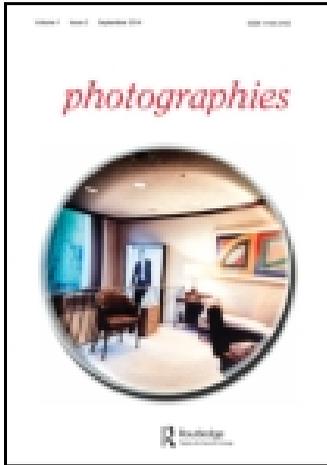


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Editorial: Photography, artists and museums

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EDITORIAL

Photography, artists and museums

This special issue of *Photographies* is dedicated to the intricate relationship between photography and museums. More specifically, it focuses on artistic practices that use photography to challenge the theoretical complexities of this relationship. The featured papers of this issue examine what happens when artists turn their lens on such museum practices as collecting, archiving, exhibiting and interpreting. Moreover, they investigate how artists negotiate the concept of the museum, its practices and visitors through their photographic work, and the ways in which they often adopt a curatorial position by using real and/or fictional photographic archives.

The papers in this issue were selected from the *2nd International Conference of Photography and Theory*, which took place in 2012 at the Thalassa Museum in Agia Napa, Cyprus. The International Conference of Photography and Theory (ICPT) is a biannual conference, which takes place in Cyprus and was originally created as a response to expanding research in historical, artistic and vernacular photography. It aims to provide an outlet for an interdisciplinary and critical theoretical exploration of photography and photographic practices. The theme of the 2nd ICPT was “Photography and Museums” and aimed to critically investigate the diverse relationships between photography and museums.

Photography obviously has a long and complex relationship with the museum as well as different functions within and outside its walls. To begin with, photography is displayed in museums as an autonomous artefact or an art form demanding aesthetic consideration. Additionally, photography has been historically adopted by various types of museums — anthropological, historical, archaeological, science etc. — as evidence for the objects on view or as supporting documents to events, stories or other artefacts already on display. Furthermore, museums use photography as a tool for documenting, archiving and facilitating museum practices, and for self-promotion. Finally, visitor photography of museum collections, interiors, exteriors and even of other visitors — often circulating online through social media — has expanded the dissemination of museum images. Despite the close relationship and interdependency of museums and photography, there is limited research that examines the roles that photography plays in the formation of cultural, historic or social narratives inside museums. In addition, museums, and also contemporary artists, have been showing a renewed interest in photography and its potential to challenge museum orthodoxy, as well as in the medium’s expanding possibilities through the use of new media technologies.

ICPT 2012 explored the import of photography on the nature and character of the museum, the relationship between photography and the museum experience, as well as the impact of the institution on the status and development of photography. The call

for papers invited participants to respond to three broad sub-themes. The first sub-theme, “Examining Photography in Museums”, looked into the exhibition of various photographic genres in museums and the resulting narratives, stereotypes and power relations. The second sub-theme, “Photography and Museology”, examined the shifting paradigms of museum displays, the role of digital technologies, and the educational implications of the use of photography in museums. Finally, the third sub-theme, “Photographers/Artists and the Museum”, examined photographic exhibitions and interventions in museums and the ways artists use photography to question or challenge museum practices. This last subcategory solicited a number of interesting papers and became the focus of this special issue. In consequence, the selected papers mainly focus on the relationship of photography with the art museum even though examples of artists’ interventions in other kinds of museums or exhibition spaces are also mentioned. Furthermore, the focus is on contemporary artists.

There are only a few attempts at theorizing the relationship between art museums and photography. Most of them focus on the relationship between the photographic copy and the original artwork (see, for example, Benjamin; Fyfe; Henning; Malraux). Other authors have claimed that the museum is on the verge of being reinvented in an era defined by a “post-medium condition” (Crimp; Krauss): the result of conceptual art’s integration of art and photography and the dispersal of medium specificity (Ross). This special issue contributes to already existing debates and expands the literature by giving equal emphasis to museums, photography and artists. The featured papers touch upon various themes but, more importantly, they investigate: the way artists use photography to question the authority and power of both museums and photography; ways in which photography can produce various *fictions* and the ways these can change based on the frame/context in which they are encountered; how the digital impacts on artistic and photographic practices as well as on the museum’s role today.

This introductory paper aims to contextualize and introduce the papers. It is divided into four main parts, which explore different aspects of the relationship between photography and art museums. The first part examines the common characteristics of both photography and museums: their perceived objectivity and the resulting authority and power invested in them. It then looks at how these characteristics have been challenged. The second part explores how the “consciousness” of photography was shaped in relation to that of the museum. The third part looks at the museum’s and photography’s virtual existence. Finally, we offer a short introduction to each of the featured papers.

Museums and photography: questioning authority and power

Photography and museums seem to share a common characteristic: they are both authoritative mediums that preserve selected representations of reality, contribute to a collective memory (and amnesia) and have the power to direct our understanding of the world. Questioning the perceived truthfulness and authority of museums and photography is one of the main concerns of many of the featured artists in this special issue. For this reason, this section briefly explores the authority of museums and photography to represent reality.

Since their inception, the power of museums and photography was grounded in empiricism. Both were charged to make visible, represent, preserve and interpret. On the one hand, from the first photographic image captured by Nicéphore Niépce in the 1820s, photography enjoyed the reputation of a detailed, authentic and unmediated reflection of the world's appearance: it was seen as a transparent medium or else a "species of alchemy" (Sontag 73). On the other hand, museums are considered to be repositories of knowledge and good taste as well as safe-houses for the material expression of history (Bennett; McCellan). Specialists, informed by the prevailing scientific and historical taxonomies and discourse, categorize and interpret museum collections. Museums' everyday activities (collecting, preserving, exhibiting, interpreting, etc.), expert personnel (scientists, curators, historians, educators, etc.) and knowledge-based products (exhibitions, educational material, catalogues, books, etc.) have contributed to their perceived objectivity and authority.

Of course, both photography and museums are far from being objective and unmediated. Photography is now recognized as an immensely subjective practice, defined by intentionality and individual biases. Furthermore, apart from decisions made by the photographer regarding what to photograph and what to include in the photographic frame, the context of viewing (newspapers, museums, family albums, etc.) as well as the viewer's past experiences and beliefs also influence the meaning of a photograph. As John Tagg argues, photography's apparent truthfulness is "a complex historical outcome and is exercised by photographs only within certain institutional practices and within particular historical relations" (4). Therefore, one has to consider not only what a photograph can visually communicate, but also how the context or *frame* within which a photograph is viewed shapes the photograph's meanings; museums are only one example of such a frame.

Photography that is detached from its original context can be easily manipulated in museums to tell different stories. For example, inside museums, photographs can be employed to reinforce museum narratives that are not necessarily connected to the original context of the photographs on display (see for example Edwards; Stylianou-Lambert and Bounia). As a result, the real question is not whether or not — as the cliché goes — a photograph is worth a thousand words. Instead, we need to ask *which* thousand words are expressed, *who* utters them and *for whom*.

In a similar manner, museums have the power to communicate certain ideas, histories and values as authentic, universal and objective, despite the fact that these ideas, histories and values are a product of their time, space and socio-cultural framework. What is often ignored is the fact that it is difficult, if not impossible, to represent in a museum, or any other medium, an objective social or political reality independent of our understanding of it (Heywood) and, also, that the context of an institution, and more specifically its culture, history and geography, influences its entity and practices. Certainly, the development of the field of museum studies brought into investigation issues relevant to "what", "who" and "why". Questions such as what is worth preserving, what is studied and by whom, what is chosen for exhibition and how it is interpreted, are vital to our understanding of museums. Artists who have a close and critical relationship with museums are in a good position to reveal and reflect upon such questions, playing a crucial role in influencing both the museum's practices and our perceptions of it.

Photography and the art museum: a self-conscious medium in a self-reflective institution

Art museums have been instrumental in conferring the status of art on photography, introducing photographers to the public and crystallizing photographic trends and histories. While museums have traditionally acted as gatekeepers, art historical trend-setters, as well as promoters and interpreters, artists have also played a crucial role in influencing museum practices. It is not our purpose in this editorial to explore the historical interaction of museums or of curators with photographers. Rather, we want to argue that the *"consciousness" of the medium of photography was shaped in relation to that of the museum.*

To begin with, the mere existence of museums has encouraged photographers to think in terms of "museum" photographs — that is, photographs created specifically for exhibiting in museums either as autonomous artworks or artistic interventions among other artefacts. Foucault has made a similar argument for painting in an essay discussing Manet's work:

Déjeuner sur l'Herbe and Olympia were perhaps the first "museum" paintings, the first paintings in European art that were less a response to the achievements of Giorgione, Raphael, and Velazquez than an acknowledgement (supported by this singular and obvious connection, using this legible reference to cloak its operation) of the new and substantial relationship of painting to itself, as a manifestation of the existence of museums and the particular reality and interdependence that painting acquire in museums. (In Crimp 47)

According to Foucault, the existence of museums urged painters to reflect on the medium of painting and create "museum" paintings. In a similar manner we can talk about "museum" photographs created by photographers who both acknowledge the complex relationship of photography to itself and create photographs with a specific context in mind — the museum.

Additionally, we argue that the interconnected history of museums and photography has helped photography to become more "self-conscious" as a medium. Museums have traditionally supported art photography that fitted the prevailing art historical trends as well as their own ideologies. A good example is modernist photography displayed at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Modernism encouraged certain photographers to focus on aesthetic formalism and often emphasize form over subject matter (Hirsch). According to Robert Hirsch, "Until World War II, the modernist concept of the naturalistic/documentary photograph, the previsualized, full frame aesthetic of the individual photographer, reigned supreme" (344). As was the case with other artists, photographers were seen as creative authors who utilize an art medium with its own formal characteristics and histories. Photographers such as Edward Weston, Edward Steichen, Imogen Cunningham, László Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer embraced and exemplified these modernist aesthetics and ideas. These photographers, as well as many others, consciously employed a different (photographic) visual syntax than that of painting. Despite this difference, they overall spoke the same aesthetic language and thus their

photographs could be easily accommodated in art museums along with other modern artworks.

The year 1940 marked the creation of the first department of photography at MoMA, which also happened to be the first in a major art museum in the United States of America. Beaumont Newhall, its first curator (from 1940 to 1948), helped introduce specific photographers to the public and promote modernist ideas (Hirsch). His 1837 exhibition, *The History of Photography: 1839 to the Present Day*, marked the first comprehensive retrospective of photographic works in the United States and helped secure a place for photography within the arts and the art museum. John Szarkowski, who subsequently took over MoMA's department of photography from 1962 to 1991 (after Edward Steichen), and continued Newhall's work, ends his famous 1966 catalogue essay titled *The Photographer's Eye* with the following sentences:

The history of photography has been less a journey than a growth. Its movement has not been linear and consecutive, but centrifugal. Photography, and our understanding of it, has spread from a center; It has, by infusion, penetrated our consciousness. Like an organism, photography was born whole. It is in our progressive discovery of it that its history lies. (11)

Szarkowski was criticized for not taking into account ideological tensions, which emerged from the historical context of photography, and for focusing instead on formalist poetics, defending creative authorship and the authority of the artist (Roberts). However, this criticism does not take into account the art politics of the period and of the museum itself. In the 1950s and 1960s MoMA was one of the most active institutions which defended abstraction, formalism and artistic authority. It was only natural that the museum adopted the same approach with photography as well as with painting and sculpture.

The new generation of artists and photographers in the second half of the 20th century adopted a more critical approach towards art and culture. Conceptual art, installation art, multimedia art, as well as theories of deconstruction and post-structuralism, influenced photography to a large degree, introducing a thinking photographer who is more aware of the production of photographic meaning, the various contexts of photography, and the social and cultural construction of photographic histories. Michael Fried, in his book *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, attempts to make the argument that photography is placed at the centre of art history in the last half of the 20th century because of photography's ability to raise fundamental questions about the limits of representation. He argues that what separates the contemporary photographers he discusses in his book (for example Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, Candida Höfer, Jeff Wall and Hiroshi Sugimoto) from the modernist photographers of the first half of the 20th century is the "explicitness of their engagement with a particular constellation of artistic and theoretical issues" (338). We argue that this shift towards theoretical, conceptual and critical approaches helped photography become more self-conscious as a medium and encouraged photographers to critically reflect on photography's possibilities, limitations, histories and contradictions inherent in the medium as well as its changing contexts and meanings. Meanwhile, by supporting emerging art movements, major museums and art centres

also further encouraged critical approaches and thus contributed to the increasing self-consciousness of the medium of photography.

The combination of an increasing appetite for reflection and deconstruction, as well as the acknowledgment of the importance of the museum context, led artists to investigate and challenge the museum itself. This special issue of *Photographies* focuses on contemporary artists who consciously and critically explore the relationship between photography and museums. Photography and museum practices are placed in the spotlight, revealed, dissected and questioned. For example, artists such as Thomas Struth (Baxter in this issue), Sophie Calle, Louise Lawler and Diane Neumaier (Stylianou in this issue) use photography to reflect on the museum space, its practices and visitors. On the other hand, artists such as Joachim Schmid (Martins in this issue), Walid Raad (Lambouris in this issue) and Gerhard Richter (Leister in this issue) assume curatorial roles by re-staging photographs from various real or fictional archives. Interestingly, the above-mentioned artists manage to challenge museum practices by adopting those same practices.

Finally, whilst photography is becoming more self-conscious, museums are also increasingly more self-reflective. Museums often seem to comfortably accommodate, and even encourage, their own critique. Current museological approaches help question museum practices, reveal the construction of narratives in museums, and thus demystify the museum's absolute authority and hegemony (Barrett; Vergo). Furthermore, museum professionals find ways to accommodate artworks that challenge museum histories and practices, and in certain cases even invite them. For example, Joachim Schmid was invited in 2000 by the then curator of the Pitts Rivers Museum in Oxford, Elizabeth Edwards, to make a site-specific intervention into the museum's exhibition space (Martins in this issue). This invitation was part of a broader project that the museum launched and which called contemporary artists to respond to its space. Of course, this intervention can be read within a long tradition of institutional critiques, dating back to the first avant-garde artists of the early 20th century (such as El Lissitzky and Marcel Duchamp) as well as later artists (such as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Andrea Fraser).

Virtual museums and photography: shifting paradigms

External, as well as internal, forces have been pushing museums to become more self-reflective and open their doors to critical re-evaluation, transformation and expansion. As Nick Prior argues:

From the introduction of plural funding strategies and tougher-minded boards of trustees, to heightened accountability and intensified public scrutiny, museums have been placed in a supercharged climate in which adaptation, flexibility, and product diversification are the watchwords. (53)

Digital technologies have supported and facilitated, if not further motivated and influenced this trend. The promise of democratization, access, inclusion and interactivity were enough to lure museums into investing in digitizing their collections and

expanding their presence online, aiming to reach out to wider audiences, become more flexible and diverse. At the same time, digital technologies were viewed as the answer to claims of exclusion and irrelevance as well as the principal way of establishing an online presence and reaffirming the authority of museums as bastions of culture beyond the walls of the museum. These expectations were based on three main assumptions.

First, the virtual realm seemed to respond to what Stephen Bann identified as our inherent curiosity and desire to further expand our knowledge and understanding of art and culture as well as to what Oliver Grau argued to be our inherent desire to immerse ourselves in imaginary worlds. Such claims led to an expected increase of online participation and engagement with various museum collections online, expanding at once the museum's presence and influence beyond its physical walls. Second, virtual online museums could theoretically allow the viewer's/user's interaction and active participation — through hyperlinks, networks and a non-linear structure — in the construction or deconstruction of the stories previously only told by the authoritative voices of various experts. This assumed a more democratic and open museum that invites a wide range of audiences, tells multiple stories and manifests various identities.

Third, the online museum could be perceived as a catalyst for the democratizing potential of the photographic, reminding us of André Malraux's *musée imaginaire*. Malraux argued that part of the idea of the museum without walls is the possibility for works of arts to be viewed and experienced detached from their origins or usage, as well as to be made equal through the democratizing effect of the camera (i.e. when they appear as photographic reproductions in art books, posters, postcards, etc.) (Krauss). Malraux's prediction that photography could contribute to the broad dissemination of artworks and the advancement of art by expanding our common "library of images" seems only a prelude to further technological advancements and their potential. Walter Benjamin claimed that mechanical reproductions had a profound change in the impact that works of art had on the public. More so, Antonio Battro, following Benjamin's steps, argued that while photographic reproductions function as a frame in which one encounters art, they have also helped popularize less prevalent or forgotten works of art for they made "the most diverse objects equal, creating new families, suggesting new relationships and shared styles" (Battro 141). Nowadays, online museum environments further expand these possibilities by allowing the juxtaposition of different works of art, often shifting paradigms of conventional museum displays beyond chronological order, value or medium. This could arguably facilitate access to art as well as make manifest photography's democratizing potential.

Certainly, questions of accessibility, interactivity and agency are not to be easily tackled or successfully measured, and they are much more complicated issues than the mere acceptance of the virtual's potential. Nonetheless, the virtual online realm still offers an alternative to the physical and conceptual boundaries of the conventional museum, addressing the "conceptual space of the human faculties: imagination, cognition, judgment" (Krauss 341). Of course, one could similarly argue that online museums are not necessarily expanding the physical museum display, but they are instead simply replicating it online (Meecham and Stylianou). In other words, those museums that move beyond museum orthodoxies in their physical space will also do the same for their online counterparts. Similarly, those museums that remain faithful

to notions of originality, aesthetic value and artistic intentionality will perpetuate those attitudes in their online museums.

When it comes to photography, museums' ways of reading, displaying and interpreting photographs have been historically tied to a tradition of visual realism and objectivity. Even when photographs (either as documents or artworks) are displayed on museum websites, they still reflect the museums' conventional attempts towards establishing a sense of objectivity, trustworthiness and aesthetic value. Nonetheless, museums often find themselves in an awkward position when photographs online are used for purposes other than those defined by the museum's institutional codes: users download, share and alter images for their own purposes. Museums' previous power to control the meanings of a photograph is currently limited, if not jeopardized by such practices. Henning argues that:

[o]nly recently has the discussion of the digital image shifted towards an interest in the cultural and philosophical consequences of practices of transmitting, sharing, and transforming images as they pass between different kinds of devices and from one medium to another. (19)

When photography moves from its controlled physical or online museum context and is placed on different devices and mediums, then a different context is created that is altogether different from the museum's physical or online space.

Within these different contexts, a photograph's genre boundaries and meanings can shift in unexpected directions. Without the museum context to support the significance of artistic intention and of a particular artistic and cultural tradition within which a photograph can be read or perceived, the photograph can easily be assimilated into the stream of countless other images. In a sense, photography's self-consciousness is expanding due to this new context/frame of its production, presentation and distribution. Photography's expanding self-consciousness is again connected to the museum's self-reflexivity.

Thus, what is perhaps changing nowadays is the possibility for audiences/users to transform the meanings of photography and its modes of presentation through social media, interactive personal websites, chat forums and online image banks that allow the appropriation of photography in ways previously unimaginable and very different than those appropriation practices created by artists. Audiences are perhaps the key to the deconstruction of the power of both museums and photography because of the virtual's potential to allow such divergence from authoritative control. Despite the fact that the virtual realm is still subject to hierarchies and various forms of politics, it is also a space that increasingly showcases its potential to remain open and allow for various "bottom-up" revolutionary acts to occur. At the same time, digital photography has also played its part — misleading, informative or empowering — to the various online revolutions across the globe (Soutter).

Museums begin to identify users' agency, the impact of the virtual online museum to the dissemination and re-examination of the photographic (Knelman), as well as the possible impact of digital photography online on the distribution and re-envisioning of the museum as global and democratic. As they do so, museums also move towards including their audiences, as much as their artists, in online exhibitions and displays.

For instance, in May 2010 the Guggenheim Museum announced an online competition with the title “Contemplating the Void” as a celebration of the museum’s 50th anniversary. It invited participants to “re-imagine the museum’s iconic rotunda and submit their ideas via the image-sharing site Flickr” (Guggenheim Online).

Whilst the Guggenheim rotunda has been the subject of many artistic interventions and projects in previous years by contemporary artists such as Matthew Barney, Cai Guo-Qiang, Frank Gehry, Jenny Holzer and Nam June Paik, the Guggenheim’s decision to share the new interventions and appropriations online via Flickr only confirmed its intentions towards self-reflexivity and its desire to be more inclusive and democratic. Flickr as an online sharing platform allowed hundreds of viewers to intervene, comment and re-appropriate the uploaded images. The Guggenheim staff seemed to have been aware of two things: first, the difficulty, even the impossibility of a museum to be self-reflective unless there is an intervention by an external agent (artist, visitor, user, etc.) that would ensure that the process of reflection is not absorbed by the institution itself (a critique made for many art works of institutional critique), and, second, the potential of the online virtual sphere to expand museums’ self-reflective practices — and ultimately of photography’s self-consciousness. If museums like the Guggenheim display artistic projects on online platforms like Flickr, eliminating those hierarchies and distinctions between “fine art” and “popular culture”, “artistic” and “vernacular”, “museum authority” and “visitor agency”, then the relationship between artists, museums and photography is becoming more complicated than ever before.

Artists are, of course, “heirs of the digital revolution” (Soutter 92) and contemporary artistic practices include a wide range of strategies that are informed by the digital. Many artists, for instance, respond to the “digital revolution” by choosing to create exclusively online (see Lambouris in this issue), using the virtual as an alternative creative platform for their critique of the museum. Other practices include either the creation of virtual immersive environments with the use of elaborate technologies, or of works that engage with the everyday use of digital imagery (see Robins and Martins in this issue). Artists do acknowledge, similarly to museums, that they cannot be the sole producers or owners of photographic works. Nonetheless, it is also becoming clear that “despite the proliferation of vernacular imaging” (Soutter 93), art photography is still sought after from both museums and the public. The challenge that artists might perhaps face is how to differentiate their practices from those of many other camera users (for example Thomas Struth’s *Museum Photographs* from visitor photography of museum interiors posted on Flickr) and sustain the critical potential of their work, especially when museums turn towards the virtual to support and enhance their practices.

Introduction to the papers

The relationship between museums, artists and photography is a complex and multifaceted one. The six papers that follow attempt to reveal and explore questions regarding: photography and the museum’s perceived objectivity; museum exhibition practices and processes of archiving, selection and dissemination; photography’s relationship with

painting; modes of spectatorship in the museum; artists' use of photography for questioning the museum; and the potential of photography's virtual presentation.

Joachim Schmid is an artist whose body of work is preoccupied with photography and its relationship with the museum as a space of validation, but also exclusion. In this special issue, *Susana Martins* investigates the way Schmid incorporates museological notions into his work in order to challenge the established hierarchies and values museums help validate. In order to further examine the relationship between the archive, truth and photography and how museums depend on collections and archives to create exhibitions and museum narratives, the artist adopts the role of a collector and curator. He collects, archives and presents unwanted photographs through his *Institute for the Reprocessing of Used Photographs*, pointing to an important museum omission: vernacular photography.

In *Claire Robins'* article, the author examines artists who have, like Schmid, disrupted the established museum discourses — this time by paying tribute to persons excluded from museum narratives who eventually disappeared from collective memory. The author discusses specific examples from the work of Christine Hellyar/Maureen Lander and James Luna to demonstrate how artists creatively use museums to question museum narratives and practices. Furthermore, Robins discusses two artists who have gone a step further and have created fictional museums. Orhan Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence* and Michael Blum's *A Tribute to Saffiyeh Bahar* (created for the 2005 Istanbul Biennale) both trace the lives of two fictional women who are made "real" through a careful selection of photographs and textual documents in a museum dedicated to them. In both cases, documentary and vernacular photography is used to provide proof of the existence of these fictional characters, revealing how photography can effortlessly manipulate, enhance or completely invent reality.

Walid Raad is another artist who is fascinated by the possibilities of the fictional museum. *Nicolas Lambouris* examines the work of Walid Raad, produced under the fictional organization *The Atlas Group*. The Atlas Group gathers detailed archives of photographic images, documents, videos and writings and claims to document the history of Lebanon. Similarly to conventional museum practices, the Atlas Group creates a version of history through the use of specific processes of archiving that ensure "objectivity" and the display of only selected parts of the archive. In this way, Raad explores how historical archives can ultimately form very specific narratives and interpretations that have an impact on collective memory, identity and cultural fantasies. His work also offers another reading to the potential of fiction and virtuality.

Elena Stylianou builds on the notion of the fictional by discussing the work of Louise Lawler, Sophie Calle and Diane Neumaier. These artists have used photography as a frame within which museum hegemony, the viewing experience and art's commodification are questioned. Lawler, in particular, provides new constructed readings of existing collections through the techniques of re-framing and cropping; Calle elaborates the fictional character or potential of memory by engaging with absence; and Neumaier simulates a tour through an imaginary and generic American museum, evoking the imaginary museums of Pamuk and Blum. Finally, Stylianou considers digital photography and online manifestations of imaginary institutions to suggest that perhaps a new virtual frame emerges for the production of fictions that allows us to reimagine both photography and the museum.

The artists discussed by Martins, Robins, Lambouris and Stylianou are among many others who use photography in ways that reference “a documentary tradition from which they also clearly distance themselves, providing audiences with clear indications that their work is indeed constructed” (Soutter 66). These works invite audience interpretation while facilitating alternative modes of discovery and spectatorship in the museum environment (Soutter). The last two papers focus on artists who engage with photography’s relationship to painting in order to further discuss the museum viewing experience and the importance of the context in which this takes place.

In an attempt to capture the museum experience, the artist Thomas Struth photographically reflects on the behaviour of museum visitors. *Miranda Baxter* discusses Struth’s work and how he plays with the boundaries of photography, painting and time to offer a better understanding of what might be a transformative viewing experience. In the dialogue between painting and photography established in Thomas Struth’s *Museum Photographs*, the artist directs our attention to the “crucial similarity between looking at paintings and looking at photographs, namely that the viewer is no more invited to enter the space of the photograph than he or she is invited to enter the space of the painting” (Fried 124) when these are displayed in an art museum.

Another artist who has pushed the boundaries of painting and photography is Gerhard Richter. Richter, an avid collector of photographic references, has consistently used photographs as a reference for his paintings. *Wiebke Leister* explores Richter’s relationship with photography and painting. More importantly, she references Richter’s *48 Portraits* in order to examine how the museum space and the display of Richter’s work influences the way in which it is perceived. The work includes 48 portraits of famous men and was originally created for the German pavilion of the 1972 Venice Biennale. Leister investigates the different installations of *48 Portraits* and the effect these have on the viewer, emphasizing the interrelated association between artwork, museum and viewer interpretations. Furthermore, Richter has produced a photographic edition of these photographs (1998), which increases the variations of the work’s exhibition and subsequently of the viewer’s responses.

As argued in this introduction and in the papers that follow, the context or *frame* within which a photograph is viewed can shape photography’s various constructed meanings. This frame also influences the various *fictions* produced by photography that are now equally formed by museums, artists and various audiences online. Likewise, photography withholds the potential to impact on the frame in which it is viewed. What we have also argued here is that this complex and close relationship between photography and its frame of production, presentation and dissemination — the museum — is further cemented by the fact that both photography and museums have been evolving alongside and in relationship with each other. As an effect, photography’s self-consciousness is strongly tied to the museum’s self-reflective practices. As we have suggested, this now extends to the sphere of the virtual museum wherein interventions and appropriations further challenge the agency and interrelation of photography, artists and museums.

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