

Resume

Contemporary photography has surpassed from an historical and conceptual viewpoint, its initial goal to be the visual leader, the ambassador and the one that ensures its quality as a witness. This newfound freedom has enabled it to make various connections to other art forms, even with literature, music, etc. This freedom hasn't affected one bit its ability to faithfully portray reality (a necessity for science, technical applications or documentary work) but has ensured that it can become very subjective, transforming reality into imaginary using both the artist's talent and the technical side of photography. This successful attempt to portray reality subjectively has taken photography to the boundaries of other visual arts, ensuring a mutually beneficial partnership that has added to its initial state other ones, such as trans-photography and photo-actionism. This fact has allowed photography to be inserted into illustrations, graphic design and digital and virtual synthetic images.

If one would try to severely concentrate this doctoral thesis, one could write only one phrase: the interpretation of the real in contemporary photography is in a schizophrenic state because on one hand photography has exploded technically and conceptually, limiting one's ability to analyze it because of its vastness, and on the other, its former qualities of a witness to reality and a documentary form of reality have been largely forgotten, nowadays photography being a medium that is very subjective, unreal and hybridized with other art forms.

This is why it is so important to identify and record those theories that focus on researching photography from its past to present times, from its past role as an accurate witness to its present role as a phantasmagorical medium. Everything needs to be catalogued, from the technical instruments to the conceptual aspects, from the motivations of the photographer to the photographic actions that relate to archetypes, myths, images, anthropology, psychology, theology, philosophy, science, mnemonics, energy, etc.

We must also take notice that the present technical, conceptual and artistic liberties make the real easy/hard to see, easy/hard to find, easy/hard to analyze. The new digital techniques complicate things even more making the real even harder to find because of their permissiveness and abilities to bend it, creating difficulties for the seeker of the real. There is even a practice in photojournalism of using software that checks the degree of authenticity of photos submitted by photographers in the field so they don't have too many alterations and/or modifications.

Free photography, commercial photography or other types of photography that are accepted by other art forms aren't cramped by their documentary or observing attributes. The same instruments and methods that are shunned by photojournalism are the great enablers of conceptual and expressive freedom.

It is important for pinpointing photography's standpoint from the real to exactly highlight the state of the authors, because if everything is permitted, the great gain in quality isn't freedom, but responsibility.

Thus, both for commercial and non-commercial photography there is a need for the authors to assume their roles, and thus allowing photography to fuse with texts, graphic design, installations and other forms of expression and to become more than a mirror for the real.

From the beginning of the photographic adventure the extensions and markers of photography have been with us, either through interventions on the genuine attributes of the photo such as the retouching of the negative, staged photography, collages or different technical practices. Today, after late modernism and trans post-modernism, the technical freedom enables a freedom of thought and concept for photography, using the partnership with the digital laboratory or by experimenting with other visual arts, practically reinventing photography in all its aspects.

In this context, the theoretical discourse of the doctoral thesis entitled: *Interpretation of the real in contemporary photography – extensions of the photographic discourse and of the post-photographic shaping*, as well as practical discourse, go together with the synthesis and analysis of the original offers to innovate through experimentation, thus aligning them to contemporary photography and extending the boundaries of concept and expression. To electively sum up things, the personal contribution to this doctoral thesis is a series of photographic images that are tributary to a partnership between straight photography, related to representing the evidence of the real and the repertoire of other visual arts, mainly that of the collage. This partnership is linked to essential myths that enable the viewer to deduce, be prone to suggestion and even to have illusions about the narration of the visual images presented through the techniques of contemporary photography and the laboratories in which it is presently molded.

The fact that photography has been accepted by traditional visual arts as well as the new media is because of the tradition of visual representation inside a frame or on a bi-dimensional or volumetric surface. For now these volumetric representations happen only inside a virtual space and are limited by the bi-dimensionality of the screen.

That is why a discourse on the relation between photography and the compositional states must begin with observations, enunciations, comments regarding the way in which the proportions, limits and measures have evolved over the history of humanity from it being conscious of its presence in the world to the acknowledgement of the existence of measures, proportions, dimensions, limits, surfaces, volumes that govern visual arts.

In order to make the structuring of the doctoral thesis more efficient and to highlight its discourse, this thesis is organized into six chapters, as well as an introduction, conclusions, this resume, keywords and bibliography.

Next we will entirely reiterate the table of contents, guiding the reader through the chapters and subchapters: *Chapter 1 – Visual investigation*; 1.1 To see/to look at; 1.2 The eye and the emergence of the image; 1.3 The Image; *Chapter 2 - The limit and its boundaries – constructing the visual representation*; 2.1 Proportion and measure; 2.2 Bi-dimensional surfaces: limits, delimitations, structures, orientations; 2.3 The framework of the triangle and the author's contribution; *Chapter 3 – The myth and visuality*; 3.1 The myth and visuality; 3.2 The myth; 3.3 Classifications of the myth; 3.4 The myth and the human condition; 3.5 The myth and the visual; 3.6 Conclusions; *Chapter 4 – Forms of visual representation in technical images*; 4.1 Introduction; 4.2 Calligraphies on a score; 4.3 The physical and metaphysical energies of material visual images; 4.4 Forms and geometry elements in contemporary photography; *Chapter 5 – The interpretation of the real in contemporary photography*; 5.1 Photography in relation with the real; 5.2 The New Real vs. The New Realism; 5.2.1 Interpretation of The Real vs. The interpreted Real; 5.2.2 Interpretation along the history of photography; *Chapter 6 – Personal contributions to the area of research.*

Thus the first chapter entitled *Visual Investigation* begins with documentary theoretical research as well as some illustrations of the areas of the visual image regarded as a *sine qua non* condition for the act of photographing to become a visual representation for the subject of this act.

The first sequence is dedicated to the partnership between seeing as an investigative and detecting act and looking, as an act of motivation and interpretation. Therefore in this thesis we prefer to partner the act of seeing with the act of looking without any confusion of meanings.

The second sequence concisely presents the physiological structure of the eye, an essential intermediary between sight and its subject and its uncanny resemblance to the photographic camera.

The third sequence is dedicated to unraveling the image, the state and status of photography, be it historical or contemporary, in the context of interpreting the real.

The fruit of the interacting between seeing and looking is the molding of images, images that are the results of investigations of the visual, the visible, the real as well as decisions taken by the imagination that facilitates the appearance of the real or the imaginary from within. Thus the images have become entities of a fictional state of the real because they are born as a post-sensory event, long after their eyes have investigated the surrounding area, an event which can be represented in an infinite amount of forms and senses.

The new images lie at the end of contemporary imagery. They prove to be new in two ways, in the sense of the actuality and novelty of their creation that is looking to mature, and in the sense of innovation and generation of a new territory with sufficient evidence to distinguish themselves from the old images. The new images are spread evenly across all contemporary imagery, from science, information and technical applications to art. They exist right now only because of their aggressive presence and their statistical overwhelming invasion of all the social, cultural, economic and political space.

The research on the notion of the image ends with an analysis on the new status of the visual representation created by using the technical image, photography.

Thus we have gotten to the point from which every visual representation can transfer its meaning from a representation to evoking and mimicking suggestions or illusions without being accused of treason. This was already happening for drawing and painting as well as all the other traditional arts but by explaining the signs and symbols inside the image it earns its freedom to express itself beyond the accurate representation of reality.

The second chapter entitled *The limit and its boundaries - constructing the visual representation* is dedicated to the theoretical and applicative research of the ways in which the visual images are formed and molded, and how we can transfer this responsibility from the representation of the real to the unreal and the imaginary, a transfer made possible by extending physics into metaphysics.

Thusly, after a long evolution of the proportions and measures that govern the natural and its application in the acts of human spiritual creation, contemporary society has exceeded its responsibilities by rebelling against them, but as we can see, they can't either consciously or unconsciously abandon exercising and respecting the proportions and measures physically and metaphysically imposed by the state of the human being in the natural and artificial world.

The identification of the surrounding area through seeing/looking brings inside the human conscience the form as a limit for distinct and noticeable identities. The contour complicates the evaluation made by looking, that are simplified into approximations that bring the natural form inside the perimeter of bi-dimensional geometrical shapes and the volumes of polyhedron. The forms are perceptively and interpretatively subjected to circumscriptions belonging to geometrical shapes and volumes.

The triangle, the rectangle, the square, the pentagon – pentagram, the hexagon and the sphere, the cube, the triangular pyramid, the square pyramid and the prism become focus points for the sight as well as the bi-dimensional and spatial frames for the scanning done by the human eye connected to the laboratory of understanding and interpreting sight.

If the human being is governed and governs such actions and exercises of investigation, then surely the artist is an elite ambassador for this type of investigation as well as for the visual representation partially or completely reliant on the geometrical shapes we have announced.

In this chapter we have included a demonstration of contemporary photography in which interpreting the real is exceeded by the tradition of visual arts to apply measures and proportions.

The third chapter entitled *The myth and visuality* is dedicated to the impact the myth has on visuality. Beyond the dependency of forming the visual image using the technical aspect of photography, when taking into account proportions, rhythms and geometries, writing, clothing and masks can easily become visual representations belonging to the social, the cultural, the anthropological or the psychological.

An element that strongly influences human communication in all its meanings relates to a dependency on myths regarded as essential landmarks that manage the necessary human behaviour for social interactions in civilizations. There are countless visual representations of myths but there are only a few of them that overcome their status as an illustration and become specific myths by themselves. We have decided to name these, visual myths, and in relation to the purpose of this thesis we have concluded that photography can be a great medium for suggesting and simulating new myths inspired by the essential myths.

We can add to this “the real” that is coming from the archetypal state belonging to the conceptual coding/decoding of photographic acts and images. Thusly we can review elements that are powerful and diffuse, explicit and subliminal or still covered by the mystery of the human being that is related to the generic myth, a situation in which historic and contemporary photography plays a big part.

The fourth chapter entitled *Forms of visual representation in technical images* engages theoretical and applicative endeavors of the real and the meanings of the shape in contemporary photography, endeavors taking place between tradition, innovation and experiment.

Since its beginnings photography has had a way in which it could write its calligraphy on a physical score, in which it could engage eccentric and centric tensions specific to human psycho-physiology. This is called *composition* whether traditional and conventional or contemporary and unconventional.

Photography exists only after the moment it has recorded the image of the real, the molding that implies both the mental and the technical laboratories. After this takes place the artifact of the process is seeable, be it real (print, photogram) or pseudo-real (spatial projection, image on a computer screen).

Thus photography as a visual image exercises into actuality forms of framing and classical limitations extracted from the junction with painting and graphics. To this we can add the new types of framing brought by the innovations and novelties in conceptualization, the technical/technological aspects as well as the cooperation with other artistic media.

Classical framing and limitations are spread around the usage of different types of dimensional engagement of the rectangle, from the vertical position to the generous panorama, as in the case of David LaChapelle.

The circle is presented either on its own or as a perimeter, both cases present in the works of the group AEF+S.

The square, from original to attached (as well as the rectangle) to the image recorders, respectively 6x6 medium format, is copiously exploited either in its initial perimeter (with the margin of the film used as a linear frame by Richard Avedon), or through compositional framing as used by Luca Pierro.

Gerard Rancian uses medieval-type triptych and polptych panels to transfer photography to the architectural space.

Installations are newcomers in the portfolio of framings and limitations. They either highlight the photographic element or highlight the installation, as is the case with Christian Boltanski.

David Hockney still makes the best assemblages, to which we can add the seriality of Duane Michals and the eclectism of Gilbert Colbert.

The dimension of already classical projection by utilizing transparent film has found new fusions, partnerships and junctions with drama, video and multimedia arts.

The fifth chapter entitled *Interpreting the real in contemporary photography* is dedicated to the synthesis of the theoretical discourse regarding the state, status and sense of interpreting the real depending on historical and contemporary points of reference that influence the concept, attitude, technique and expressivity with which the real is represented visibly and visually using the technical image and its technical instruments.

As an example we have included a case study that puts together two different and yet similar attitudes of interpreting the real. We are talking about the representation of war viewed through the eyes of Western military propaganda (American and British) that declines to portray the realities of war and instead chooses to subtly promote images in which soldiers are seen as pacifying heroes that help their fellow man. The second attitude is that of advertising photography, more precisely that of fashion photography in which the specificities of army life are used in a metaphysically and erotically charged way to promote a clothing line.

The sixth chapter entitled *Personal contribution to the area of research* roundly encompasses the results of this theoretical and applicative research through a sequence of works that exemplify both the concept, attitude, technique and expressions that are used to interpret the real in contemporary photography as well as the innovations, experiments, authenticity and originality of the discourse.

The final conclusions, keywords, and bibliography end the thesis as is required by the standards of the field of research.