Steinberger, and Hilde van Gelder. Leuven: P 57**

Fiona Lowry comments on *A Sudden Gust of Wind* (after Hokusai) **Fig2**; a composite by Wall in 1993. As the title suggests it is Walls response to a work by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai; *Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji: Ejiri in Suruga Province (Fugaku sanju-rokkei: Fugaku Sanju-rokkei: Sunshu Ejiri) 1831. Fig3*

However in Walls updated version four figures are shown on a flat barren landscape, each with their own reaction to the titled gust of wind. The land surveyor whose case has opened and papers blowing from left to right across the composition, the agricultural worker ducking down holding his hat, the yuppie turned to observe the paper and the figure representing the Everyman in his jeans with paper stuck to his face. The image is a comment on the social discourse at the time; the location is far from picturesque and the symbolic nature of each identity is Walls evaluation of the divide between the social classes at that time while still retaining the overall composition from Hokusai's original image whilst giving it a more sublime metaphor.

Walls images often evaluate ethical, social and public opinions such as the provocative 'Picture for Women' 1979 **Fig4** which itself is a reaction to *Un bar aux Folies Bergère (1882)*¹ **Fig5**. One only has to look at much of Jeff Wall's work to appreciate the process of observation of life and art history, through conception to final shoot and then on to being displayed on large light boxes that his photographs are for from just being taken.

'I hated that my work was becoming popular; I needed to create something that was difficult to view, so I created sex pictures...' **Cindy Sherman (1994) Nobody is here but me. Arena; BBC Executive producer, Ron Orders; Producer, Robert McNab.**

Other photographers such as Cindy Sherman observe their current place within society and choose to comment/evaluate/argue against these opinions; Sex pictures **Fig6** commented upon the social acceptance of

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picture_for_Women

erotic and sexual imagery within the media; it combined parts of shop manikins and sex toys in various different positions, bringing the viewer into an ever increasing state of intimacy with the subjects, making it harder to view than the real thing due to its sublime nature and false representation of the human body. It disconnected emotion from the physical and creating an awkward point of view between pornography and art where a viewer could not recognisably place themselves due to its multi-layered visual hierarchy that spanned art, documentary, erotic and Vanitas.

Street photographers also base their projects upon research, inspiration and concept development; artists such as Robert Frank and Cartier Bresson could be seen as opportunist 'snappers' simply walking the streets, this assumption could not be further from the truth; Artists such as they specialised in capturing the sublime and surreal of life all around creating not just indexic but also symbolic photographs which commented on public and social issues of the time. The photographs were created with research of particular issues, people, locations and once the scene was set and the journey over the final outcome was the creation of a photograph, artists such as those were far from opportunistic.

'If what we see is a formal setting with a woman in a long white dress and with flowers in her hand we add the missing elements of the wedding scene. Policeman point to some incident or crime, and so forth.' **Maren Polte (2010) Time and photography. Edited by Jan Baetens, Alexander Steinberger, and Hilde van Gelder. Leuven P105**

Robert Frank's revered work the Americans saw him travel over 10,000 miles across America documenting social inequality and the battle for civil rights at that time; often his work first appeared as though it was of a documentary nature, but much of his imagery although indeed indexic and often symbolic also left the narrative open to the viewer.

'My photographs are not planned or composed in advance and I do not anticipate that the onlooker will share my viewpoint.' **Robert Frank** www.AmericansuburbX.com

Frank does not allow us to see what the couple sitting on a bench are viewing **Fig7**, or what is on the floor beneath the feet of the African couple on a motorbike **Fig8**; what he does is removes those elements from space pulling our interest into his photographs allowing us to add the missing elements and therefore broaden the narrative of the composition, purposefully engaging us in a planned and pre-medicated way perhaps like Cindy Sherman;

'For a photograph you can make people believe anything, it's not really the camera doing it, is the person behind it and figuring out ways to tell lies in a way, through the camera.' **Cindy Sherman (1994) Nobody is here but me. Arena; BBC Executive producer, Ron Orders; Producer, Robert McNab.**

Creation of the space/scene

With the concept now in mind no matter how small scale, the space must be set and the scene prepared: Having seen that it is a regular cycle route, **Cartier Bresson** climbs the top of the spiral staircase - **Bill Brandt** poses a nude - **Guy Bourdin** places a bodiless limb or **Martin Parr** discards wooden chip forks on the floor, the **Everyman** asks his subjects to come closer are all examples of preparing and adapting a scene prior to creating a photograph whether it be on the street or in the studio and no matter the final destination. This action of collaboration and the individual altering the environment to suit a composition is the preparation required prior to a photograph being created much the same way that a workman may prepare his supplies and tools before beginning a task.

Moving away from his staged incredibly well-planned conceptual work Philip Lorca DiCorcia's Heads ^{Fig 9} project involved a large light source being mounted above busy streets in New York City photographing passers-by following in Robert Frank's, Paul Strand and Walker Evans footsteps; this combination of the tableau and Street photography with elements of portraiture mixed with elements of fashion photography is very much a statement upon the diverse social and cultural elements of the city and how those individuals interact with it, whilst also telling the world 'I create images' with meticulous planning and execution; the pressing of the shutter button is purely just one small part of the process.

'Whatever tools or methods are required for the full realisation of the image as conceived should be at the disposal of the image maker, and should not be withheld on the basis of abstract principle.' **A.D. Coleman (1976) The directorial mode: Notes towards a definition.**

Coleman's interpretation of Man Ray's quote '*a certain amount of contempt for the material employed to express an idea is indispensable to the purest realisation of this idea*' is fully evident in much of Lorca DiCorcia's work; his intricate planning on location, lighting and research very much lends to a 'kitchen sink' approach where his goal of *taking* his image pales into insignificance compared to the effort of creating it. His work Hustlers, Street work, Lucky 13 and A Storybook Life give a sense of drama to regular occurrences and some consider them to be *explorations into his conceptual fields of interest*.² It would take less time to paint many of Lorca-DiCorcia's photographs.

Destination

'Their images are not mere prints - mobile, manipulable sheets that are framed and mounted on a wall for the duration of an exhibition and go back into their boxes afterward.' **Fried, Michael, (2008) "Jean-Francois Chevrier on the Tableau-form 'Why photography matters as art as never before pp.143-189, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.**

With nearly all photographers a destination is in mind when pressing the shutter button; whether it a family album, a framed print, magazine, gallery or even kept for prosperity on a mobile phone there is nearly always a purpose. The act of considering the final destination is in itself part of the process of creating a photograph. The considerations of theme, concept, colour or connection elevate the act of taking a photograph to the creation of an avatar; or a piece of work that would provoke recognition and to evoke emotion, recognition, repulsion, connection and be consumed by the viewer as Fried would suggest further in his text.

Conclusion

Cartier Bresson taught us that life can flash before us and as a photographer we must be ready at all times; a painter has time to absorb his subject, to constantly assess and adjust their view, a photographer is poised at any moment to react and exists in a constant state of awareness no matter if they are in the street or studio; if an athlete is considered in the race whilst in the blocks, surely a photographer is in the midst of creation whilst observing the world? No matter what the subject, all photographers are documenting what represents concept to them; they are constantly making photographs in their mind to transpose to physical media.

Much like the light that is captured within the camera, a photograph travels along a fixed path of creation. It travels from observation/inspiration into research, to conception and there it shifts to a physical interpretation and creation of a scene within a space. It is far from a single click of a button, the process is a rigid set of procedures that must be carried out no matter the scale, scope or intended destination. It is bound by the technical confinement and artistic use of silver on glass/film or sensor when the shutter is

² Arthur Lubow (August 23, 2013), [Real People, Contrived Settings: Philip-Lorca diCorcia's 'Hustlers' Return to New York - New York Times](#).

released, but the journey does not end there. It is taken by the photographer and crafted onto his desired medium via processing and then finally it moves towards the destination its creator intended. Even there the journey is not over; it transfers to the heart and mind of a viewer and becomes an experience, a tangible inscription to the creative process of the artist.

A photograph is not a single physical object but a carefully combined representation of an artist's thoughts; thoughts cannot be taken only created.

End

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Image listing



Figure 1 Bernd Becher and Hilla Becher Pitheads (1974)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/01/photographic-compartment-of-bernd-and-hilla-becher>



Figure 2 A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai) - Jeff Wall (1993)

<http://www.phaidon.com/resource/jeffwall-p080.jpg>



Figure 3 Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji: Ejiri in Suruga Province (Fugaku sanju-rokkei: Fugaku Sanju-rokkei: Sunshu Ejiri) (1831)

http://www.ohmigallery.com/DB/Images/Hokusai_Katsushika/Hokusai_Katsushika-36_Fuji-Yuyudo-Ejiri-01-03-28-2007-8410-x2000.jpg



Figure 4 Picture for Women - Jeff Wall (1972)

http://images.tate.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/jeff%20wall%20picture%20for%20women_0.jpg



Figure 5 Un bar aux Folies Bergère - Édouard Manet (1882)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picture_for_Women#/media/File:Edouard_Manet,_A_Bar_at_the_Folies-Berg%C3%A8re.jpg



Figure 6 Untitled 263- Sex Pictures - Cindy Sherman (1992)

<https://meliamez.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/untitled263.jpg>

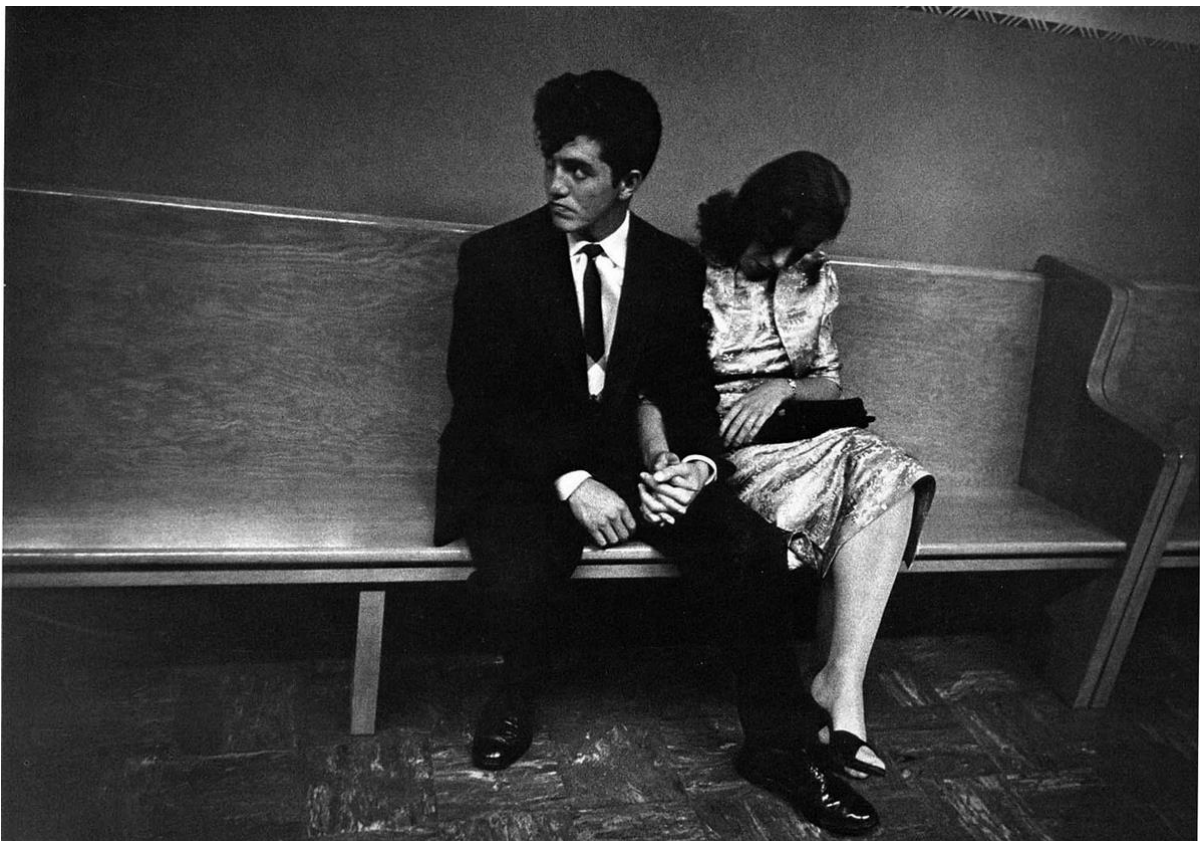


Figure 7 The Americans- Robert Frank (1958)

<http://www.americansuburbx.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/102-Custom.jpg>



Figure 8 The Americans- Robert Frank (1958)

http://www.ricecracker.net/files/blog_images/frankramericans.jpg



Figure 9 Head 5 - Phillip Lorca-DiCorcia - Heads (2002)

<http://www.americansuburbx.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/philip-lorca-dicorcia-head-05-Custom.png>