



THE STATE OF CREATIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

robert świerczyński
thesis project

WHAT AM I WRITING ABOUT?

Appropriation art used to recontextualize whatever it borrowed to create the new work. But today when the ability to take "nice photos" has become quite common, copying, all of a sudden, turned out to be an efficient way of producing the complete NEW. Without remembering or even taking into consideration which artist came up with an idea first.

Contemporary art is now constantly being measured by the modernist criteria of novelty and originality, even if it ruthlessly draws on its history or long-established visual formulas.

In such circumstances, how can a photographer be original? Is it still possible to look at the world differently than through the prism of billions of images of which this world is a hero and in which it usually comes out pretty boring?

... I think that has become a sign of photography as contemporary art — how much time you will spend with the pictures that don't appear as good pictures?

Charlotte Cotton

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I don't consider my thesis as a scientific study, but rather as open considerations. It should reflect my own experiences and memories, my personal view on photography.

I'm not aiming to answer all the questions, but only to gain a greater awareness of certain issues and to later be able to use my mémoire as a tool in my own creative process.

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What are the possibilities of creativity in contemporary photography when the line between copying and taking inspiration is fading?





Jan Kapitän, 2016



Florian Braakman, 2015



Justinas Vilutis, 2017



Robert Świerczyński, 2015

Joseph Kadow, 2016



Wolfgang Tillmans, 2012



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STATE OF THE ART

- analyzing various source texts on the theory and philosophy of photography

COMPARATIVE METHOD

- comparing the viewpoints of emerging and recognized artists

OBSERVATION

- investigating various methods of approaching photographic exhibitions

PRESS REVIEW

- analyzing photobooks and magazines in terms of similarities in style, mood, technique

OBSERVATION

- observing diverse aspects of self-promotion in social media

instagram accounts:

@martinparrstudio
@ryanmcginleystudios
@wolfgang_tillmans
@kubakuba
@paperjournalmag
@minimalzine

books:

Goeff Dyer, *The Ongoing Moment*
Susan Sontag, *On Photography*
Adam Mazur, *The Decisive Moment*
Charlotte Cotton, *Photography is Magic*

interviews with young photographers:

Maxime Guyon, Fluxo
Qiu Yang, Drop Magazine
Kuba Dąbrowski, Wysokie Obcasy

STATE OF THE ART

articles and essays by recognized photographers:

Jeff Wall, *Selected Essays and Interviews*
Garry Winogrand, Image Magazine
Wolfgang Tillmans / Hans Ulrich Obrist, *The Conversation Series*
Juergen Teller, Independent

photobooks:

Martin Parr
William Eggleston, *From Black and White to Color*
Gregory Halpern, ZZYZX
Wolfgang Tillmans, *Zachęta Ermutigung*

exhibitions:

Wolfgang Tillmans, Tate Modern, London
Sputnik Photos, CCA, Warsaw
The View From Here, MOMA San Francisco
What is a photograph? ICP, New York
Photography Is Dead! Long Live Photography! MCA, Sydney

SAMPLE OF A VISUAL ANALYSIS

This is sample of my mémoire - an extract from the draft essay.

This particular set of works as well as these particular set of photographers cannot be read in any way as objective. It shows my personal way of thinking that interests me as a recipient of art. Therefore it is not accidental - it shows the means of expression that are also particularly important to me in my own work.



In Tillmans' photography of the aircraft engine and McGinley's roe deer, common is that beautiful abstract background color, reminiscent of Mark Rothko's paintings.



The photographs of William Eggleston present a matter of artificial light in the interior, which emphasizes the “temporariness” of the situation - a hotel room, late at night.



Set of two photographs of Stephen Shore and Philip-Lorca di Corcia is a composition about symmetry, lack of movement and emotions. Characters in the center of these photos are not very different from the palm in the next picture.



The photos of Martin Parr and Juergen Teller are like two sides of the same coin. On one side there is the poor American consumption and conventionalized ways of spending free time. On the other - contemporary idols like the model Anja Rubik and the painter Wilhelm Sasnal. They both look like Greek gods who with moderate interest look at anything other than themselves.



Finally two photographs of light, Eggleston's boy pushing shopping carts and Tillmans' breakfast. On one, a sharp light draws the silhouette of a boy, on the other gently extracts the fruit lump. They draw attention to the fact how using specific light can already build the atmosphere and expression of a photograph. Light is therefore one of the determinants of a potential viewer's reception of photographs. It creates a specific mood and depth, regardless of the object that it illuminates. But must a young photographer have any idea about light? Not necessarily.

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 - > I will use the theoretical books and other sources to underline or to discuss these certain aspects rather than to discuss each source in all its complexity

SO WHY AM I EVEN DOING THIS?

I don't have anything to say in any picture.

My only interest in photography is to see what something looks like as a photograph. I have no preconceptions.

Garry Winogrand