

Hee Eun Chung

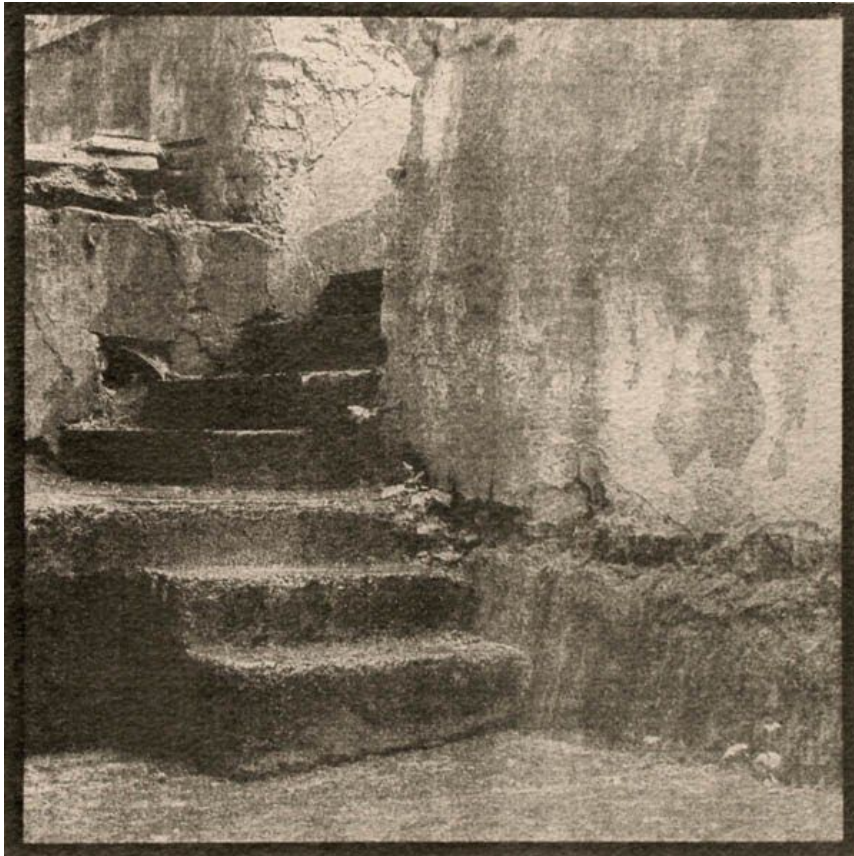
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History of Photography

Final Paper

During one of the most unpredictable times in history, I was fortunate enough to learn the stable and rich history of photography. Like with most history, we talk about the beginnings of photography and the philosophy that goes behind it. Photographers struggled, in the beginning, to find relevance in the art world and it was difficult to know where one's creative input of the



artist belonged in photography, this relates back to the choice of medium. One of the earliest photographic processes that interested me the most was the Pigment Process. Mungo Ponton, a Scottish inventor, was the first person to experiment with the light sensitivity of the compound. Based on Talbot's research on Gum

Frank Evich. *Gum Bichromate Print 2*. February 20, 2010. Gum Bichromate

Bichromate, it does not take too much time to create permanent prints. We take a colloid, put pigment into the colloid, and then sensitize it with chromium salts. One would take a brush and paint the created medium onto paper, expose it to light, and wash it with water. Alphonse Poitevin was a talented Frenchman who perfected certain elements of chromium printing and eventually led to Joseph Swan improving the original formula. Carbon printing is essentially a piece of paper that is coated with gelatin that is bearing pigment. The paper is sensitized with chromium, then becomes contacted with a negative and light, and as a result, hardens the gelatin selectively. The paper is then dunked in cold water and the second piece of clear gelatin paper lies on top of the chromium sensitive paper, which then gets dunked and rinsed with hot water. This photographic style was developed in the 1850s as a solution to the public's desire for a more permanent print and offered control of the appearance of the final photo. The pigment process was both gum bichromate and carbon prints which used to use the metal salts that were typically used in the formation of the images and now were replaced with pigments and bichromated colloids. The resulting prints were described as broad tones and soft detail, often compared to drawings and paintings. These new printing processes were used by the Pictorialists to establish photography as a fine art form and to obtain a respectable status as an artist in the arts community. They were interested in a printing process that used a lot of craftsmanship and handwork to give that personal touch and proved that photography does belong as a high art form.

I feel like I carried the morals of the Pictorialists in the belief that photography is all about the personal touch that you give to photos. While I am not opposed to the new wave of digital photography, there is a beauty to the hard work that goes into manually creating your photos. Over time in quarantine, I began to take an interest in developing analog film of my own



and creating my own small business with it. After trial and error, it felt rewarding to be able to scan and be proud of the film that I developed. However, I did not want to stop there. I always was intrigued with traditional photography and my goal in life is to learn all the ways. I am always looking to elevate my art and make it special for my audience. Personally, I have

always been inspired by photographer, Driely Carter, a Brazilian photographer located in New York. She immigrated from Brazil in 2009¹ and worked as a waitress, cleaner, and dog walker before making her debut into the photographic industry. While I do not agree with her on

Hee Eun Chung. *New York Roadtrip 2020*. August 5th, 2020. Kodak Portra 400 Film

some moral issues, I do admire her art and tenacious personality. Driely Carter is one of the most determined female photographers that I know as well as creative. Carter recently did a project by herself and used radioactive plates as a base for her photos. She has a legendary mindset that is unlike any other photographer that I know. Driely dabbled in many mediums, including the Gelatin Silver plate, and created works using natural resources like water from lakes or rivers.

Driely was not the only photographer who experimented with natural resources. Matthew Brandt, an artist who lives in California, also experimented with waters from Lake and Reservoirs by

¹ Meredith, Nina. "Adidas x Friendly Ghosts." Vimeo. Adidas, November 26, 2018. <https://vimeo.com/310979232>.

bathing his prints in the water during its final stage of development. Brandt was also a photo-chemical artist that worked with finishing the prints and then adding his own spin of artwork by using contaminated water. As you can see with his print here, the colors are mesmerizing and the eccentric idea of using natural resources as a part of his work really impressed me. I feel like his artwork can be observed on a bigger scale with questions of climate



justice or even with

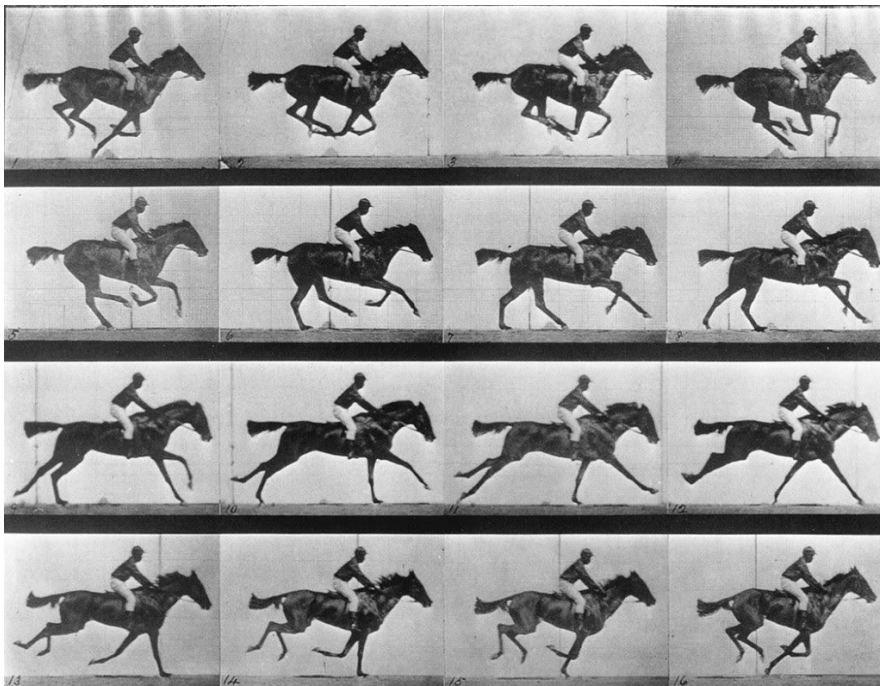
Matthew Brandt. *American Lake, WA CO.* 2011
Chemical Print.

his act of taking water from originally indigenous sites, I wonder how he felt.

While these questions do pose a deeper connection to the photo, it is just something that I do take into consideration. There is not much about Matthew Brandt on the internet, but it feels like I can already find so much of him and his energy through his works of art and the colors. As a learner and appreciator of the photo-chemical method, I want to expand my knowledge and experiment just like these brave photographers.

As the world continued to evolve in photography, we began to widen our perception of reality and learn about the reality of motion. We start with the motion pictures and the moving of still photography. In 1834, Sir Charles Wheatstone first observed a painting on a revolving disc that appeared to be stationary when illuminated with electric light. This led to Henry Fox Talbot attached a piece of newspaper to a "... swiftly revolving wheel in a darkened room, uncapped the lens of the camera, and made an exposure at 1/100,000 of a second, freezing the action of the

moving paper.”² While photography has existed prior to the discovery of stopping objects in mid-air, it was such a massive find that sparked a new revolution of science intersecting with photography, and completely challenged the way that we have previously looked at motion. While our eye does not have the capability to see stills of motion, photographers, philosophers, and scientists like Muybridge, Mulberry, and Étienne-Jules Mare were able to present to the public depictions of our vision that we never thought possible. Mulberry tried to use the camera to convince viewers that what they were seeing was accurate, even when it did not conform to anything they had ever seen. Even the world could not believe that motion worked that way and created quite the controversy. There was some strife between different art categories, especially with well-renowned sculptor artist, August Roden. Roden was a big believer in the realities of art



and what makes art truthful. Rodan argued that it is the artist's job to be truthful within their work and said that photography is a lying type of art form because reality does not stop, whereas a photograph abruptly suspends time, which goes back to his point of photography not being truthful.

Eadweard J. Muybridge. *Galloping Horse, Motion Study*. June 19, 1878. Collotype

² Robert Hirsch, “New Ways of Visualizing Time and Space,” in *Seizing The Light: A Social History of Photography* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2009), pp. 131-136.

August Roden does prove his point in a sense that Muybridge manipulated his photos of the galloping horse “...for the purpose of giving a better effect of the details.”³ It was a thin line for Muybridge of art and scientific research; “Muybridge chose artistic pictorial effect over a scientifically accurate and complete recording of movement...”⁴ While Muybridge’s desires for this revelation was not for the purpose of motion, but more so for his desires. On the other hand, Étienne-Jules Marey was a scientist who wanted to use photography as a way to support the scientific statement that makes “an unseen world visible in an objective manner.”⁵ Marey was determined to find concrete facts to analyze animal and human movement, to see if Muybridge was correct with his findings on animal/human movement, and Marey was focused on how the movement wired rather than how it looked compared to Muybridge. The amazing discoveries of motion led to groundbreaking truths of what the eyes sees. From here, we seek to elevate our art, to challenge ourselves, and see truths that have not been spoken or thought of.

We move into contemporary art, the genre of art that is most favorable in art institutions. From our unforgettable online field trip to the Met Gala and the Moma, we are introduced to a mixture of old and new work from well-known to up-and-coming artists. The shared goals of the curation of artworks were to showcase selected remarkable works that have elevated the photo scene in the last century- changing both society and how we view artwork with having a slightly diverse casting. One of the artists that I wrote about was Zanele Muholi. They are an artist and self-proclaimed activist from South Africa, and they explore queer identities and politics in their photographs. “Muholi’s sensitive portraits challenge the stigma surrounding gays and lesbians in

³ Robert Hirsch, “New Ways of Visualizing Time and Space,” in *Seizing The Light: A Social History of Photography* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2009), pp. 131-136.

⁴ Robert Hirsch, “New Ways of Visualizing Time and Space,” in *Seizing The Light: A Social History of Photography* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2009), pp. 131-136.

⁵ Robert Hirsch, “New Ways of Visualizing Time and Space,” in *Seizing The Light: A Social History of Photography* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2009), pp. 131-136.

South Africa, debunk the common rhetoric that homosexuality is un-African, and address the preponderance of hate crimes against homosexuals in their native country.”⁶ Their artwork,



Vukani II, is being shown at the Met Exhibition currently along with other amazing artworks.

Zanele Muholi. *Vukani II*. 2014. Gelatin Silver print

Muholi’s art caught my eye when I was scrolling due to its dark contrast and painting-esque features. Muholi’s work deals with a lot of self-portraits and extreme contrast in the black and white images, so extreme that it leaves a discomfort to the viewer. However, their statement makes the experience go even further. The most important aspects of their practice is to create the representation for

LGBTQ+ folx who are not represented much in South

African culture because of homophobia, transphobia, racism, etc. The artwork is meant to be an archive, an act of resistance that queer people exists and will continue to exist. Muholi’s portraits challenge the queerphobic agenda that being queer is ‘Un-African’ and continues to defy that with their gaze. Another artwork that I wanted to write about was Umbo (Otto Umbehr) and his artwork in the Met Museum called ‘Tea for Two’. The ‘Tea for Two’ photo was of him and his sister in a staged position from an upward perspective, as if seen by a buzzed companion who has slipped under the table. It was made from a Gelatin silver print which was his main medium

⁶ Muholi’s sensitive portraits challenge the stigma surrounding gays and lesbians in South Africa, debunk the common rhetoric that homosexuality is un-African, and address the preponderance of hate crimes against homosexuals in their native country.

of work. Otto was a German photographer born in 1902 who was well known for his photo-journalistic work. In the 1930's, a German industrial manufacturer commissioned Otto to promote the new fish-eye lens camera. "A known master of perspective play, Umbo here riffs on the association of overindulgence with visual distortion."⁷



Umbo (Otto Umbehr). *Tea for Two*. 1935. Gelatin Silver Print.

I think this photo is iconic because it was during the production of 180 degree lenses and it was an introduction of the kind of realities that one can create using camera lenses. However, Umbo is more known for his photos of the ruins of postwar

Hanover from the occupation of Nazis, and died in Hanover. Lastly, the Dionne Lee manipulated photographs at the Moma exhibition are truly exquisite. As part of Moma's online exhibition Companion Pieces: New Photography 2020, they chose to focus on Dionne Lee and her work. Dionne Lee was born in 1988 and grew up in Harlem, New York where she learned about the horrific history of the displacement of free Black families in the 19th century. In Lee's work, the landscape "... is a refuge as well as a site of trauma. It's a dichotomy she recognizes as inherent to her own identity: 'Holding those two truths at once... grounds me in understanding my relationship to those spaces.'⁸ Now, Dionne lives in North California and examines the

⁷ "Tea for Two." metmuseum.org. Met Museum. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/818017>.

⁸ "Dionne Lee: Magazine: MoMA." The Museum of Modern Art. Moma . Accessed December 1, 2020. <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/424>.

history of American landscape photography, asking questions about who captured these images



of the land and what were the images used for. She creates her work using manipulation and multiplication amongst other methods as well, such as double exposures, scanning, collage, and added graphite. “The works are frequently an amalgam of images she’s taken and images she’s found, and appreciates the ambiguity that exists between them.”⁹ I was drawn in to the restructure of images and the way Dionne has created new narratives that exposed her truth and closely looks at the ever-changing history of America. We learn at a later age that everything that has been

fed to us in history class has been a propagandic lie to prove that America has

Dionne Lee. *True North*. 2019. Collage

always been best. Dionne Lee’s work interjects into the picturesque dream-like imagination of American landscape photos and reveals the truth of what the picture tries to hide. All of the photographers that are presented in the MoMa and the Met have proven themselves to be great and essential artists to the 2020 year and truly have shown elevated work that expands the public knowledge.

⁹ “Dionne Lee: Magazine: MoMA.” The Museum of Modern Art. Moma . Accessed December 1, 2020. <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/424>.

It is refreshing to see more diversity within these predominantly white male space institutions, but we still have a way to go. In one of our assignments, we begin with the question of why aren't there many women artists? The author, Linda Nochlin, did not feel to expand on examples and try to prove our artistic nature and try to name some hidden woman artists. Nochlin instead wanted to dive deeper and examine the institutional problem that prevents women from being successful artists: "I have tried to deal with one of the perennial questions used to challenge women's demand for truth. Rather than token, equality, by examining the whole erroneous intellectual substructure upon... the question... is based... By stressing the institutional- that is, the public- rather than the individual, or private, preconditions for achievement or the lack of it in the arts..."¹⁰. Some of the right questions that we should be asking ourselves are: What is the cause of women not being able to succeed? What institutions are causing the downfall of their success? Will there ever be a moment where we can overcome this? I agree with Nochlin's assessment that we need to hit the core of the issue and talk about the institution that does not uplift women artists. Not only are we concerned with the success, but the minefield that goes behind the brain on trying to become famous. Nochlin concludes at the end that "... while great achievement is rare and difficult at best, it is still rarer and more difficult if, while you work, you must at the same time wrestle with inner demons of self-doubt and guilt and outer monsters of ridicule or patronizing encouragement..."¹¹. The only criticism of this paper is that it did not mention the bigger obstacles that women of color have to jump to even greater heights to get their artwork discovered.

¹⁰ Nochlin, Linda, and Maura Reilly. *Women Artists: the Linda Nochlin Reader*. New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 2015.

¹¹ Nochlin, Linda, and Maura Reilly. *Women Artists: the Linda Nochlin Reader*. New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 2015.

Throughout learning the history of photography and all of its objectives in this semester, it was truly a thrill to learn different artists that do not pertain to the West and to have a teacher that was supportive of diving further out. All these methods of photography, learning the essential histories and photographers shaped more of who I would like to be in the future and I look forward to seeing what I can do after I graduate.

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