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# Allowing the Accidental; the Interplay Between Intentionality and Realism in Photographic Art

Katrina Mitcheson
*Bath Spa University*, katrinamitcheson@googlemail.com

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*Katrina Mitcheson*

**Abstract**
We experience photographs both as intentional and as prone to the accidental. The photograph is both capable of being an artwork with its own, constructed world and of drawing our attention to the reality of the objects used in creating it. In this article I employ the insights contained in the concepts of Barthes' *studium* and *punctum* in order to explore how the artist's intentions and the realism of photography interact aesthetically. I advance the idea that a unique aesthetics of photography can be rooted in the tension between the intentional, culturally coded message of a photograph and the emanation of a reality that escapes intentional control. Our aesthetic experiences of the artist's intentions and the appearance of the real depend upon and enhance each other. I claim that the photograpiher can intentionally allow the accidental, leaving room for the audience to encounter a *punctum*, and that the control manifested in the photographer's work can serve to heighten the experience of the penetration of the *studium* by the *punctum* when it occurs.

**Key Words**
Roland Barthes, Henri Cartier-Bresson, intention, photographic experiencee, photographic realism, photography, *punctum*, August Sander. *studium,* Jeff Wall

## 1. Introduction

In the short history of the aesthetics of photography, thinkers have persistently interrogated the nature of its realism. André Bazin claims that "we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re*-presented, set before us, that is to say, in time and space. Photography enjoys a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction."[1] In the work of Bazin, Stanley Cavell, and Roland Barthes there is a preoccupation with the special status photographs have for us psychologically; they allow us to feel in touch with the objects photographed.[2] The realism of photography is not a question of likeness or resemblance but of an encounter with something that was. The photograph is "an emanation of *past reality*."[3] The functions that photographic images serve are frequently linked to their unique variant of realism, but at the same time photography is an art form.[4] Hence, the experience of our connection to the real objects photographed is mediated by artistic intention.

Various philosophers have addressed the tension in photography between its realism, the special connection between the image and what is photographed, and the extent to which artists can express their intentions through the photograph. This tension has been viewed as threatening the possibility of our taking an aesthetic interest in photography. The concern is that the realism of photography elides the expression of intention, and with it the scope for the spectator

to be interested in the photograph as opposed to the object photographed.[5] Some defenders of the aesthetic value of photographs have turned to the aesthetic possibilities of photography's realism, thereby challenging the assumption that this realism is necessarily opposed to aesthetic interest.[6] Other commentators have stressed how photographers can variously influence the photographic image and assert their artistic style.[7] These writers thus defend the possibility of an aesthetic interest in photography against a sceptical challenge by locating an aesthetic interest in either the realism or the intentionality of photography.[8]

Instead of focusing on one aspect of photography at the cost of another, it is worthwhile to explore how the presence of a tension between these two sites of aesthetic interest provides a unique photographic aesthetics. We can take an aesthetic interest in the relation between the intentional expression of the artist's thoughts and the interjection of the reality of what was photographed. I hope to demonstrate how, in Barthes' phrase, the "genius" of photography[9] is expressed when we experience this tension between the artist's intentionality and the realism of photography.

Barthes' discussion of *studium* and *punctum* in *Camera Lucida* serves as a useful starting point from which to develop an understanding of the unique aesthetic experience that emerges from the tension between intention and realism because he demonstrates how our experience of these two moments of the photographic are interrelated. There can be no *punctum*, and thus no encounter with the real, without the intentional and cultural realm of the *studium*. I begin, therefore, by presenting the salient aspects of Barthes' framework for the purposes of this discussion.[10]

### 2. *Studium* and *Punctum*

Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* is a deeply personal text, which, after opening with Barthes' professed desire "to learn at all costs what photography was in itself,"[11] explores the nature of the photograph through his own experience of particular photographs. Barthes focuses on photographs (and aspects of photographs) of significance to him, and in doing so reveals as much about himself as about photography.[12] However, even if Barthes' aim was primarily to explore the loss he felt at his mothers' death and the layering of significations that could elucidate his pain by attempting this through his reaction to certain photographs and the significations they contained, the text remains illuminating for photographs in general. Barthes' prose allows us to share his experience of photographs. We either come to recognize it as part of our own engagement with photography, or at least to understand the reality of the experience for him. The possibility of this experience rests on assumptions concerning the nature of the photograph and is revealing of this nature, as Barthes hoped it would be.

For Barthes the majority of photographs remain unremarkable. The interest we generally take in photography is culturally mediated. We understand the field of information the photograph refers to and interpret it accordingly, whether this is historical or anthropological fact, political statement, journalistic shock, the pathos of an image in a charity

campaign, or the beauty of an artwork. All of these uses of photography would be assigned by Barthes to the "cultural participation" we undertake when we take a general interest in the "*studium*" of the photograph.[13] The *studium* is something we approach a photograph in the light of. The photographer speaks to us through an established code of images and stylistic practices. We understand how the photograph was intended and take an interest in these intentions. "To recognize the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, to enter into harmony with them, to approve or disapprove them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which *studium* derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers."[14]

The *punctum* is understood in contrast to the *studium*. It is not an interest with which we categorize and approach a photograph, but an unexpected discovery of our encounter with it. It pierces us. It is that which breaks through and fractures the *studium*. It is wild and "mad," against the tameness of established code.[15] It cannot be reduced to convention and the photographer's intentional, general message.

In Part I of *Camera Lucida* Barthes attempts to understand the *punctum,* and highlight its contingency through the idea of a detail: "often the *punctum* is a 'detail,' *i.e.*, a partial object," one which is "offered by chance and for nothing."[16] That it hits its mark with us, disrupting our polite interest, depends on the contingency of its signification for us. That a given detail pierces us is accidental. Its effect is not something that the photographer could have intended because this effect is particular to the spectator. It is not arbitrary, but it is individual to the viewer. Thus, you might discover a *punctum* in an image that is for me pure *studium*. What strikes Barthes about James Van der Zee's family photograph of African-Americans is first the dated strapped pumps, and then, recollecting later, a necklace, which he remembers as like his dead aunt's.[17]

This detail possesses "a power of expansion" for Barthes, which allows him to "perceive the referent."[18] Where our interest in a photograph remains an interest in the *studium,* "everything which happens within the frame dies absolutely once this frame is passed beyond."[19] The *punctum* allows us to perceive the reality of the objects from which the light was reflected in making the image; "once there is a *punctum*, a blind field is created (is divined): on account of her necklace, the black woman in her Sunday best has had, for me, a whole life external to her portrait."[20]

Thus, the realism of photography is encountered when the *punctum* breaks through the coded field of the *studium*. The *studium* is disrupted because the spectator happens to feel an emanation of the real that is not reducible to a constituent of the message intended by the photographer. "Certain details may 'prick' me. If they do not it is doubtless because the photographer has put them there intentionally […] the detail which interests me is not, or at least is not strictly, intentional and probably must not be so."[21] It is because this detail is particular to the individual spectator and strikes him

accidentally, and not as part of a general communication, that it asserts its autonomy from the photographer's intentions and testifies to the reality of what is photographed. This detail "says only that the photographer was there, or else, still more simply that he could not *not* photograph the partial object at the same time as the total object."[22]

In Part II Barthes moves his discussion of the *punctum* from the detail to time. The photograph's aura of time, like certain details, has the power to wound us. The photograph offers us a tragic sense of a "reality that one can no longer touch."[23] It possesses "the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* ('*that-has-been*')."[24] A past reality is felt that is irreducible to the intentional message of the photograph.

*Studium* and *punctum* are "two elements whose co-presence established" the interest Barthes finds in certain photographs.[25] Though the two elements that Barthes attributes to the photograph are opposed, they are also interrelated. As that which disturbs the *studium*, the *punctum* relies on the former for its effect. Its madness is felt against the tameness we are used to. The opening up of a blind field is achieved by breaking through the field of information that the *studium* stipulates. The *punctum* can only disrupt the *studium* and thus produce an encounter with the real, if the *studium* is there to disrupt. Hence, while realism and intentionality in photography are in tension, the aesthetic experience of a photograph's realism requires the intentional construction of a cultural image. At the same time, the possibility that the intentional artwork can be penetrated by an emanation of reality shapes our experience of the photograph even where this encounter is lacking.

### 3. The Photograph as Artwork

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes repeats a claim he makes in his essay, "The Photographic Message," that the photograph is an uncoded message.[26] How then can the photograph become coded? How can photographers express their intentions and produce an image that we encounter as *studium*? In this earlier essay Barthes lists the various ways that codification can be imposed during the production of the photograph. These were tricks, such as montage, that alter the image; the pose of the subject; the arrangement of objects, or their selection within the photographic frame; and what he calls "photogenia" which covers "techniques of lighting, exposure and printing" that embellish the image.[27]

The photographer has the possibility to control the image through various photographic techniques which Barthes does not discuss but might place under the heading of "photogenia." Not only can the mood and style of an image be influenced by global techniques,[28] but the appearance of many details and whether some details appear at all is also under the photographer's control, and thus offers a further means of intentional expression. For instance, by altering depth of field, details in the background may be rendered visible or left as a vague blur. Or by choosing to use color film, details, such as flowers in a tree or a splash of wine or blood on a cloth, can emerge that would be unidentifiable in a black and white image.

This control is of course limited. If the photographer wants to bring a given detail into focus or show it through the choice of color, then other details, present at the time the photograph is taken, will be rendered visible too. More precise control depends on manipulation later in the photographic process, and this still operates with the raw material of the images photographed. Given, however, that our perception of details is contextual, through altering some details the photograph will control our perception of others. Framing, a core aspect of photographic style and technique, can clearly operate in this way. The photographer is limited in creating the image by the objects that are present at the time the photograph is taken. However, by selecting which objects appear in shot, the perception of other objects is affected. It is thus open to the photographer to affect, both through global techniques and some control of detail, how the audience perceives the objects used to make the image. Hence a photographer can express his thoughts about these objects, even before the possibilities offered by digital technologies.[29]

Further, these objects from which light is reflected to make the photographic image need not be equated with the photograph's subject. The photographer can use style and the cultural context of photography to indicate subjects other than the objects photographed. By using various photographic techniques to reference other photographic images and genres, the photographer can distinguish the subject from the objects that played a causal role in making the image. General types (actual or born of romanticizing or demonizing cultural figures), the nature of the gaze, even a fictional observer who never appears in the image and never existed to reflect the light that made the image, can be communicated through the photograph. For example, engaging with the cultural spheres of cinema, advertising, fashion and pornography, the artist Cindy Sherman is able to take photographs that can be understood as about, among other things, constructions of gender roles and objectification. Some of her images convey palpably a predatory, watching presence. She creates a world, and even fictional presence, through photographic means.[30] Thus, the photographer can control the *studium* of the photograph and use convention to communicate intention.

The possibilities of photographic communication are rich with artistic potential. Not only can we take an interest in the admirable skill exercised in order to control how a subject is perceived, we can take an interest in the ideas and the vision of the world thereby communicated. Photographs, as coded images, can serve to expand our understanding and critically evaluate our cultural concepts.

**4. Jeff Wall's Constructed Images**

Jeff Wall's photographic art works involve intelligent reflections on pictorial form, art history, the nature of representation, and our culture and society. Wall claims of his pictures, "since they are constructed, since they are what I call 'cinematographic,' you can get the feeling that the construction contains everything, that there is no 'outside' to it the way there is with photography in general."[31] His work seems to achieve pure *studium*.

The highly controlled nature of Wall's images works to

preclude the possibility of the experience of a *punctum*. So apparent is the precision with which a myriad of details are arranged and presented to us that we see every detail as intended, even while some may in fact be superfluous to his message. Whether Wall is depicting fantastical and thus obviously fictional tableaux, such as *The Vampires Picnic,* or photographing the seemingly mundane life of suburbia, as in *Eviction Struggle*, his photographs are felt as fully defined, perfectly coded fields of information.[32] Wall has obliterated any "interferences."[33] We accept his photographs as complete; their entire content as necessary and sufficient to the expression of his intentions. The tableaux that Wall meticulously arranges, and sometimes digitally pieces together, occlude the experience, normally associated with the photographic medium, that some details are arbitrary in relation to the photographer's intentions. In other photographs our awareness of the presence of content not intended by the photographer testifies to the reality of what was before the lens. In Wall's work, however, the construction is so complete, the coded message so omnipresent, that there seems to be no possibility of discovering a blind field.

While it is not necessarily the case that what operates as a *punctum* cannot be an intentional part of the photograph, if the *studium* is experienced as complete and impervious, then it is less likely to be the site of an experience of *punctum*. If we already experience every detail as part of an intentional communication with a general meaning, we are unlikely to be accidentally struck by the personal significance of a given detail that escapes this.

Hence, when looking at his photographs, no *punctum* pierces through the image to assert the reality of what was photographed. Thus, our imagination is not drawn beyond them to lives lived, objects faded or fruit ripened and decayed. The lack of a *punctum* is tangible not only in those works that reference famous paintings, pointing clearly to the borders of the frame, and the field of information of art history, but is something we can encounter in the staged artistry of his whole corpus. For instance, in *No* (Figure 1) the figures are utterly static. There is no sense that the man has come from somewhere and will momentarily lift his foot and move forward. Unlike Barthes' woman in her Sunday best, there is here no sense that the woman in the fur coat has a "whole life external to her portrait."[34] The man and woman in *No* "do not *emerge,* do not *leave*: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies."[35]

Figure 1: Jeff Wall, *No,* 1983, Transparency in Lightbox.

My claim here is not that Wall's control over the image logically rules out our thinking of the reality of the objects photographed, or the possibility of a *punctum* breaking through for a given spectator. I do not even claim that Wall's photographs will turn out to be lacking a *punctum* for every viewer. My point is rather that through rendering the image as so palpably controlled, he intentionally works against this possibility. The conventional message is so dominant in our experience of his work that it drowns out the emanation of the real. Spectators will, therefore, experience Wall's intentions as in part the deliberate closure of the space through which a detail or sense of time might pierce us. If our aesthetic experience of the image is as if it were entirely intentional, this creates the effect that there is no space for the *punctum* to break through.

Jeff Wall's photographs thus present the spectator with the sensation that the possibility of the experience of a *punctum*, present to us in other photography, is here shut out. Where our experience of other photographs is simply that they happen not to possess an element that serves as *punctum* for *us*, the aesthetic experience of a Jeff Wall photograph is that Wall has intentionally denied this possibility.[36]

That Wall's works are contained, their content specified in a way that seems to occlude the arbitrary message of an emanation of reality, adds to their effect and our interest in them. They work by defying our expectations and possess a magical, unreal element by doing so. They bring to our attention that we have these expectations and thus that a tension between the intentionality and realism of photography exists. They also, however, possess a certain perversity. If we are taken with Barthes' moving account of what is for him essential in the experience of photography, and we acknowledge that profound experiences and meanings can

arise from the photograph's capacity to confront us with the real, then we must also consider the aesthetic potential of the photograph's realism.

It, therefore, seems worthwhile to enquire if the status of artist must be limited to those who fight against the pull towards the reality of the objects they photograph. Even if an artist can express thoughts about his subject, and even if this subject can be distinct from the objects photographed to make the image, there is often a pull towards the reality of these objects in our engagement with the photograph. If this pull contains something profound and unique, then it seems unsatisfactory to reduce photography's artistic potential to the defeat of this aspect of its character. Jeff Wall himself recognizes this character as part of what we find in the unconstructed photography that contrasts with his work, part of what we normally take as essential to photography: "In the aesthetic art of photography as it was inspired by photojournalism, the image is clearly a fragment of a greater whole which itself can never be experienced directly. The fragment then, somehow, makes that whole visible or comprehensible, maybe through a complex typology of gestures, objects, moods and so on. But there is an outside to the picture, and that outside weighs down on the picture, demanding significance from it."[37] Arguably the effect of Wall's constructed images depends on their contrast with our usual expectations for photography.

Must the event of a *punctum* breaking through for an individual spectator necessarily oppose the intentions of an artist? I wish, finally, to consider whether an artist, rather than deliberately excluding the real can choose to leave room for it; deliberately allowing the possibility that the field of their intentional communication could be disrupted.

**5. Allowing the Accidental**

In the work of August Sander the subject of the photographs is unambiguously the figures photographed. Further, he seems to allow them to speak for themselves. The style of his photographs is not crude or irrelevant to this effect. Rather Sander's frequent use of depth of field to focus on the figures in the foreground, leaving the background in obscurity, lets the arbitrary details of their faces and clothing assert themselves.

It is possible to take a cultural interest in Sander's photographs. As spectators we can examine with sociological and historical curiosity his typology of 1920s German castes. We can understand Sander's intentions to categorize his models; reading what each represents through the context of how he photographs them with their spade, cooking pot, or cigarette to hand. This *studium* is not reductive of Sander's photographs, however. Looking at the individuals photographed, it does not feel to the spectator as if Sander intended his staged typology to be reductive of his models. He left room for them to assert their presence. His style, in which the human subjects take centre stage in the constructed scene, does not allow the scene to subsume them. Rather he allows them boldly to confront the future generations of spectators.

Figure 2: August Sander, *Arbeiterkinder*, 1932.

We see in *Arbeiterkinder* (Figure 2) the reality of these children. There are details that for me operate as the *punctum* Barthes describes: on a first viewing the tense grip of the middle girl's hands, on revisiting the image the oddity of her disjointed fringe. These details assert themselves as present regardless of any general message communicated in the photograph. These children existed, had lives. They have been and are no longer.  One can claim Sander has allowed this effect intentionally, leaving space for the accidental. He *intended* to let the real emanate.

Allowing the *punctum* need not, however, preclude the artful expression of intentions through the control of detail and style. A photographer may communicate to us through the *studium* and still allow the irruption of a *punctum*, which pierces it without fracturing it or breaking it apart. These dual aspects exist in tension but this tension can enhance their effect.

Henri Cartier-Bresson's aesthetics of geometry seems the epitome of creating a framed image, constructing a world of mathematical beauty. In some of his images, however, the perfect composition, which we would associate with the photograph as artwork and *studium*, heightens the expectation and effect of any *punctum* which cuts through it. Not only is the *studium* a pre-condition of the *punctum*, but Cartier-Bresson demonstrates how the skill with which a photographer expresses his or her intentions in a photograph influences both the aesthetic experience of a possible encounter with the real and the nature of any such encounter.

The flawlessness of Cartier-Bresson's composition increases our sensitivity to the *studium* as something which is vulnerable to being penetrated, and necessary for this penetration to occur. The tension between the intentionality and realism is felt more acutely where this intentionality is beautifully realized. Even if we are not struck by a *punctum,* the fragility of perfection in Cartier-Bresson's photographs brings with it a tension that this perfection might be fractured. Despite the skill with which he constructs his impeccably proportioned images, Cartier-Bresson's photograph's, unlike Wall's, do not

carry the sense of complete determination in which every detail is part of a general message. Cartier-Bresson exhibits great skill in composition and a distinctive personal style without attempting to exert a complete control that subsumes reality with its weight. In Wall's work, the perception of a totally determined message leads to a sense of the uncanny and thus to an awareness of the tension at the heart of photography's character. The tension is felt by virtue of what is shut out and experienced as absent. With Cartier-Bresson the awareness of the tension between intention and realism derives instead from a feeling that another element is poised to fracture a delicate construction.

The *studium* that Cartier-Bresson creates also shapes the experience of a *punctum* when it occurs. In *Corpus Christi Procession* (Figure 3), the press of lips against gloved hands held in prayer, the beads of a pearl necklace seen through a veil, defy containment in the field of aesthetic composition. They exist, they were. The gazes of the women confronting the photographer cut through the *studium* of the image just as they cut through their white veils. The perfection of Cartier-Bresson's aesthetic *studium* in this image allows the experience of *punctum* to be all the more profound if it strikes us.



Figure 3: Cartier-Bresson, Corpus Christi Procession, 1952.

The tension between these aspects serves to enhance our experience of the *studium* as well as the *punctum*. Thus, in

this image the *punctum* belongs as much to the photograph's artistic value as the *studium*. If we experience in a veiled glance a *punctum,* we are confronted with the realism of this photograph. We appreciate that these are real people with real lives, sorrows and deaths. This only strengthens the aesthetic appreciation of the beauty of the composition. Cartier-Bresson's perfect vision captures a moment, a frame, which as such never existed. There is no distilled moment available to our perception outside of photography. The beauty of this image has an ethereality, a pathos of passing, that it could not have as pure *studium*. The *punctum* which cuts through it adds a tragic knowledge of the unreality of this geometric composition. We can sense the stillness that will irrupt into movement and the flow of life. The pull towards the reality of the objects increases our awareness of the skill with which Cartier-Bresson has expressed his intentions and presented the image as *studium*. It is in its dual character of intentionality and realism that this photograph is of particular aesthetic interest.

What is essential to the photograph is that it contains this dual character. It can be artfully constructed, manipulated and controlled such that it can render beautiful, communicate thoughts, and create fictional presences and narratives in a world of its own. At the same time it contains the pull back to the reality of the objects present at the moment the shutter clicked. If developing the former and allowing the latter lie in tension, this itself is worthy of artistic commentary and exploration. The existence of this tension is part of the aesthetic interest we take in photographs and what renders photographs continually intriguing. It is the "genius" of photography. The unique way in which we experience photographs is part of the subject matter and possibilities of photographic art.[38]

Dr. Katrina Mitcheson
katrinamitcheson@googlemail.com
Katrina Mitcheson is currently lecturing in ethics at Bath Spa University and has research interests in European philosophy and the philosophy of visual art.

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**Endnotes**

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[1]André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1 (University of California, 1971), pp. 13-14.

[2]André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1 (University of California, 1971), pp. 13-14; Stanley Cavell, *World Viewed* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard UP, 1979); Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage Books, 2000).

[3]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.88.

[4]Patrick Maynard advocates the importance of recognising that photography is a technology, developed and adapted with

various purposes in mind, in which its depictive and detective functions are distinct but interact. *The Engine of Visualisation; Thinking Through Photography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997).

[5]Notably Roger Scruton claims that photographs cannot represent because the photograph is always of something. Scruton, who works from the notion of an ideal photograph, takes the photographic relation to be causal *as opposed to* intentional (a dichotomy which I reject), and the subject photographed to be equivalent to the subject of the photograph (which I also take to be a questionable assumption). Scruton concludes that this implies the photographer cannot express thoughts about the subject (photographically) and this precludes the possibility of taking an aesthetic interest in the photograph *qua* photograph. Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation," *Critical Inquiry*, 7, 3 (1981), 577-603.

[6]For example, Dominic Lopes has shown how, even on Kendall Walton's claim for the photograph's transparency to the object, our interest in the object photographed can be distinct from our interest in seeing it in real life. Dominic McIver Lopes, "Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency," *Mind* 112 (2005), 335-348; Kendall Walton, "Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism," *Critical Inquiry*, 11 (1984), 246-77.

[7]David Davies, "How Photographs 'Signify': Cartier-Bresson's 'Reply' to Scruton," in *Photography and Philosophy Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, ed. by Scott Walden (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 167-186; Jonathan Friday, *Aesthetics and Photography* (Hants: Ashgate, 2002); William L. King, "Scruton and Reasons for Looking at Photographs," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32, 3 (1992), 258-265; Nigel Warburton, "Individual Style in Photographic Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 36, 4 (1996), 389-97; Robert Wicks, "Photography as a Representational Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 29, 1 (1989),1-9.

[8]In this article I am not setting out to directly address a sceptical argument concerning the possibility that photography is something we can take an aesthetic interest in. Rather, the purpose is to offer a positive account of the aesthetic possibilities present in the apparent tension between the reality of what is photographed and the expression of the photographer's intentions in how it is photographed. I thus build on work that considers the aesthetics of either the realism or the intentionality of photography and make a new contribution by developing the aesthetics of the interaction of these two aspects.

[9]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 3.

[10]I am not setting out to explore all the significances of *studium* and *punctum*, I do not, for example, address how *punctum* connects with the mad and the primitive. Rather I am interested specifically in how understanding the dependency of *punctum* on *studium* has implications for the aesthetic experience both of artistic intentionality and realism.

[11]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 3.

[12]The text can be seen as autobiography or as an illustration of a method of self-understanding, unravelling the personal significances that we attribute to a photograph, rather than as a theory of photography. Margaret Iversen suggests that *Camera Lucida* can be understood as comment on Lacan, and that the way the location of the *punctum* shifts in stages, changing on further reflection, is "like an analysand working through screen memories towards the orginal trauma." Margaret Iversen, "What is a Photograph?," *Art History*, 17, 3 (1994), 450-463; ref. on 455.

[13]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26.

[14]*Ibid*., pp. 27-28.

[15]*Ibid*., p. 119.

[16]*Ibid*., pp. 43, 42.

[17]Margaret Olin points out the reproduced Van der Zee photograph includes a pearl necklace, not the gold strands Barthes' describes. Margaret Olin, "Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's 'Mistaken' Identification," *Representations* 80 (2002), 99-118.

[18]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 45.

[19]*Ibid*., p. 57.

[20]*Ibid*., p. 57.

[21]*Ibid*., p. 47.

[22]*Ibid*., p. 47.

[23]*Ibid*., p. 87.

[24]*Ibid*., p. 96. Michael Fried suggests that this allows any photograph to come to have a *punctum* with time, as we encounter photographs of that which no longer is. (Michael Fried, "Barthes's *Punctum*," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005), 560.

[25]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 88; "The Photographic Message," in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 15-31; ref. on p. 17.

[26]*Op. Cit.*

[27]*Ibid*., ref. on p. 21.

[28]Robert Wicks details various techniques through which photographers can affect the portrayal of their subject in defense of the artistic status of photography. "Photography as a Representational Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 29/1 (1989), 1-9; ref. on p. 6.

[29]The use of digital technology is something which Barbara Savedoff argues will change the aesthetic experience of photographs generally, reducing our faith in their realism. While Savedoff exaggerates the rupture between the ease of altering images in analogue and in digital photography, the possibility that digital photography will affect the aesthetic experience of analogue photography points to the way in which our assumptions about the realism of photography inform how we experience it. Barbara Savedoff, "Escaping

Reality: Digital Imagery and the Resources of Photography,"
*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 55 (1997), 201-14.

[30]The effect could not be achieved with a live tableau. In Sherman's work it matters that the final artwork is a photograph because our awareness of the subject matter depends on the references her photographs make to particular genres of photography. Further, the menace of a predatory gaze, or even an implied narrative of a hidden photographer, would be lost if we were present witnessing the staged scene.

[31]Jeff Wall, *Jeff Wall*, eds. Thierry de Duve, Boris Groys, and Arielle Pelenc (London: Phaidon), p. 9.

[32]"Eviction Struggle," transparency in lightbox, 1988, in *Jeff Wall, op. cit.,* pp. 18-19; "The Vampires Picnic," transparency in lightbox, in *Jeff Wall op. cit.,* pp. 62-63.

[33]Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), p. 23.

[34]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 57.

[35]*Ibid*., p. 57

[36]Even if Wall cannot absolutely exclude its possibility, he can still create an image which feels to most spectators, who do not encounter a *punctum*, that this possibility is excluded.

[37]Jeff Wall, *Jeff Wall*, *op. cit.,* p. 9.

[38]I would like to thank the reviewers of *Contemporary Aesthetics* for their helpful suggestions.