

AGAINST PHOTOGRAPHY

I do not like photographers. If I were a painter, I would probably say that I did not like painters. Which is why I nurture somewhat more sympathy towards them and their work as opposed to those that deal with photography.

There is a special type of photographer in my mind to whom I have never been able to relate. The one that strikes a pose in his (self) portrait together with his camera. What exactly does a photographer showing off his Camera want to tell me? Besides proof of dealing with this activity as either a professional or an amateur, such a pose leads me to read the following in the image: "Look, this is my camera, my tool, which I love dearly and have a special fondness of, which I like to work with, of which I am proud ..."

I have always found such emotional closeness with the Machine alien and disturbing. I certainly see considerable simplicity, perhaps innocence in this pose.

I differ from these sorts of photographers due to the fact that I have no love (or like) for photography. If I did like it (in the manner that I like a person) then I would perhaps not be selecting the attributes that I find pleasurable in photography on the one hand, and those that I dislike, on the other. Perhaps I am not devoted enough to it: if this were the case, then its returns would come as tokens of greater love ... But as things stand, I battle on with photography...

I am actually battling the disunity within photography. If I am drawing, the pen's trace intertwines with the thought, with the unconscious, and with my body. The pencil is an extension of my hand, I do not perceive it as a foreign object. Using a camera in photography makes me quick, it provides a shortcut in comparison to painting. Which means: it does a job instead of me, it "draws" instead of me. And this is why it stands – together with all the other devices and technologies – between me and the final product. I have to contend with it eventhough it is not a part of the photograph; as I (indirectly) work with the final image, I am actually (directly) working with the camera.

The camera and photographic paper allow precision and demand technical accomplishment. A trace of dust, a damaged surface of emulsion, a mistake in developing the paper: all these things are a quickly recognised foreign body within the purity of the photographic image. Striving for technical perfection in (my) photography is not so much creation as it is the avoidance of mistakes. It is more necessity than choice.

What do I see in the photograph and the painting as I approach them from a distance that can still be tolerated by my eye? The "image" disappears. I confront the surface. In the oil painting, I see the application of paint, I see the stroke, I see the material proof that someone worked on the painting (I feel his physical presence). I feel time. The hair from the brush can be a part of the story, the history.

The surface of my photograph is shallow and vacant, impersonal (the surface of an industrial product). In the material sense, I add (almost) nothing to it. I move within its given technical properties as defined by the photographic emulsion.

The surface of the photograph is vulnerable physically and visually, whereas it becomes quite domesticated and sterile once safely stored under glass and framed.

The gaze upon an unguarded photograph is a privilege, an intimate view. Which means: it is rarely seen.

However, these are not the reasons as to why the photographic image no longer fascinates me (or do I resist this fascination?). I do not consume photographs, I rarely flick through journals on the topic, I do not collect photo monographs. I only venture to the darkroom rarely and do so with effort, sometimes even resistance. Since I am not in love with photography, I sometimes simply feel as if I am using and abusing it in order to get to that which attracts and touches me. In order to enter spaces and situations which I could not otherwise. It enables me to be there, not solely prying about. At the same time – if I want it to be really good – it does not allow me any distance, a voyeuristic position. But this only means that it allows me greater sincerity ...

There are more important things than photography. More important to me. I reached them also through photography, but have nevertheless no particular wish to enter into its world (or the world of art) more than necessary. Perhaps this is the cause of effort with photography, these objections. There is a misunderstanding of sorts going on. Sometimes I feel like I could give up photography without any remorse. Actually photography does not interest me. I am interested in several motifs, which I have been trying to get to over the years. Several more motifs alongside which I do not feel any effort and resistance towards photography.

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