WHAT IS_
Photography ?

WHAT IS___?
materials and methodologies

There is a growing interest in contemporary art, yet the ideas and theoretical frameworks that inform its practice can be complex and difficult to access. The what is_? series, which is intended for a general audience, aims to provide an introduction to some of the key concepts and themes in modern and contemporary art and also to provide information about the materials and methodologies employed by artists in the creation of their work.

This series acknowledges the inherent problems and contradictions in attempting to outline or summarise a wide-ranging, constantly changing and contested sphere of art theory and practice. It also takes account of the limitations of employing summary terms to describe a range of practice. Much of which emerged in opposition to such totalising tendencies. Taking these challenges into account, the intention of this series is to promote information sharing and to encourage critical thinking, debate and discussion about art and artists.

Drawing on expertise and experience from lecturers, artists, curators and critical writers, the series offers a range of perspectives and is neither definitive nor exhaustive. Each topic is addressed by a talk and supported by an information booklet, that includes a summary, the presenter's essay, a reading list, a glossary of terms and a resources list. This information can also be found on IMMA's website along with more detailed information about artworks and artists featured in IMMA's Collection at www.imma.ie.

CONTENTS

IMAGE: Candida Höfer, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin III, 2004

*WHAT IS_*
Photography *?*

05

As the national cultural institution responsible for the collection and presentation of modern and contemporary art, the Irish Museum of Modern Art exhibits artworks by established and emerging artists who use media ranging from painting and sculpture to installation, photography, video and performance. IMMA's Collection comprises artworks by Irish and international artists acquired through purchase, donations, loans and commissions and many artworks have been acquired in the context of IMMA's Temporary Exhibitions Programme. The emphasis of the Collection is on acquiring artworks rather than representing artists and there is no limitation with regard to the media acquired. IMMA's Collection is particularly well represented by contemporary artists who use use new media, such as film, video, photography and digital technology.

In this introductory text, we provide a brief overview of the context in which photography has evolved as a form of contemporary arts practice. Terms associated with photography are indicated in CAPITALS and are elaborated on in the glossary on p. 24. We invited Fiona Loughnane, art historian and lecturer, to write an essay on photography titled *Image of Reality / Image not Reality: What is Photography?,* which focuses on artists and artworks in IMMA's Collection as a means of contextualising this area of contemporary arts practice. We hope to draw attention to the body of artworks in the Collection by artists who use photography exclusively, such as Thomas Ruff, Paul Seawright and Candida Höfer and those for whom photography forms an important part of their practice, such as Les Levine, Willie Doherty and Carl Zimmerman. We also hope to draw attention to the potential of IMMA's Collection as a growing resource for further exploration and consideration of this subject.

The word PHOTOGRAPHY literally means 'drawing with light', which derives from the Greek *photo,* meaning light and *graph,* meaning to draw. Photography is the process of recording an image – a photograph – on light-sensitive film or, in the case of digital photography, via a digital electronic or magnetic memory.

The photograph is evident in nearly every aspect of modern life. As a form of communication and documentation, photographs are present in newspapers, magazines, advertisements, posters, television, the Internet, passports, ID cards, archives, security and SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS, forensics and medicine. Photography also plays an important role in domestic and recreational activities. Most photographs produced today take the form of SNAPSHOTS documenting activities such as holidays and celebrations. With the prevalence of digital cameras and mobile phone cameras, these activities are also documented for display on photo-sharing websites and photo-based SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES. Despite the prevalence of photography in many aspects of modern life, only a small minority of photographs are considered to be art and tend to be displayed in museums and galleries in formats similar to painting.

The invention of photography is a contested subject. It was the outcome of many technological developments, most notably associated with the INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION in the nineteenth century, but was also influenced by earlier technological developments such as the CAMERA OBSCURA, which is an optical device used during the RENAISSANCE to aid drawing and perspective.

The first fixed photograph was produced by Joseph Niépce in 1827 and was originally referred to as a HELIOGRAPH due to the long period of exposure to the sun required to produce the image. Niépce collaborated with Louis Daguerre to produce the DAGUERREOTYPE which was the result of their experiments with light-sensitive paper. The Daguerreotype became a popular method of photography; however, because it was expensive to produce and it was not possible to create multiple images, it was used mainly for portraiture. In the 1830s William Henry Fox Talbot developed the more versatile CALOTYPE, which allowed for the production of multiple prints through the development of a negative image.

The introduction of low-cost portable cameras, such as the Kodak camera in the 1880s and the Brownie in the 1900s, resulted in the increased popularity and use of photography for domestic and recreational purposes. These innovations contributed to the development of photography making it more visible and accessible to a growing middle class of consumers and a working class with increased leisure time and disposable income. Photography also became important to the promotion and dissemination of commercial goods through advertising, as a consequence of its capacity for mass reproduction.

The development of lightweight and flexible equipment, such as the Leica in the 1920s and innovations in film in terms of light and speed, resulted in more dynamic and spontaneous photography. These innovations of photography as a means of documentating social, political and cultural events in the form of DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY. In the 1920s and '30s documentary photography played an important role in recording social and cultural events during the Depression era in America.

The ubiquity of photography for domestic and recreational purposes, as a result of cheap and easy-to-use cameras and its use for social purposes, contributed to the emergence of a distinction between different modes of photography. Recreational photography in the form of the snapshot was associated with the amateur documentation of aspects of everyday life. Documentary photography was associated with the recording of social and political events for the purposes of documentation and communication. ART PHOTOGRAPHY was associated with the artistic expression of the photographer. The mechanical nature of photography, its potential for mass reproduction and its association with commercial enterprise, raised questions, for some, about its consideration as art, where art was associated with beauty, originality and the imagination and technical skill of the artist.

Despite these reservations, some early photographers sought to ensure photography's status as art by adopting the conventions of painting, such as posed portraits, landscapes, elaborate TABLEAU and also by presenting their work in academy-style displays. They used soft focus and PRINTMAKING techniques, such as PHOTOGRAVURE, to create painterly effects in their photographs. This movement became known as PICTORIALISM.

At the turn of the twentieth century, photography displaced PAINTING as the primary mode of pictoral representation, freeing artists to experiment with new media and methodologies. Embracing all things new and modern, many artists associated with the AVANT-GARDE of the early twentieth century were influenced by or adopted the technological developments of photography and applied them to their work. No longer concerned with representation, artists associated with CUBISM focused on the medium and structure of painting itself, challenging the illusory nature of painting and prompting the development of ABSTRACTION. Other avant-garde artists associated with FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM and CONSTRUCTIVISM experimented with the processes and material properties of photography to produce photographic work in the form of PHOTOGRAMS, SOLARISATION and PHOTOMONTAGE.

Influenced by these avant-garde movements and also by developments in documentary photography, emerging modernist photographers abandoned the painterly and manipulated style of pictorialism, focusing instead on the inherent properties of photography, such as cropping and sharp focus. This resulted in more realistic and experimental images reflecting tendencies towards abstraction within avant-garde practice. This approach became known as STRAIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY. The emphasis on

the medium's inherent qualities, the exploration of abstraction and the role of the photographer as author expressing his/her vision, distinguished this work from the more prevalent forms of social and documentary photography and were central to its consideration as art.

The modernist period tended to be media-specific, where artists worked primarily in a single medium, such as painting or SCULPTURE. Photography's INDEXICALITY – its association with its context – and the assumptions underpinning its capacity to represent reality inhibited it from being fully embraced as an art form at the height of MODERNISM, when abstraction was the dominant mode of expression. However, social and political changes in the 1960s resulted in a shift towards social considerations in art in general and a reconsideration of photography as an artistic medium. This new POSTMODERN era was characterised by interdisciplinarity, where artists employed a range of media, including photography, in the achievement of their artistic objectives. Consequently, photography acquired a more.

During this period, artists adopted strategies of APPROPRIATION and MASS-PRODUCTION to undermine modernist notions of the artwork as an original, unique, commodifiable object. POP ART embraced the mass-produced imagery of advertising and popular culture largely generated by photography. Emphasis was placed on the idea or concept rather than the production of an art object. Artists began to experiment with new forms of practice, such as temporary, textual, performative or DIDACTIC work to challenge the COMMODIFICATION of the art object. Photography played an important role in documenting the emerging conceptual and process-based practices of CONCEPTUAL ART, FLUXUS, PERFORMANCE ART and HAPPENINGS. The photographic documentation of such ephemeral, conceptually-based practice was generally not considered to be art; however, over time, it has acquired the status of an art object, where it is now collected and displayed as such. For some performative artists, the documentation of their practice is considered an inherent component of the overall work. Equally, many art photographers have appropriated the performative strategies derived from conceptually-based work to stage their photographs.

The pace of technological development has accelerated considerably in the second half of the twentieth century with the development of DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY, the COMPUTER and the INTERNET. Developments in FILM and VIDEO and the emergence of NEW MEDIA ART have expanded the possibilities for new technologies to inform contemporary art practice. In the 1970s and '80s art photography began to encompass colour photography and documentary photography; consequently many documentary photographs; are now developed with the gallery space, rather than the newspaper or magazine, as the intended forum for display. The development of the digital camera and the mobile camera phone have transformed the process of producing and developing photographs. Yet many art

photographers continue to use traditional methodologies to produce and develop their photographs and some employ strategies from earlier forms of practice, such as pictorialism and tableau photography, in the production of their photographic work.

Since the end of the twentieth century, photography has become a common medium among artists, suggesting that it now occupies a dominant role in contemporary arts practice. Art photography is recognised as an art form in and of itself and is created increasingly for the museum or gallery space. Many photographers use medium- or large-format cameras to create large prints which are displayed in a manner similar to paintings. The situation of photography within the display, collections and discourse of many international art museums and galleries acknowledges the centrality of its role within contemporary art and has contributed significantly to its presentation and reception as art.

Lisa Moran, Curator
Education and Community Programmes

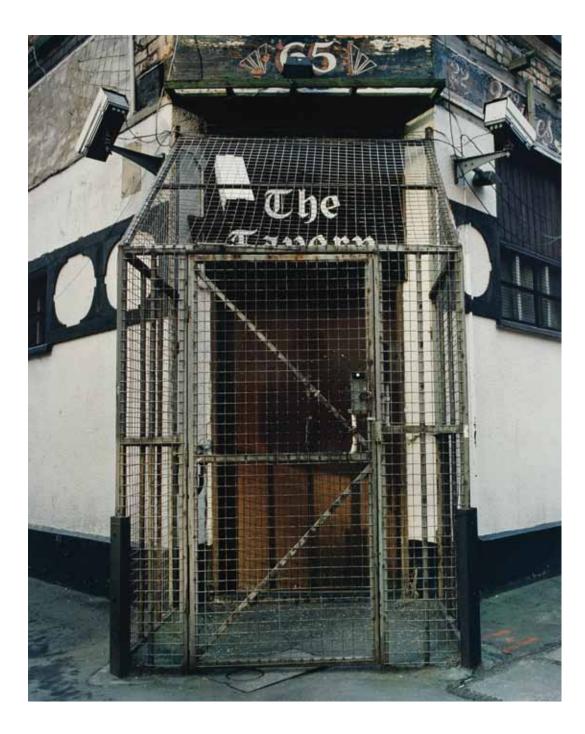Sophie Byrne, Assistant Curator
Talks and Lectures Programme

Image of Reality / Image not Reality: What is Photography?   Fiona Loughnane

11

From its beginnings, photography has been marked by its versatility. The camera has been employed for personal use in family snapshots; official use to create visual records (examples include passports, medical records and mugshots); commercial use in advertising images; and creative use in art photography, to list just a few examples. Photography has also engaged in constant technological innovations, leading to enormous differences in the physical character of the image; from daguerreotypes to images printed from a negative, from plate glass to film and from analogue to digital. Given this diversity, the photograph has always been difficult to define and contain. The apparently basic question 'What is Photography?' provokes complex responses that need to consider the diverse roles and characteristics of the photograph.

In 1922, in a letter to the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, Marcel Duchamp declared: 'You know exactly how I feel about photography. I would like to see it make people despise painting until something else will make photography unbearable.'[1] Today the camera seems more firmly embedded in visual culture than ever; every mundane event or passing sight instantly captured and shared in an age of 'smartphones' and social networking sites. The ubiquity of the photographic image has perhaps created an oppressive presence in everyday life. The colonisation of every aspect of life by photography is not a recent development; however the invention of photography in the late 1830s quickly led to a dramatic increase in the production and circulation of images.[2]

Photography has been seen as a documentary tool, allowing for realistic depictions of the world, and as a creative practice, now a central medium within the fine arts. The interchange between these opposing views of the medium – factual and imaginative, everyday life and 'high' culture – has created a rich field of image production.

image: Paul Seawright, Cage I, 1997

Roland Barthes pointed out that photography in its earliest years depicted remarkable things, but over time things became remarkable simply because they were photographed.[3] The development of a medium that allowed for a quick and accurate reproduction of the world meant the creation, for the first time in history, of a visual record of all aspects of life. Photographs offer a visual knowledge of the world outside direct experience. This knowledge is abstracted and second-hand, but it nonetheless creates a strong sense of recognition.[4] Visual representations became increasingly important in the dissemination of knowledge; the endless reproducibility of the photograph made it a central feature of modern, spectacular, consumer society.

Photography did not simply represent modern life, it became one of the conditions associated with modernity. Advancements in technology, especially those related to transport and communications, gave a sense of life lived at greater speed accross shorter distances. Photography allows for quick, accurate recording of things and its placing of distant objects, places and people, directly in front of the viewer, had the apparent effect of abolishing both time and distance.

Photography inserted itself into discourses, such as tourism, criminology and medicine, often becoming a tool through which institutional power was exercised.[5] The photographing of people and places did not always make the distant and strange seem familiar; photography, especially in its institutional use, frequently asserted difference.

John Lamprey, active in the 1870s, sought a standardised means to depict the human body for his anthropological research. He photographed the nude figure, in full-length front and side profiles, against a gridded backdrop. His methods gave the illusion of a neutral, disinterested, scientific discourse, allowing him to compare differences between races. However, Lamprey's work didn't just record difference, it also constructed it. His project was 'steeped in colonial ideology and illicit desire' and served as a visual representation of western power over the 'other'.[6]

Early accounts of photography often displayed a clear sense of wonder at a process that showed a miraculous ability to record the world. Walter Benjamin cited the response of German author, Max Dauthendey, to early portraiture:

> We were abashed by the distinctness of these human images, and believed that the tiny faces in the picture could see us, so powerfully was everyone affected by the unaccustomed truth to nature of the first daguerreotypes.[7]

Despite such accounts, the photograph's distance from reality can be seen from its distortions of time and space; its two-dimensionality; its selection and omission of objects through the framing of the camera's lens; the frequent absence of colour; and its stillness. However, despite these
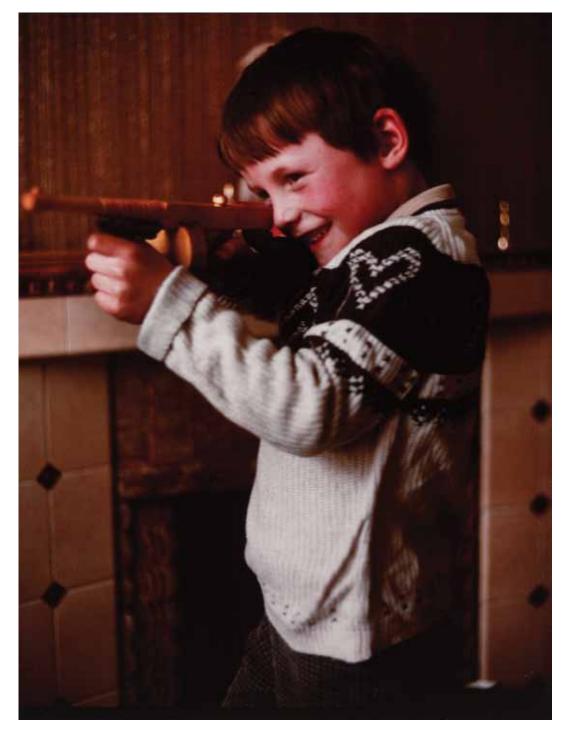
Image: Les Levine,
The Troubles: An Artist's Document of Ulster, 1972,

15

features, photography has been seen to have a necessary link with reality. This connection to reality is often cited as the reason certain photographs generate a charged or emotional response from viewers.

The photograph has been described as indexical, a sign carrying a trace of the real, because of the way analogue photography records a physical trace of the light as it falls on actual objects. Dennis Oppenheim's work from 1970, *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn*, is an illustration of photography's indexical properties; a photograph of the artist as a photograph. In the work, Oppenheim turned his torso into a light-sensitive plate, sunbathing with a book on his chest, and recording the result in a pair of 'before and after' photographs. It's a compelling demonstration of the way traditional photographic methods both depict the objects that appear before the camera, and contain physical residues of them.

Photography was also considered to offer a truthful depiction of the world because it avoided the personal, subjective expression of media such as painting. In contrast, the camera was seen to offer an objective means of recording subjects that documented rather than interpreted. Photographic documents aspired to a 'straight' photographic style – direct and unmediated – that described 'facts' in a neutral, scientific way.

John Lamprey's work demonstrates that claims to scientific objectivity were often spurious. Our experience of images is never entirely free of interpretation, and the meanings we ascribe to photographs are strongly influenced by the context in which we encounter them. Photographs are rarely presented in isolation; even personal snapshots are often experienced in the context of the 'family album'. The supposed truth and objectivity of photography is as much a symptom of institutional authority, as a characteristic of its physical properties.

One way in which the meaning of the photograph is fixed and made clear is through the use of the caption. Walter Benjamin described the caption as an imperative directive to photographic meaning that created signposts for the viewer.[8] Another paired set of images, *Incident*, 1993 and *Border Incident*, 1994, by the Irish artist Willie Doherty, demonstrates the way our understanding of photographs is informed by the context in which they are viewed and how language supplements the image in the form of title and/or caption. Both images are large, detailed, close-ups of burnt-out cars abandoned in the landscape. The straight on camera angle in the photographs adds to the sense that we are being presented with a factual description. Both works are given a political charge because of the use of the words 'border' and 'incident' in the titles, immediately evoking the violence of Northern Ireland's recent past and suggesting that we are looking at the aftermath of conflict. However, one of the two images depicts a car that has simply been illegally dumped. Typically for Doherty's work the signposts offered by the titles misdirect rather than guide.

When digital processes first became widespread in the 1990s, they were seen by many to mark the end of any claims to photographic 'truth'. Rather than carry a physical memory of light falling on objects, digital images

are reconstructions using binary code, and can therefore be seen as further removed from reality. As we have seen, viewing photographs as a slice of the 'real' has always been problematic, no matter what form they take.

The field of photojournalism is most vulnerable to doubts about photography's relationship to reality. For many the most important role of the camera has been its ability to 'bear witness' to the major events of history. Photojournalism certainly seems less prestigious today than in its heyday from the 1930s to the 1960s, when magazines such as *Life* and *Vu* were dedicated to the narration of current events through the picture story. However, the decline in photojournalism has less to do with doubts about photographic truth, than with the emergence of new media and forums for the circulation of news images. Many of the images of the recent 'Arab Spring' revolts were taken by protestors and ordinary citizens, who then circulated the images on the Internet. Such developments offer the possibility of more democratic documentary practices. In the past the figure of the photojournalist or documentary photographer suggested a heroic figure (by virtue of both skill and bravery) who occupied a superior position relative to his/her subjects, often presented as passive victims of events.[9] Digital technologies seem to offer the possibility that such victims of circumstance can achieve agency through recording their own trauma.

Outside these debates, in our everyday experience of visual culture, we continue to invest in the belief that photography presents a reliable and truthful account of the world. We expect images of products displayed by online stores to relate to the items for sale, and tend to believe in the image more than the textual description. The item for sale on e-bay, without an accompanying photograph, is assumed to be in dreadful condition, no matter how enthusiastically its virtues are listed by the seller.

Image not Reality

While some have prized photography for its ability to document and record the world, others have been drawn to the creative possibilities offered by the camera. Photography was initially positioned as a creative practice through emulating existing fine art media. The earliest photographs depicted genres established in painting: the still-life, the nude and the landscape. From the 1850s a style of photography known as 'pictorialism' emerged. The pictorialists recreated the type of sentimental, narrative subject found in nineteenth-century art, often producing very elaborate, multi-figural scenes through using techniques like combination printing. Pictorialist imagery tended to employ soft focus and made the surface of the photograph appear expressive and individual, by scratching into or drawing on negatives.

In the early twentieth century, with the emergence of avant-garde groups such as Dada, Soviet-Constructivism and Surrealism, there was a radical change in approaches to photography as art. These groups were drawn to photography's modernity and, rather than relating it to painting, they sought a new aesthetic based on the operations of the camera. Avant-garde photography tended to employ a sharp focus and often depicted modern subjects, such as Albert Renger-Patzsch's images of industrially-produced commodities or László Moholy-Nagy's images of the Eiffel Tower.

Aleksandr Rodchenko felt that photography allowed artists to move away from the 'old point of view' which he associated with bourgeois 'belly button shots' and argued that the camera enabled less conventional views of the world, such as views from above and below (bird's eye and worm's eye viewpoints), extreme close-ups and cropping.[10] Photography was also seen as an exciting extension to natural vision, recording sights unavailable to the human eye. Microphotography using powerful magnifying lenses, the use of series of cameras to capture motion and X-rays, all extended natural vision, creating what Walter Benjamin referred to as 'the optical unconcious'.[11] While avant-garde photographers were interested in photography's connection to reality, they were also concerned to dismantle and subvert the reality of the photograph. Techniques such as photomontage, photograms, doubling and solarisation emphasised the photograph's status as a made image and its distance from the real.

Some art photographers, particularly those associated with *Aperture* magazine in the 1940s and 1950s, produced a type of modernist pictorialism; moody black and white images that abstracted their subjects and emphasised the expressive qualities of the camera. David Campany has argued that this approach was concerned to separate photography from everyday, vernacular snapshots. This is why they chose to use black and white rather than colour; produced images that were expressive rather than descriptive; and often used unusual angles or framing to create abstract effects.[12]

In contrast, other art photographers engaged in a 'documentary style', often focusing on urban life in street photography.[13] John Szarkowski's influential catalogue, *The Photographer's Eye*, was centred around these practices by artists who were united by an interest in the vernacular snapshot, using its tropes to give their artfully composed images a careless, everyday quality. As with earlier avant-garde ideas, this approach to photography attempted a codification of the medium, based on qualities inherent to the camera. Szarkowski argued that one of the central features of the camera is the way it causes us to see the world as an image (the thing itself), framed, isolated and ultimately separated from the world by the act of photographing (the frame). The resulting image is separated from the flow of time, and causes an attentive form of viewing, often focusing on compelling details.[14]

Artists from the 1960s began to move away from seeing the photograph as art, and were instead drawn to its everyday documentation of the mundane. In this they were strongly influenced by conceptual art, in particular its mistrust of the expressive aesthetic of modernist art, engaging instead in an art of intellectual enquiry. Conceptual artists employed photographs as blank, neutral documents, but soon this became an influential aesthetic within art photography, most famously represented by the exhibition, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*, held in the Eastman House Museum of Photography, New York in 1975.[15]

This approach to the image continues to be influential in contemporary art, however, apparently neutral documentation of the everyday spaces of life can often be deceptive. Thomas Demand's practice involves photographing

seemingly blank and overlooked environments, such as offices, stairwells and bathrooms; spaces Marc Augé referred to as 'non-places'.[16] Demand's photographs are in fact elaborate hand made creations, sculptural models of space, created in paper by the artist and then photographed. Demand's work brings together two opposing tendencies in the use of photographs by contemporary artists: the documentation of the everyday, and the creation of elaborate scenarios for the camera.

While art might engage with the everyday, documentary character of photography in one way, in another it avoids losing the unique, special character of art. Most artists using photographs tend to produce images in single or limited editions, denying the reproducibility offered by photographic technologies. Walter Benjamin famously argued that photography diminished the 'aura' of art, but that it also offered the possibility of more democratic forms of art.[17] The economic imperatives of art production prevent the widespread adoption of these ideas, but some artists have used photographic practices to reach a wider public audience. A good example is Yinka Shonibare's *Diary of a Victorian Dandy*, which was shown as a series of posters on the London Underground, for one month in 1998.

Despite our exposure to ever increasing amounts of photographic images, it could be argued that we notice them less and less. Where once photography was seen as representing modernity and speed, it is now often characterised by its slowness and stillness, more marked today as the moving image becomes increasingly accessible. Roland Barthes argued that the frozen quality of the photograph has the effect of suggesting a past moment, but that our belief in its reality makes that moment permanently present.[18] Photographs create a powerful nostalgia, evoking the past in the present.

Digital practices mean that photography has become more disembodied, often exchanged from computer to computer without ever taking physical form. But certain photographs are still noticed, embodied, displayed and examined. The best example of this is the family photograph, which often becomes a substitute for absent loved ones, and is sometimes touched and caressed as if it had a type of personhood.[19]

However, we are attentive to such images, not because of their physical properties, but because of their subject. Barthes argued that the photograph acts as a 'transparent envelope', which we look through in order to engage with its content.[20] This unassuming quality has allowed photography to adopt new forms and to insert itself into a wide variety of contexts. The invisibility of photography does not mark the end of the medium, the invisibility of photography is its power.

image: Abigail O'Brien,
The Last Supper, 1995

1   David Campany, *Art and Photography,* London: Phaidon, 2003, p. 13.

2   The question of who invented photography is still subject to debate. For general
        accounts of the history of photography see Michael Frizot (ed.), *A New History
        of Photography,* Cologne: Könemann, 1994 and Mary Warner Marien, *Photography:
        A Cultural History,* London: Laurence King, 2002. The classic text by Beaumont
        Newhall, *The History of Photography,* New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982
        remains useful.

3   Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, p. 34.

4   Susan Sontag argues that photography gives us 'knowledge at bargain prices'.
        See *On Photography,* London: Penguin, 2002, p. 24.

5   See John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and
        Histories,* London: Macmillan, 1988 and his recent publication *The Disciplinary
        Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning,* Minneapolis: University
        of Minnesota, 2009.

6   Steve Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University
        Press, 2006, p. 24.

7   *Walter Benjamin,* 'A Small History of Photography' in *One-Way Street*, *London:*
        Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979, p. 244.

8   Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction',
        in *Illuminations,* London: Fontana, 1973, p. 224.

9   Martha Rosler, 'In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)',
        in Liz Wells (ed.), *The Photography Reader,* London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 261-274.

10   Steve Edwards, 'Profane Illumination: Photography and Photomontage in the USSR
        and Germany,' in Steve Edwards and Paul Wood (eds.), *Art of the Avant-Gardes,*
        New Haven and London: Yale University Press and Open University, p. 408.

11   Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', p. 243.

12   Campany, *Art and Photography,* p. 17.

13   Walker Evans coined the term 'documentary style' to separate art photography's
        approach to documentary from more everyday photographic documents. See Britt
        Salvesen, *New Topographics,* Göttingen: Steidl, 2009, p. 16.

14   John Szarkowski, 'Introduction to *The Photographer's Eye*', in Wells, *The Photography
        Reader,* pp. 97-103.

15   Salvesen, *New Topographics,* 2009.

16   Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,*
        London and New York: Verso, 1995.

17   Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 221.

18   Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* pp. 76-80.

19   Elizabeth Edwards, 'Thinking Photography beyond the Visual', in J. J. Long,
        Andrea Noble and Edward Welch (eds.), *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots,*
        London: Routledge, 2009, p. 33.

20   Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* p. 5.

Fiona
Loughnane

Fiona Loughnane is a graduate of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology,
University College Dublin and National College of Art and Design.
She has worked as an education assistant in the National Gallery
of Ireland, as an associate lecturer for the Open University and
is currently an associate lecturer with the National College of Art
and Design. She is a member of the editorial committee of 'Artefact',
the journal of the Irish Association of Art Historians.

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: the Conception of Photography*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.

Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), in *Illuminations*, London: Fontana, 1973, pp. 219-253.

Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

Victor Burgin (ed.), *Thinking Photography*, London: Macmillan, 1982.

David Campany (ed.), *Art and Photography*, London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2003.

Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004.

T. J. Demos, *Vitamin Ph: New Perspectives on Photography*, London: Phaidon Press, 2006.

Emma Dexter and Thomas Weski (eds.), *Cruel and Tender: The Real in Twentieth-Century Photography*, London: Tate, 2003.

Steve Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Jessica Evans (ed.), *The Camerawork Essays: Context and Meaning in Photography*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 1997.

Vilem Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, London: Reaktion Books, 2000.

Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

Michel Frizot, *A New History of Photography*, Cologne: Konemann, 1998.

Martin Lister (ed.), *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, London: Routledge, 1995.

J. J. Long, Andrea Noble and Edward Welch (eds.), *Photography: Theoretical Shapshots*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

Nathan Lyons (ed.), *Photographers on Photography: A Critical Anthology*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966.

Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002.

W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconography: Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982.

Fred Ritchin, *After Photography*, London and New York: W. W. Norton, 2009.

Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1997.

Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.

Stephen Shore, *The Nature of Photographs*, London: Phaidon Press, 2007.

Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.

John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2007.

John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009.

Alan Trachtenberg (ed.), *Classical Essays on Photography*, New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980.

Liz Wells (ed.), *The Photography Reader*, London: Routledge, 2002.

ABSTRACTION
The process of making abstract through elimination or avoidance of any representational elements and by emphasising the formal elements of an artwork.

APPROPRIATION
The use of existing elements, such as an image, idea, sound, text or style, in the creation of a new artwork.

ART PHOTOGRAPHY
Also known as fine art photography, a category of photography which emphasises the photographer's artistic intentions over the technical or functional aspects of the photograph.

AVANT-GARDE
French for advance guard or 'vanguard', a military term used to describe an advance army group. The term is used to describe innovative, experimental or cutting edge artists and movements.

CALOTYPE
An early photographic process invented by William Henry Fox Talbot in the 1830s which involved the exposure of paper coated with silver iodide to light, producing a negative image from which multiple positive images could be printed.

CAMERA OBSCURA
An optical device used extensively during the Renaissance to aid drawing and perspective.

COMMODITY / COMMODIFICATION
A product or article of trade which is marketed for a commercial exchange of equal value. The influence of the art market on the nature, production and distribution of art is often referred to in terms of commodification.

COMPUTER
A mechanism for storing data and executing instructions called programmes in relation to that data. Software applications for personal computers include word processing, spreadsheets, databases, Web browsers, e-mail clients, games and specialist software.

CONCEPTUAL ART
Originating in the 1960s, conceptual art emphasises the idea or concept rather than the production of a tangible art object. The ideas and methodologies of conceptual art continue to inform contemporary art practice.

CONSTRUCTIVISM
An abstract art movement founded by Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchenko in Russia around 1915, which embraced developments in modern technology and industrialisation.

CONTEMPORARY ART
Refers to current and very recent art practice. Attributed to the period from the 1970s to the present, it also refers to works of art made by living artists. Contemporary art can be driven by both theory and ideas, and is also characterised by a blurring of the distinction between art and other categories of cultural experience, such as television, cinema, mass media, entertainment and digital technology.

CUBISM
An early twentieth-century movement led by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque that focused on the physical qualities of painting rather than the subject matter. It is characterised by the breaking up of the picture plane, the merging of figure and ground, the adoption of multiple viewpoints and the simplification of form into geometric shapes. Cubism was very influential on subsequent art movements and artists, and is considered to be the forerunner of abstract art.

DADA
An international, avant-garde art movement founded in 1916. The artists associated with Dada used a variety of media, including collage, sound, nonsense texts and absurd performances to protest against the social, cultural and political conditions prevailing in Europe during World War I. Originating in Zurich, the movement spread to Paris, Berlin, Cologne, Hanover and New York.

DAGUERREOTYPE
A photographic process developed by Louis Daguerre in collaboration with Joseph Niépce in the

1830s where an image is etched onto a silver-plated copper sheet after lengthy exposure to light.

DIDACTIC
To adopt an approach which conveys a message, knowledge or information.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
Electronic data storage and transmission technology that enables immense amounts of information to be compressed on small storage devices, such as computers and telephones, that can easily be preserved, retrieved and transported.

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY
A genre of photography applied to the photographic documentation of social, cultural, historical and political events. Traditionally it was associated with professional photojournalists but, more recently, with the proliferation of digital cameras and social media websites, it is associated with amateur photography.

FILM
The medium used for the creation of still or moving images. The term is also used to describe a motion picture which is a sequence of images projected onto a screen, collectively referred to as cinema. In contemporary art, film is referred to as an art form.

FLUXUS
An international, avant-garde art movement in the 1960s which included artists, writers, filmmakers and musicians creating experimental, multimedia work in film, video and performance informed by social and political activism.

FUTURISM
An early twentieth century movement which originated in Italy and embraced all things modern, including technology, speed, industrialisation and mechanisation. It also embraced violence and nationalism and was associated with Italian Fascism.

HAPPENINGS
Associated with US artist Allan Kaprow, the term Happenings emerged in the 1950s to describe time-based performances, events or situations which rely on artistic chance and improvisation to provoke interaction from the audience.

HELIOGRAPH
An early photographic process invented by Joseph Niépce in 1827 which involved exposing a metal plate coated with bitumen to light for long periods of time.

INDEXICALITY
A term associated with linguistics and philosophy which refers to a word or phrase whose meaning is contingent on the circumstance or context in which it is expressed.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION
A period of social, political and economic change arising from the shift from manual to machine-based manufacturing, which affected agriculture, manufacturing, mining and transport. Originating in Great Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Industrial Revolution spread throughout Europe and America, impacting on all aspects of social, political and cultural life.

INTERDISCIPLINARY
The combining of two or more artform specialisms, such as music, visual arts or dance.

INTERNET
A globalised system of computer networks linked by copper wire, fibre-optic cables and wireless connections, which provides services, resources and information, such as the hypertext of the World Wide Web, electronic mail, file sharing, online gaming and social networking sites.

MASS PRODUCTION
The generation of large quantities of standardised objects associated with industrialisation and mechanised factory production.

MODERNISM / MODERN ART
Refers to art theory and practice from the 1860s to the late 1960s and is defined in terms of a linear progression of styles, periods and schools,

such as Impressionism, Cubism and Abstract Expressionism.

NEW MEDIA ART
Artwork created using new media, such as film, video, lens-based media, digital technology, hypertext, cyberspace, audio technology, CD-ROMs, webcams, surveillance technology, wireless telephones, GPS systems, computer and video games and biotechnology.

PAINTING
The application of a pigment or colour to a surface such as canvas, paper or plaster. Painting was the dominant artistic medium for pictorial representation until the twentieth century.

PERFORMANCE ART
Involves an artist undertaking an action or actions where the artist's body is the medium. Performance art evolved in the late 1950s and is closely associated with video art as this was the primary means of recording this ephemeral art form.

PHOTOGRAM
An image produced without the use of a camera by projecting the shadows of objects on photographic paper.

PHOTOGRAPHY
The process of recording an image – a photograph – on light-sensitive film or, in the case of digital photography, via a digital electronic or magnetic memory.

PHOTOGRAVURE
A printmaking process developed in the 1830s which involves creating an intaglio etching from a photographic image created on a light-sensitive copper plate through exposure to light.

PHOTOMONTAGE
The creation of a photographic image by combining parts of a number of separate photographic images. A practice associated in particular with the Dada movement in Berlin in the 1920s.

PICTORIALISM
An approach to photography prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which emphasised the pictorial and aesthetic qualities of the image over its documentary characteristics. Photographic artists created images similar to paintings in terms of form and effect, employing a range of techniques, such as use of soft focus and manipulation of the printmaking materials to create painterly effects. They also displayed these photographic works in exhibitions similar to the conventional academy exhibitions.

POP ART
An art movement which developed in the UK and US in the 1950s, drawing on aspects of popular culture and entertainment as subject matter.

POSTMODERNISM
A social, cultural and intellectual movement characterised by a rejection of notions of linear progression, grand totalising narratives and critical consensus associated with modernism. It is characterised by an interdisciplinary approach, multiple narratives, fragmentation, relativity, contingency and irony.

PRINTMAKING
The process of creating an artwork by transferring an impression from one surface to another. Printmaking processes can use metal, stone, linoleum, fabric, etc. While printmaking enables multiple copies to be produced, each print is considered unique.

RENAISSANCE
A French word for rebirth, the Renaissance was a cultural movement originating in Italy in the late fourteenth century, prompted by the revival of ancient classical sources. Extending until the sixteenth century the movement spread throughout Italy and Europe affecting all aspects of social, political and cultural life. Characterised by the adoption of a humanist approach, Renaissance artists placed an emphasis on naturalism and the use of linear perspective.

SCULPTURE
A three-dimensional art object which is either created or constructed by an artist and includes

constructions, assemblages, installations, sound, new media, etc.

SNAPSHOT
A photograph taken with lack of deliberate aim or consideration of framing, lighting, etc. Characteristics of the snapshot include inadvertent cropping, red-eye, lack of focus, under or overexposure and double exposure.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES
Internet sites which facilitate global social interaction through the posting of text and images on personalised web pages. Examples include Facebook, LinkedIn and Bebo.

SOLARISATION
The reversal of tones in a photographic negative or print caused by overexposure to light where light areas become dark and dark areas become light.

STRAIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY
A term associated with photographers who emphasised the inherent qualities of photography and rejected any form of manipulation or distortion of the image for painterly effects as associated with pictorialism.

SURREALISM
An anti-establishment literary and visual art movement founded in 1924 by André Breton and influenced by Dada, Psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud's theories of the unconscious.

SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY
The employment of technology to monitor behaviour and activities and to gather information. This includes electronic security systems: CCTV cameras; social network analysis; biometric surrveillance: fingerprinting and facial recognition; aerial surveillance: satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles; data mining and profiling; corporate surveillance and telephone and computer monitoring.

TABLEAU
An elaborate pictorial narrative or story staged and presented in a single image in the form of a painting or photograph.

VIDEO
Technology used to record, store and project static images in a moving format similar to film. The production of lightweight, low-cost video technology, such as the Sony Portapak, in the late 1960s, contributed to the growth in experimental video making during this period.

The following is a select list of resources. A more detailed list of resources can be found on IMMA's website www.imma.ie

Information Websites
General

Artcyclopedia
Internet encyclopedia on art and artists.
www.artcyclopedia.com

The Artists
Database of modern and contemporary artists.
www.the-artists.org

Intute
Online service providing information about web resources for education and research.
www.intute.ac.uk

STOT
Platform providing online links relating to contemporary art.
www.stot.org

Photography
Photo-Festivals
A platform for international photography festivals with the aim to promote the development of the community of photographers.
www.photo-festivals.com

Photography-now
An international online platform of photography and video art.
www.photography-now.com

Photomuse
A resource for scholarship in the history of photography.
www.photomuse.org

Organisations, Museums and Galleries
Photography

Aperture Foundation, New York
www.aperture.org

Centre for Contemporary Photography, Australia
www.ccp.org.au

Daguerreian Society, USA
www.daguerre.org

Foam, Amsterdam
www.foam.org

G44, Centre for Contemporary Art, Toronto
www.gallery44.org

Gallery of Photography, Dublin
www.galleryof
photography.ie

George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, New York
www.eastmanhouse.org

International Centre of Photography, New York
www.icp.org

Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago
www.mocp.org

Photofusion, London
www.photofusion.org

PHOTOIRELAND, Dublin
www.photoireland.com

The Society for Photographic Education, USA
www.spenational.org

Biennials and Art Fairs
General

Art Basel, Switzerland
www.artbasel.com

Documenta, Kassel, Germany
www.documenta.da

Frieze Art Fair, London
www.friezeartfair.com

Istanbul Biennial, Turkey
www.iksv.org/bienal

Liverpool Biennial, UK
www.biennial.com

Manifesta, European Biennale of Contemporary Art
www.manifesta.org

Moscow Biennale, Russia
www.moscowbiennale.ru

Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil
www.bienalsaopaulo.globo.com

Shanghai Biennale, China
www.shanghaibiennale.com

Skulptur Projekte Münster, Germany
www.skulptur-projekte.de

Venice Biennale, Italy
www.labiennale.org

Photography
Auckland Festival of Photography, New Zealand
www.photographyfestival.org.nz

Brighton Photo Biennial, UK
www.bpb.org.uk

Format: International Photography Festival, UK
www.formatfestival.com

GRID, International Photography Biennial, Netherlands
www.gridphotofestival.com

Les Rencontres d'Arles, Photography Festival, France
www.rencontres-arles.com

London Street Photography Festival, UK
www.londonstreet photographyfestival.org

New York Photo Festival, USA
www.newyorkphotofestival. com

Paraty em Foco, International Photography Festival, Brazil
www.paratyemfoco.com

Photo Biennial, Thessaloniki, Greece
www.photobiennale.gr

PhotoEspana Festival, Spain
www.phe.es

Visa Pour l'Image, Perpignan, France
www.visapourlimage.com

Journals / Magazines
General

Art Forum Magazine
www.artforum.com

Art Monthly
www.artmonthly.co.uk

Art Newspaper
www.theartnewspaper.com

Art Review
www.artreview.com

Circa Art Magazine
www.recirca.com

Contemporary
www.contemporary-magazines.com

Critical Inquiry
www.criticalinquiry. uchicago.edu

E-flux
www.e-flux.com/journal

Flash Art
www.flashartonline.com

Frieze Art Journal
www.frieze.com

The International Journal of Cultural Policy
www.tandf.co.uk/journals/ titles/10286632.asp

Irish Arts Review
www.irishartsreview.com

Journal of Visual Culture
www.sagepub.com/journals

Printed Project
www.visualartists.ie

Third Text
www.tandf.co.uk/journals/ titles/09528822.asp

The Vacuum
www.thevacuum.org.uk

Variant
www.variant.randomstate. org

The Visual Artists New Sheet
www.visualartists.ie

Photography
Aperture Magazine
www.aperture.org

B&W Magazine
www.bandwmag.com

Blind Spot: Magazine
www.blindspot.com

The British Journal of Photography
www.bjp-online.com

Camera Obscura
www.obscurajournal.com

F-Stop
www.fstopmagazine.com

History of Photography
www.tandf.co.uk/journals/ titles/03087298.asp

Lens Culture: Photography and Shared Territories
www.lensculture.com

Philosophy of Photography:
www.intellectbooks. co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=186/

Photography and Culture
www.bergpublishers. com/?tabid=3257

Pluk Magazine
www.plukmagazine.com

Silvershotz: The International Journal of Photography
www.silvershotz.com

Source - Photographic Review
www.source.ie

Tank Magazine
www.tankmagazine.com

Images:
Every effort has been made to acknowledge correct copyright of images where applicable. Any errors or omissions are unintentional and should be notified to the Irish Museum of Modern Art *What Is_? series.*

List of Illustrations:
Page 2
Candida Höfer, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin III, 2004, C-print Ed 2/6, 180 x 220 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 2005.

Page 4
Hannah Starkey, Untitled - August 1999, 1999, C-type print, 122 x 152 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Donated by George and Maura McClelland, 2000.

Page 10
Paul Seawright, Cage I, 1997, C-type photograph on aluminuim, 200 x 160 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 1997.

Page 13
Les Levine, The Troubles: an Artist's Document of Ulster, 1972, Archival cibachrome, 27.9 x 35.6 cm or 35.6 x 27.9 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Donated by the artist in memory of his parents Muriel McMahon and Charles Levine, 2010.

Page 14
Willie Doherty, Incident, 1993, Cibachrome mounted on aluminum, Ed 1/3, 122 x 183 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 1994.

Willie Doherty, Border Incident, 1994, Cibachrome mounted on aluminum, Ed 3/3, 122 x 183 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 1994.

Page 16 – 17
Carl Zimmerman, Mausoleum, Birmingham, 2001, Digital photo - archival inkjet print on watercolour paper, Ed 5/15, 81 x 183 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Donated by the artist, 2001.

Page 21
Abigail O'Brien, The Last Supper, 1995, 7 Cibacrome photographs, table, chair, embroidered tablecloth, dinner set, Dimensions variable, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 1996.

what is series 3?
materials and methodologies

'… the photograph has always been difficult to define and contain. The apparently basic question 'What is Photography?' provokes complex responses that need to consider the diverse roles and characteristics of the photograph itself.'

Fiona Loughnane

What is Photography? is the first in a series of talks and booklets which aim to provide a general introduction to the **materials and methodologies** of contemporary art. *What is Photography?* provides an overview of photography and its role as medium and mode of documentation in contemporary arts practice. This is accompanied by an essay by **Fiona Loughnane** titled *Image of Reality / Image not Reality: What is Photography?*