

## **THE PARADOX OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DIGITAL CULTURE**

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### **Abstract**

Photography never lies, The statement of Bourdieu can just happen in the era of analogue photography, as in analog technology, photography reveals the results of visual form in actual reality. With the discovery of digital cameras photography experiences a change of identity and also a process of 'lethal' analog photography.

In this digital age, it can be artificially information package on a 'space', that is open to various forms of fraud, forgery, player-invert facts and distortions. In short the world electronic digital information currently is the world's 'not credible', and no longer has any relationship with reality (hiperreality) not authentic because it is ingested by the world's developed technologies by fictional image

In this contemporary era, photography has evolved and is evolving and also has undergone a process of 'metamorphosis' of an authentic documentation tool, a tool that can be sold to satisfy the desire of the party each time without celebrating anything. Paradox photography occurred due to attraction between photography as a laden payload that is natural (authentic), yet at the same time is also loaded cultural payload, which is adapted to the needs of politics and business of photography today.

In the dialectic between photography as a perfect illusion, with photography as an indisputable reality, then the problem appears depending on the needs and utilization of appropriate media in the use of the photography, which is in line with the psycho-social changes in today's society. Advances in information technology and digital cameras in the future allows for changing the face of photography towards more sophisticated or vice versa, photography would die and is replaced by a new, more promising media perfection of the visual appearance of an image.

**Keywords:** Photography, Digital, Identity, Reality.

### **1. Introduction**

When traced based on etymology, the word photography derives from the language of Greece, 'phos' meaning light, whereas the word 'graphy' means writing or illustrating. Therefore, literally the meaning of photography is painting with light.

Photographic identity can be identified through a combination of creative people and the right lighting. A merger between the natural and cultural elements are central in photographic work, because in the beginning, in photography, natural elements that cannot be changed is the light, whereas culture is a man-made element.

Along with the changing times, the discovery of a new medium in the world of photography: digital photography, creates a long debate about the definition of a photographic work. The problems resulted in that other parties declare that photography is unique, as well as citing the term P. Bourdieu that States that photography never lies, and do not change nature; While on the other hand they stated that with the advancement of digital technology, photography became the human tool in developing dimaginal work. Therefore with the discovery of new facts, then a new redefinition of paradox is needed in photography.



**Figure 1.** Roll film used in cameras in the past, DSLR Camera with an LCD screen for photographers

([http://rlxphotography.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/film\\_roll\\_icon\\_by\\_neil\\_gfx.png](http://rlxphotography.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/film_roll_icon_by_neil_gfx.png),  
[http://rlxphotography.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/8\\_1.png](http://rlxphotography.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/8_1.png))

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Materials

#### 1. The Photograph as Object: Materiality

In times before the invention of digital photography, the process of photo printing was done through a phase called 'dark room', where the film dipped in liquid developer, stop bath and fixer, thus producing a photographic work, both in black-and-white and colored (Edwards and Hart, 2004: 5). This type of photography is called analog photography, according to Walter Benjamin's opinion which States that, where the pictures were obtained through a process of 'dark room' produce something unique and authentic, as well as generate an 'aura' which is typical. (Vestberg, 2008: 50-54).



**Figure 2.** Dark Room for Photography

([http://rlxphotography.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/in\\_darkroom\\_4-2-2010- photo\\_by\\_hannu\\_sinisalo- www-600.jpg](http://rlxphotography.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/in_darkroom_4-2-2010- photo_by_hannu_sinisalo- www-600.jpg))

## 1. The Photograph as Image: Dematerialisation

In the dematerialisation era, photography is the medium which processes the image, so the photography is artificial in the form of information packaging codes and digital electronic impulses.

[T]he substance of a [digital] image, the matter of its identity, no longer has to do with paper or particles of silver or pictorial appearance or place of origin; instead it comprises a pliable sequence of digital codes and electrical impulses [...] It is their reproduction, consumption, flow and exchange, maintenance and disruption, that constitute part of our culture.

(Batchen, 2003: 155)

The process of photography as such is currently called 'bright room'. This type of photography is also open to other forms of fraud, forgery, player-invert facts and distortions. Based on the statement of Baudrillard, "We live in a virtual world, a world that is no longer authentic, full of knockoffs and manipulation".



**Figure 3.** Light Room or Editing Room for Digital Photography  
([http://www.zoprod.com/media/filer\\_public/2013/01/17/loft\\_01\\_2013.jpg.800x800\\_q85.jpg](http://www.zoprod.com/media/filer_public/2013/01/17/loft_01_2013.jpg.800x800_q85.jpg))

## 2. Psychosocial Changes in Digital

Digital photography is a process of evolution and revolution in their field. Why it is said to be so, because in fact the change of photography from analog to digital photography causes a shift in awareness within the community of psychosocial.

In the era of digital photography, the ease in getting results became a hallmark of the main game, as well as the manipulation of the melody (removal of forms, color change, distortion, etc.) become uncontrolled, humans like to drown themselves, unite themselves with the reality outside (hiperrealitas). Humans are no longer chasing the ' meaning of life ', but rather seeks to capture and enjoy things that are likely to surface towards inner rather than physical, so life feels

' trite '. In fact unwittingly, humans are currently under siege and being herded towards the world of fictional image and sometimes illusive.



The Walter John Harwood family. From left to right: Sarah, mother Thea, Helga (standing), Maude, Walter John with young Walter on his lap and Harold.  
 Photograph courtesy of Phyllis Libby Glynn.



**Figure 4.** Old Photographs 1840-1929, Today's Photography

(<http://www.familychronicle.com/images/photoharwood.gif>, [http://www.ilex-press.com/wp-content/uploads/making\\_a\\_statement\\_b.jpg](http://www.ilex-press.com/wp-content/uploads/making_a_statement_b.jpg))

## 2.2 Methods

### Literature Studies

The terms of literature studies are used in variety of terms by experts, among them the best known are: literature review, literature review, analysis, and theoretical review. These uses of terms basically refers to the General efforts which should be undertaken to get the theories that are relevant to research topics.

Literature studies from the source is distinguished into two parts namely: conceptual literatures and research literatures. Conceptual literatures include concepts or theories that exist on the books and articles written by experts which in the delivery it is determined by ideas or experiences of the experts. Research literatures instead include research reports which have been published in scientific journals or magazines.

In this writing, the author uses conceptual literatures because the experiences of the authors, experts and practitioners of photography have become essential. Photography is a fine art in a new medium, and is also a crucial element in design, but the change of times can not be denied, the world is changing, human needs change, so does the photography, hence the paradox of photography became very important to know and to re-construct the thought of photography that exists today.

### 3. Results

In the Materiality era, the value of photography lies in the product of the work of the photo material, however the material of photo made from paper is easily damaged and burned. In his book 'Camera Lucida', R. Barthes said as follows :

.... a photograph as an emotional object that gives pleasure, the ... attacked by light, by humidity, it fades, it weakens, vanishes; there is nothing left to do but throw it away '

(Barthes, 2000: 93)

In the era of Dematerialisation, photography becomes very effective and efficient, because any time anyone can take photographs (photograph), delete, and process them in accordance with their needs. Photography has become commercial media due to the work of processing photos can be bought and sold for the sake of particular interest.

Nowadays, we are in a period of psychosocial change in digital culture which contains things to be aware of like enchantment and madness toward image and impression of the surface, which are often shallow and unwarranted. The odd hysteria against fictitious charm is strange enchantment on power and artificial intelligence (electronics), as well as just the adrenaline pumping without satisfaction and meaning. The party at any time is without celebrating anything. The Interesting thing in the current era of digital photography is that there are difficulties to claim a truth or a system with a single specific value, since the value of meaning is relative and is wrapped by the interests of some parties.

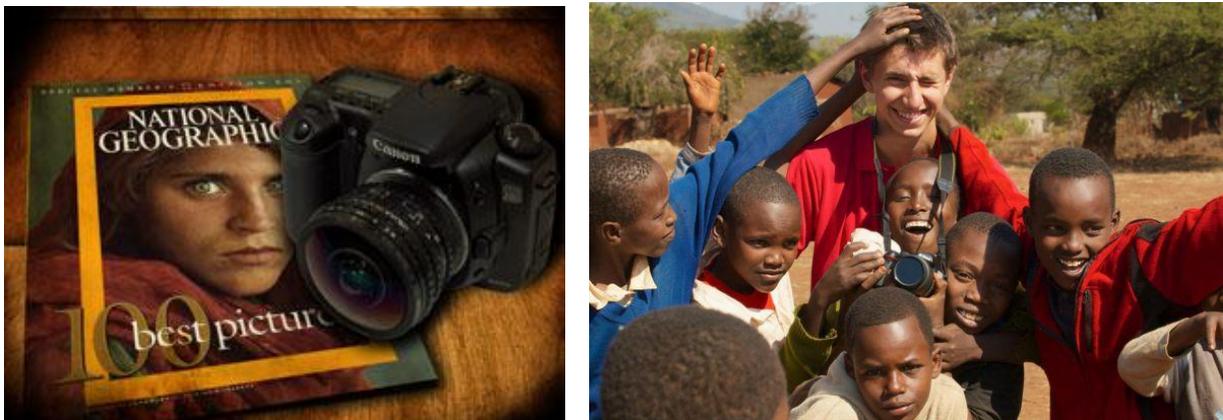


**Figure 5.** Old Photographer 1893, Today's Photographer

(<http://nilsskog.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Photographer-studio-1893.jpg>, <http://children-photographers.regionaldirectory.us/child-photographer-720.jpg>)

#### 4. Conclusion

Nowadays there is no denying that photography is an authentic document against an event that occurs in this world. Photography can bring the atmosphere of the past events in the present atmosphere. And photography can tell more than words and can evoke a buried memory. The debate about the identity of the photography appears when the digital era was born, a problem that became a summit debate was none other than the authenticity of a work of the photo. Where on the work of a standardization of digital photos from the authentic value is not too important, rather than the use of photos at this time is very widespread for this modern community life, which is characterized by a political and business in it.



**Figure 6.** National Geographic Magazine works, National Geography Photographer  
(<http://raisedonhoecakes.com/ROH/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Nat-Geo-Photo-Contest-ROH.jpg>,  
<http://ww2.hdnux.com/photos/17/62/34/4138813/5/628x471.jpg>)

Although digital photography is growing and more sophisticated nowadays, but a work of authentic photographs of this era are still needed in the world of education, research, and documentation as well as in National Geography Magazine. This is necessary due to the existence of the principle that an authentic photography is a metaphor for the principle of reality, whereas digital photography that has been processed (created according to desire of the owners of photo) is a metaphor for the pleasure principle. This paradox photography does not strictly need to be disputed, there are always pros and cons, the current digital age cannot be dammed, people just need to be prudent in using photography so as not to be lulled by the ease of digital technology, and are not carried away by the current impair mentality so that photography is used to find the sheer enjoyment without any meaning in it.



**Figure 7.** Commercial Photography, Commercial Photography in ads  
<http://cdn.thesearchengineshop.com/wp-content/uploads/commercial-photography-perth1.png>,  
[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-5ZV5J48h2EM/TYQrjRM6bUI/AAAAAAAAAH84/yXPY0VcPW08/s1600/advertising\\_idea\\_1.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-5ZV5J48h2EM/TYQrjRM6bUI/AAAAAAAAAH84/yXPY0VcPW08/s1600/advertising_idea_1.jpg)

In ancient times light was considered as surge, but after Albert Einstein discovered that light was a particle through photo electric experiment. With the invention of the electric photo, then comes a new technology, the uses of technology become more advanced, producing a variety of new possibilities, as in the case, the death of photography and is replaced by new, and more sophisticated findings in expressing an image visual is very probable.

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