

Moholy-Nagy
University of Art and Design
Doctoral Training

The role and potential of Archaic Photographic techniques in the Digital Era

DL A Thesis

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Summary

Today speed and agility are the fundamental attributes that define our everyday life. Acceleration, precipitated in part by the “Digital Era”, can be observed in every field of photography. It ultimately seems that most of the artists using photography have concluded that digital imagery is the best medium for their work.

The appearance of digital technologies fundamentally transformed both the attitudes towards photography, and the relationship between photographers and their analogue and archaic photographic techniques. Within this scope, the perceptions held by art theorists and even the common man has changed. In an era of mass production, when images fill our space, there is a greater expectation for the artist to produce as quickly as possible and as much as possible. The constant race, for more time and more space, is leading to a crisis of photographic quality that often leads to monotony of image.

In contrast it has also been proven, by many examples, that digital image processing can rejuvenate the language of photography. In my thesis I try to demonstrate that the dissimilarities that arise from using opposing photographic techniques, can be bridged and can interlock with each other.

Let us assume that the amalgamation of analogue-archaic photographic techniques with digital, creates a certain special image quality. The essence of this quality lies in the dissimilar appearance of the dots assembling the images in each of the techniques used independently (pixels vs. silver grains). The field of education can provide the most fertile ground in regard to the experimentation in, and the study of, this new quality. It is here that a future generation of artists can be guided towards a new visual understanding. Today the knowledge base of photography is moving more and more, if not exclusively, towards digital image making. The analogue photographic techniques, in absence of popularity, are fading fast. It is up to the art in-

stitutes to continue to pass on this disappearing knowledge and to insert it into their pedagogical practice; one method is in experimentation in the combination of processes, evaluating nuances that images acquire. When technical knowledge fuses with talent there is the opportunity to achieve artwork of a unique quality. I have chosen this less explored territory because as an artist, and a teacher, I am curious at the beginning of the digital age about the changes that have become relevant at both national and global levels. My desire is to discover the requirements and the potential of teaching art through this.

The imagined or real conflict between the followers of analogue and digital photography does not form part of my discussion. This battle over the quantitative quality of a photographic image I consider to be irrelevant and take no interest in. These physical facts are much better suited for a spur to the discussion over the choice of technique for a given particular instance of work creation.

I discuss the work of artists (International and Hungarian) who use a combination of both the digital with the analogue-archaic in a heterogeneous image making method of image creation.

In my own work I use military devices as symbols for playing with the concepts of time and space. I realise my illusionist montages with the aid of digital image processing and materialise the works using archaic photographic materials. By this method my work loses the “cold” appearance of the purely digital, and achieves the desired temporal distortions.

The realization of the work using traditional photographic materials intensifies documentary characteristics; it also being true that documentary characteristics in the digital era, – given the unlimited possibilities of the digital lie – are becoming more and more questionable. Distinct from the

documentary genre these “fake documents” can posit a subjective response by the artist. It becomes a meditation on social and political questions. As a part of my thesis I also discuss the work of those Hungarian and international photographers who incite debate, by their art, in those very delicate questions concerning war, aggression, terrorism, and the notion of “fake document”.