Ibidem

Master’s Thesis
Booklet 1

Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture
Department of Media / Master’s Degree Programme in Photography

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“What distinguishes language from all other signs and enables it to play a decisive role in representation is, therefore, not so much that it is individual or collective, natural or arbitrary, but that it analyses representation according to a necessarily successive order: the sounds, in fact, can be articulated only one by one, language cannot represent thought, instantly in its totality; it is bound to arrange it, part by part, in a linear order. Now, such an order is foreign to representation.”

Michel Foucault, *The order of things*
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Introduction

1.

My interest in photography comes from an even deeper interest in repetition. To depict, or to image, is essentially to repeat, and that is precisely what photography does. Or at least appears to do. During the (almost) 200 years that the photograph has been among us this particular kind of image has reached such social importance that we easily take it as a referent, and model ourselves according to it. This contradiction lies at the core of my artistic work as well as of this thesis. In a playful way, with a good dose of irony, I strive to both underline and question how and when the relation between subject and representation change place.

This leads me to the second problematic that I want to address, and it is closely linked to the first, is whether photography offers ways of seeing (as states the title of John Berger’s famous essay) or if, on the contrary, photography lead us to one way of seeing and perceiving the world.

This thesis can be read as an extended project description of my photographic project “Ibid.” In this series, which I will deal with more in detail in the second and third booklet (of this thesis), my aim is to create an isolated “world” where images and their referents, presentation and re-presentation, lay at the same level. By removing the “natural” hierarchy between these elements I want to question how natural they, in the end, are.

This thesis can also be read the other way around; as a frustration caused by the impotence on the part of (my) images to deal with repetitive images. As I see it, and as I will go on to show in this thesis, the photograph with its sharp edges interrupt the deceitful linear worldview texts brings along. On the other hand, text by necessity arranges everything in a linear order, and so breaks up the circular, or magical, structure of photographic images. The issue is of
course not that straight forward. Text easily sneaks in to the images, and vice versa. So as I start this undertaking there are two main issues I have to bear in mind.

Firstly, I need to ask myself to which extent I am an accomplice, to which extent I push and make possible the same repetitiveness I aim to question: In this thesis, I am trying to make a coherent review, somewhat historical and somewhat institutional, in order to achieve a credible present conclusion. I try to follow the parameters of a good discourse. Logical and correct. Proper, according to the prevailing parameters of the artistic community. I have no other option than to build upon earlier referents, nor should I.

Secondly, as a photographer, in order to produce understandable photographs, I have to follow the established rules and forms of photography. How else can my images be understood? This leads me to constantly return to the same question: How much of a photograph do I do, how much is there of me, my personality, in the photograph, and how much is it a question of simply repeating already seen images and patterns?

2.

This thesis work consists of three small booklets. The first one is the one now in your hands, in which I will present my concerns and aims in the form of writing. In the second booklet I will explain my photographic work more in detail, including visual references, sketches and installation views. The third booklet consists only of images. It is the visual outcome of this thesis.

3.

The written part of this thesis is structured as follows. I will present three short examples that in different ways show how the
photographic image can become opaque. With the word opaque I refer to how, due to a mixing up of literary and visual as well as empirical referents the photograph becomes undecodable. Or maybe better put, how the photograph appears to show something it doesn’t.

The first example is literal, in two ways. I will start of by discussing some of the problems that a textual-linear-historical perspective brings along. This I will do with the help of Czech theoretician Vilém Flusser. It is literal also in the sense that the second, and main part, is based on a review of a literary work that doesn’t have anything to do with photography: Through a reading of Edward W. Said’s book *Orientalism* my aim is to show how an image can be formed based on literature.

The second example builds on the first, but moves in to the photographic field proper. In this chapter I will make a short overview of one of photography’s main fields, namely that of portraiture. The idea is to show how in a successive order, starting from painted portraits of royals, the photograph takes over, models itself according to the traditions of painting only to ultimately become a model itself. The use of photographic portraiture within law enforcement will be my main subject of study owing to the fact that this “culmination” takes place within this field. Jonathan Finn, and his book *Capturing the Criminal Image*, will serve as backbone for the latter part of this chapter.

The third example is targeted at the image itself. Through a reading of French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy I aim to draw a picture of what an image is, how it stands out, and how it should be used. In parallel to Nancy, I want to problematize the issue once more through the thinking of Vilém Flusser. My aim here will be to establish a push and pull between image and ground, reality and representation.
In the last part of this thesis I will not so much present conclusions, as I do not think there are any clear conclusions to be made. I will, instead, present some possible ways of how this “deadlock” could be resolved; how photographs themselves could be used to open up the knot they produce. In this way, I aim to make a bridge between the written and purely visual part of this thesis.

The issue I am dealing with is, ultimately, repetition; how repetitive images, and a repetitive use of images can come to form a closed system.

The images we are dealing with, in daily life, and in their overwhelming majority, are cheap: Cheap clichés that repeat themselves. In other words, we are dealing with a system that consists of, and produces, visual noise.

I believe that the most efficient tool in resolving this deadlock can be found in repetition itself. In other words, I do not think that the answer can be found in the search for an original image.

The task, photographically, is to produce images that can infiltrate the system. For this reason I will lean towards the idea of a silent image: A discrete image, an image representing repetition, resisting noise. A clear photograph with the sole purpose of showing just how hollow images are.
“Quotations from ancient witnesses are in perpetual danger of corruption due to miscopying, careless typesetting, or technical glitch. The Murderers’ bible of 1795 was so called because Mark 7:27 read: “Let the children first be killed” instead of “filled.” Because of broken type, an 1849 edition of Colton’s Lacon reads, “We moderns must also become ancients in our urn.”

Willis Goth Regier, Quotology
Chapter 1 - Ibidem.

The Latin term Ibidem, in the same place, is usually used in bibliographic citations to refer to the last source previously referenced. On many occasions, when studying, I am confronted with a silly problem; I check up the footnote, no problem. I check up the next and it happens to be an “Ibid”, no problem; I go on reading and the next citation also happens to be an “Ibid”. Sometimes this happens very many times in a row, on top of which in some books the footnotes are placed at the end of the book. After having jumped back and forth between text and footnotes I, at some point, cannot remember what the “Ibid” refers to anymore; I forget the source. Of course, the problem is not any bigger than just looking at the footnotes again. But this is just the case: When reading a book I can always check up the referents quite easily, and if I want to, I can verify them. So, the problem not this “Ibid” itself, the problems start if, and when it gets confused (intentionally or not) for the real source. As already said, in the case of literature the referent can be looked up easily – at least in theory. In the case of photography (and many other areas of life), as I intend to show in continuation, this is not always the case. What I am concerned with, and what this chapter will be dealing with, is the consequences of relying on unknown or false references. There are two main issues I am interested in. Even though closely linked, there is firstly the building upon false or unknown references and then there is blind repetition.

1.

The most obvious example of blind repetition (without clarity of what one is repeating) is probably best condensed in popular phrases such as “history repeats itself” or “those who don’t know their history are bound to repeat it”. It is easy to fall in to generalizations here, and that is probably why these phrases resemble catchphrases more than serious arguments. On a less grand scale however, theories
and claims concerning repetitive cycles, or histories, can be found quite often. To name a few, there is the Japanese philosopher Kojin Karatani, who argues that modern capitalist history works in cycles, that with regular intervals we go from an imperialist to a liberal cycle¹. Or the anthropologist David Graeber, who within his study of the history of debt makes a very compelling argument that ever since the dawn of money we have been oscillating between recurring cycles of virtual credit money and metal money². There are two interesting points that these suggestions have in common. Firstly, while they do not explicitly claim that all history repeats itself they do give a hint of this being the case. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, they both make evident the problem of the common understanding of history. We have a tendency of considering history as a linear, progressive process; starting from somewhere and leading somewhere else. Both of the authors mentioned above, as well as many others, introduce the possibility of a non-linear, cyclical history. They also stress the fact that while one cycle is reigning the other is placed behind us, and so feeding the belief that we are living at the front of a linear history. For me it seems like the question to be asked should be whether it this linear view in itself that makes it prone to repetition?

This doubt, this problematic, makes me tempted to think of history through the Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser, being that he argues that the technical image, as he calls the photograph and its relatives, interrupts with history³. In a later chapter I will discuss Flusser’s views in more detail, but for now I will restrict myself to a short introduction. Flusser’s main concern is the gradual death of writing. When the technical image, as he calls the photograph and its relatives, replaces text as the main tool for information and communication, Flusser means, that we will step in to a totally new,

¹ Kojin Karatani, History and Repetition, Columbia University Press, Aug 13, 2013  
² David Graeber, Debt: First 5,000 Years, Melville House, 2012  
³ Vilém Flusser, In to the Universe of Technical Images, University of Minnesota Press, 2013
post-historical era. History, as we know it, would seize to exist. Flusser breaks it down as follows: First man needed the image in order to explain the world. The image however quickly came to stand between man and the world, so text was needed to decode the image. Text and image, however, come to form a complex relation, feeding on each other, leading to the point where man cannot decode his texts anymore. The technical image is invented to “save the situation”, or as Flusser has it, in order to prevent culture from breaking up. The technical image is not an image in the traditional sense. It is made with an apparatus, i.e. camera, and the apparatus itself is based on a theory, which on its part is written. In this sense, the technical image consists of text. The technical image is however situated above the text making text superfluous. Flusser’s view becomes quite clear when he looks at human history as a whole: We humans have wandered the earth for hundreds of thousands of years. Of these hundreds of thousands of years text has only been used for about 4000 years. From this perspective text is not especially old, nor is it (probably) irreplaceable. With the help of text, according to Flusser, man did not only become aware of his history, but it is through text that man created and wrote his history. Before text human history was circular, with text it became linear and narrative. For Flusser history is always man-made, it is always an artefact. It is this last remark that I find hugely important and relevant to the second issue I wanted to address here, namely that of building upon false references.

Say we accept Flusser’s ideas, and I have a hard time finding counterarguments, if history is human made then the importance of getting the sources right is crucial. One provoking example, even though its trustworthiness is debatable, is the suggestion made by British scientist Richard Dawkins. In his book The God Delusion he argues that the idea of the holy conception of Jesus Christ is based on a mistranslation; the Hebrew word for young woman was translated
as virgin. 4 If this claim is true or not is of little importance here: It only illustrates how far reaching consequences a misreading of a source can have. The problem of a linear history is that it necessarily builds upon the earlier, and in doing so obscures the repeated. Vilém Flusser however, argues that this historical age is coming to an end, and that we now find ourselves in the universe of technical images. Simplifying, this would mean the substitution of written history with the technical image as the centre of our lives. An evident confrontation takes place here between the linearity of history and its repetition. It is in this intersection I believe that photography fits. This small space is where I think photography can make sense. But before addressing photography as such I think it’s important to stress the (evident) fact that the photographic image doesn’t fall down from the sky, pure and innocent. Photography is invented within the historical universe and is from the start conditioned from all angles. Photography builds upon all the texts and imagery that predated it. I would like to elaborate this idea through a reading of Edward W. Said’s book Orientalism.

2. How an Image takes form.

In his great book Orientalism, Edward W. Said makes this problematic very clear on a tangible, non-theoretical, level. Said’s main point is that the Orient is a construct of the western mind; it is a projection. Even though my aim is not by any means to indulge in the particular question of Said’s book or Orientalism I do find very enlightening the way in which he sketches up the Orient, and how this example shows how an image can take shape out of literary (in this case false and corrupt) references. Before I start, to better understand Said’s arguments, and my ideas around them, I feel a clarification of terms is needed: With the Orient Said refers to a

geographical region, with Oriental to a person from this region, and with Orientalism to a western idea of what the before mentioned is. Said begins his book stressing the fact that man makes his own history, and what he does is to extend this argument to geography. The two oppositions that constitute Orientalism, the “Orient” and “Occident” are, according to Said, clearly man-made. The Orient – that vast “territory” reaching from North Africa to India and beyond - is, and this is the main point, western-man-made. The Orient is in other words, and rather paradoxically, Occidental. However, according to Said one should never think of Orientalism as merely a “structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away”. The approach should rather follow the idea he notes in the introduction of the book: “The unity of the large ensemble of texts I analyse is due in part to the fact that they frequently refer to each other: Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors.” Put simply, Orientalism is a field of learned study with a history reaching back as far as to ancient Greece and so it is not a question of truth vs. lie but rather a question of examining a self-sufficient system that runs the great risk of building upon itself.

This “building upon itself “ happens in two main ways, firstly in the sense that the idea of the Orient always builds upon an earlier Orientalist idea and therefore naturally has great deficiencies in empirical reality. Worth while noting is that all of the most important, founding, works on Orientalism were written in European libraries by scholars of whom many had never visited the Orient. Secondly, the Oriental (person) is never presented; rather he is represented. It is the non-Oriental that makes up the symbol of the whole Orient.

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6 Ibid. Pg.6
7 Ibid. Pg 23
8 Ibid. Pg. 56
9 Ibid. Pg 23
Already in the Iliad, “Asia speaks through and by virtue of the European imagination” and is already then depicted as a hostile other - that is defeated. According to Said, this Western construct, that the Orient is, is the West’s need for an other. The foreign, exotic, and threatening Orient is the counterweight of the good, normal and known Occident. In this sense, as Said points out, it is never actually a question of the Orient, and the Orientalist study becomes “not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things”.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Islam. This “branch” of Orientalism offers us a detailed description from its beginning to present day. Since its conception Islam is, and has been, a great threat to Christianity. The symbol of “terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians” which Islam still is has its long roots reaching back to the seventh century Muslim attacks and conquests of large parts of the (Christian) world. The labelling of Islam as fraudulent is therefore not surprising, and to some extent understandable. But what is especially interesting for me is how through this fear, hatred and lack of understanding, Islam becomes an Image, as Said writes. A fixed image of the deviant other. This misunderstanding has its roots in the ignorant view of Islam that Christians have held since the beginning: “Since Christ is the basis of Christian faith, it was assumed – quite incorrectly – that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity.” If this was the starting point, if Islam can from the beginning (erroneously) be referred to as Mohammedanism, if Mohammed since the beginning takes the shape of an imposter, and most importantly, if this forms the referent upon which ultimately our modern view is built then misconceptions, ignorance, and continued fear is inevitable. So it
stands clear that the current fear of Islam builds upon this centuries old Orientalist “tradition”. At the time that Said writes (1978), of course, this fear is fuelled by renewed Western “colonialist” interests; Oil economics, ultimately leading to a divide between freedom-loving Israel vs. evil Arabs\(^\text{13}\) that still persists today. What is remarkable is that in the last (almost) 40 years very little has changed. Much of the racist statements of past centuries are still, if not valid, then at least working “behind the scenes”, shaping the western view; the image of Islam.

3.

Going back, as I stated earlier, the subject of my study is not Orientalism. The importance of the example of Islam, which Said so eloquently shows, clearly and in an exemplary manner, is that to form an image, images (as such) are not necessarily needed. In the case of Said’s Orientalism we are dealing with a highly complicated system of cross-referencing. Said argues that even though the different forms of knowledge, or research, are seen as apart from each other this can never be fully the case: The political is influenced by the economic, the humanistic by the political, and so on. The Orient, as a whole, is the outcome. Islam, in specific, is even more accentuated: The image of terror, and I wouldn’t say this is an all too bold statement, has come to be that of Islam. How else could we have come to a point where we are afraid of all that is Islam? How else could we have come to a point that an Arab face is the symbol of a terrorist? How else could we hear on the news about terrorist groups referred to simply as Islamists?

In the next chapter I want to develop this idea further, introducing it in the photographical field. Through a short overview of the development of portrait photography I want to show how a tangible,

\(^{13}\) Ibid. Pg 26-27
“real” image, can be formed on top of the (mental) image Said has helped me paint up, following the exact same logic Said argues for.
“Quotations take a beating in medical journals. In a 1990 study 29 percent of quotations in surgical journals were misquoted. Matters were somewhat better in otolaryngology: errors occurred in 17 percent of the quotations, but 11.9 percent were considered “major errors. This prevalence is similar to the established error rate in medical literature.”

Willis Goth Regier, *Quotology*
Chapter 2 - Taking shape

Since its conception, photography has first and foremost been an anthropological tool. I would even dare to say that photography freed painting from its traditional role, taking over as the main recording mechanism of the surrounding world. “The scrupulous fidelity of the photographic image” as art historians Arnason and Kalb put it, served for artists “as a good reason to work imaginatively or conceptually and thus liberated their art from the requirement of pictorial verisimilitude.”14 In the same way, photography was never new, never free; it merely took over. So, on the one hand photography brought with it a universal promise of objectivity, and on the other it inherited both the history and expectations of painting. Evident as it may sound, I want to stress this because in order to sketch up a fair picture of where we now stand the importance of the fact that the medium came along in this historical manner cannot be overstated. The Swedish theoretician Jan-Erik Lundström addresses the issue in a very poetic way in his essay “Ett hundra svar på frågan vad är fotograf” as he contemplates on the possible births of photography. In a playful manner he suggests that photography is 165 years old, 166 years old and 167 years old; it was invented 10 000 years ago by Narcissus, 3000 years ago by Aristotle; reinvented by planning the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima so that it would be photographable.15 The point being that an exact date of invention is hard to define.16 More commonly

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15 Jan-Erik Lundström, Ett hundra svar på frågan vad är fotograf
The ponderings on which would be the exact date of invention still seems to be of great importance: Lately, with the coming of digital photography, a big discussion on whether photography is over or not has began to take shape (eg. Fred Ritchin’s book After photography or Foam Museum’s What’s Next debates). The whole question, in my understanding, is ridiculous. Wouldn’t photography then have “been over” at the invention of the wet plate or the roll negative, for example?
16 There are various takes at questioning the inventor(s) of the photographic medium. Amongst others, Geoffrey Batchen has compiled a list of various inventors, the first of
though, if the invention of photography is not put in Niepece’s or Daguerre’s honour then the most likely contender would be the invention of the perspective; the camera obscura of the renaissance.
For my purposes here it is however not of great importance to try to specify a date of invention of the medium. It is enough to bare in mind this initial burden the medium carries, as it gives way for a more realistic view on photography’s more “famous” burden, namely that of its (indexical) relation to the real.
The debate on the indexical nature of the photograph, its objectivity and reliability is as old as the medium itself. And even though these issues to some degree stand behind all conversation on photography I find especially the talk of the Index if not misleading, then at least confusing. The big issue, for me, is not which of the oppositions true/untrue, subjective/objective, indexical/indirect etc. are correct, but how these assumptions and beliefs have been used and abused: My main goal is to show how photography to a very high degree can (and very much does) form a self-sufficient system, blindly – or intentionally - building upon itself. Within this system the indexical or the objective become mere arguments – however, arguments of great weight.
The point I want to make is, I believe, is best presented in the form of a short review of the history of portrait photography, drawing upon the ideas I presented through my reading of Edward W. Said.

Does photography offer ways of seeing or rather lead to one way of seeing?

When saying that photography is an anthropological tool I mean just that: “The study of mankind”17. And when I say that it took over painting, I also mean that quite literary: The first professional

which is Henry Brougham, dating back as early as 1794. Historia general de la fotografía, Ediciones Catedra, 2007 Pg. 64
17 Dictionary definition of Anthropology, Oxford University Press
photographers where portrait painters who in the late 1830’s and early 1840’s switched from painting to photography.\textsuperscript{18} Before photography, even many of the greatest artists supported themselves through commissioned portraits. As is said even of Francisco Goya, who, even though his passion was to depict human the condition of his time, mainly made his living as the official portrait painter of the Spanish royal family. Until the advent of photography it was renowned artists like Goya who received all important commissions, ranging from portraits to documentation of architecture or historical events. This rapidly changed when photography took over as the mainstream means of documenting, forcing many artists to either change careers or to experiment with other media in order to survive.\textsuperscript{19}

Before going any further in to the portrait as such, to understand the field better, there is another group of early photographers that I shortly want to look at; in the mid 19\textsuperscript{th} century, parallel to portraiture, also documentary photography was taking form.

1.

The first to make use of the camera in a documentary way were fairly wealthy European travellers, writers, artists and archaeologists looking for adventure. As shall be seen, the importance of these first \textit{photographic missions} lies in that they hugely helped shape the worldview of the time – and to considerable extent the worldview of today.

\textsuperscript{18} Maria de Los Santos García Felguera, Historia general de la fotografía, Ediciones Cátedra, 2007 Pg. 69
\textsuperscript{19} John Tagg also comments on this, noting that a well-earning miniaturist in the 1850’s France produced around 50 portraits a year. Only some years later, a decent Portrait photographer produced on average 1200 plates a year. John Tagg, The Burden of Representation, University of Minnesota Press, 1993 Pg. 39
In order to locate the origins of these early photographic missions I follow the Spanish photography-historian Carmelo Vega. Vega suggests we look back to well before the advent of photography. She situates us in the late 18th century when a new kind of interest for travel arose in Europe, one that reached beyond the old continent. And with the desire for travel arose the urge for documenting it.

There were three main areas of interest amongst the artist-travellers of the time. Firstly, there was a renewed interest of the classical age, making Italy and Greece attractive destinations for artists, and turning Rome into the artistic centre of the time. Secondly, the Orient, wherein the exotic, the different and strange could be found. The Orient was a new world to be explored; unknown, innocent and at the same time primitive and savage. The third main area of interest was, rather paradoxically, a relocation of focus towards the domestic, the national.20 All of these three, on their part, helped form the European identity of the time: The exploration, representation and romanticizing of the classical was needed in order to enhance a pride of history, the domestic to generate an own identity, a nationalism; and the Orient as the counterweight, or as Edward W. Said would have it, Europe’s need for the other. Here I am of course referring to a bourgeoisie, colonialist, imperialist worldview (after all, all of this did take place during the splendour of European colonialism).

When the, within the history of photography, so famous Excursions Daguerriennes take place, when documentary photography could be said to have been born, they merely take over what earlier artists began. A good description of this is a comment made by one of the documentary photographer-pioneers, Maxime Du Camp, who since the mid 19th onward travelled the Orient widely. In his memoirs, Souvenirs littéraires, Du Camp talks about the use of photography as a more convenient, faster and more precise mode of documentation.

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20 Carmelo Vega, Historia general de la fotografía, Ediciones Catedra, 2007 Pg.123-127
than drawing\textsuperscript{21} (the term photography, descriptively, means drawing with light). Neither Du Camp, nor any other of the early documentarists, held photography in any high regard. They merely note that the use of a camera makes the act of documenting easier. What for me is important is to notice the way in which photography enters the field, a field that later developed, in photographic terms, to documentary photography (and as social phenomena to mass tourism). Here, as in portraiture, (or any other field where photography was introduced) it seems to have been the precision and presumed objectivity of the camera that was valued. Before I continue there is a second remark that, in its obviousness, is fundamental to an understanding of the various (even contemporary) uses of the photographic portrait. These initial photographic travels or missions, however benevolent their intentions might have been, constitute a crucial “turning point”: That of the white, male European view as the normal, the starting point: The point of reference against which all else was to be measured.

2.

To have your portrait painted had until the birth of photography, or more exactly the Daguerreotype (arguably the first photographic technique), mainly been possible for the royal, or the very uppermost class of society. In the 1840’s, beginning with the first photographic studios, it was still not available to the common man, but it was so to the nascent middle class; the industrialised society’s bourgeoisie. The poses in these early portraits are very formal and stiff. This is partly due to the long exposure-times the daguerreotype required (in the early stages up to minutes, depending on the weather) but also due to the fact that for most people the portrait made was the

\textsuperscript{21} Maxime Du Camp quoted in Carmelo Vega, Historia general de la fotografía, Ediciones Cátedra, 2007 Pg.132
portrait. Of course, if one is to make only one portrait during ones life it is best to come out well. But much more interestingly, the poses as well as the decorative elements used in the studio aspired to be as noble as possible. The references here were clear; what came to poses the model to follow was that of the royal; that of court portraiture. The decorative elements, starting from the backdrops formed out of painted landscapes, gardens or palaces to the adornments such as sculptures, ponds with swans etc. also served the same function. The important thing here is that while "the camera revealed the sitter with uncompromising truth" it was instantly understood that the surroundings could be tampered with, presenting the truth in a very compromised way: The portrait had back then, as is the case today, very little to do with the representation of the portrayed, and all to do with the way the representation was presented.

It was not until the invention of the Collodion process, the first process to combine the reproducibility of the Calotype (the first photographic negative) and the image quality of the daguerreotype, that photographic studios spread everywhere. By the end of the 1850’s all bigger European cities already counted with various photography studios. The final breakthrough was a system invented by the French photographer Eugène Disdéri making it possible to produce up to eight photographs on one plate. The reduced cost (of production) of the Carte de visite, as it was named (due to the fact that the size of the pictures was the same as the visiting card, common amongst aristocrats and royals), made portraiture available to practically everyone, and turning photographic studios into very profitable businesses.

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22 María de Los Santos García Felguera, Historia general de la fotografía, Ediciones Catedra, 2007 Pg. 77-79
23 Ibid. Pg. 83
24 Helmut Gernsheim, A concise History of Photography, Dover, 1986. Pg.34
25 María de Los Santos García Felguera, Historia general de la fotografía, Ediciones Catedra, 2007 Pg. 80-81
So, here we have two crossing paths, actually three. On the one hand we have the development of studio portraiture, an elitist practice mainly directed towards the bourgeoisie, and on the other the photographic journeys, or “missions” to unknown, foreign countries, conducted by the bourgeoisie. The third would be the possibility for common people to have their portrait taken. Only when adding a fourth use of early photography does the issue turn really interesting. The photograph, after taking over paintings “celebration of the Bourgeoisie self” rapidly took on a role no painted portrait could have, that of the medical and anatomical portrait: Far from the honorific portrait of the bourgeoisie, the photograph was at the forefront in creating the deviant other. 

The official, medical, scientific (and later to be surveillance) photography is a mix of documentary and portrait photography. Soon “it was no longer a privilege to be pictured but the burden of a new class of the surveilled.”

3. **It is not a question of your passport matching you, but of you matching your passport.**

Even though this chapter has taken the shape of a short historical overview, it is not history that is my main concern. This background is, however, needed as I move on towards my principal argument. In the first chapter I tried, through a reading of Said, to show how (false or empty) arguments easily become regarded as true, and used as a base on which to form new arguments. In what follows I intend to show how this is the case also in photography. The most effective way of making this problematic visible, I think, is through an examination of the use of the photograph within law enforcement.

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27 John Tagg, The Burden of Representation, University of Minnesota Press, 1993 Pg 59
This is, of course, not a new undertaking. The most famous commentators on the issue are probably John Tagg and Allan Sekula. In the book *The Burden of Representation* Tagg focuses on the adaptation and use of photography employed by state institutions. Sekula, in *The Body and the Archive* takes a slightly different stand. In contrast to Tagg, Sekula doesn’t place as much weight at the specificity of the photographic medium, but rather positions it within a larger bureaucratic system, or more famously an archive. I am, however, most interested in the ideas Dr. Jonathan Finn presents in his book *Capturing the Criminal Image*. The book is written as a history of the criminal image, ranging from the first mug shots to fingerprints to the latest DNA sampling of criminals and crime scenes. What these various methods of identifying the criminal bear in common, Finn argues, is that they all rely on the photograph. More exactly, they all rely on photographic techniques to be visible, and mobile. Finn’s main argument, and the one I find particularly useful, is that in order for the photograph to attain this position of “reliability” it had to transform from a simple recording to an *inscription*. As an inscription, Finn means, the photograph becomes a scientific fact itself; a source of information (rather than a mere documentation).

The evidentiary potential of the photograph, as we have seen, even predates the actual medium. So it should come as no surprise that in 1841, only three years after Daguerre had presented his new invention, the French police already produced daguerreotypes of detained criminals. The mug shot, as the portrait

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28 Jonathan Finn, *Capturing the Criminal Image*, University of Minnesota Press, 2009, Pg. 6
Edward W. Said’s comment is from a different context, but equally instructive: “If we agree that all things in history, like history itself, are made by men, then we will appreciate how possible it is for many objects or places or times to be assigned roles and given meanings that acquire objective validity only after the assignments are made. This is especially true of relatively uncommon things, like foreigners, mutants,
taken of a caught criminal was named, was in the beginning considered as visual documentation, to support the textual information that actually described the criminal. The photograph was believed to be such an accurate description of the criminal that in future cases (of capture) it could not be refuted. The mug shot was a representation, a proof of the criminal having-been-there, as Finn writes through the words of Roland Barthes. The reliability of the photograph was, however, questionable. Both Finn and Sekula point out that not even in the 19th century was the photograph indisputably considered objective nor truthful. The objective status that Photography enjoys is more of a convenience than anything else: The medium can be seen as the scientific community’s fulfilling of a centuries long search for a non-intervened, verisimilar image. So, as much as a technical-mechanical attribute, the objectivity of the photograph is a cultural construct, or desire.29 It stands clear that as much as law enforcement needed photography’s evidentiary promise, so photography needed the institutional support to become reliable. The evidentiary status of the photograph is then, according to Finn, a social construct. But to truly become evidence the photograph had to become an inscription.

In order to understand the shift from representation to inscription we have to remember when and where this all took place. In the mid 19th century slavery was still legal and common in America, whilst Europe was still at its height of colonialism. In short, racism was so institutionalized that in the way we understand it today, it didn’t even exist. The scientific and medical communities, of course, functioned accordingly. To examine these fields, as Allan Sekula points out, is crucial as “we understand the culture of the photographic portrait only dimly if we fail to recognize the enormous

29 Jonathan Finn, Capturing the Criminal Image, University of Minnesota Press, 2009, Pg. xii

or “abnormal” behavior.” Edward W. Said Orientalism, Western conceptions of the Orient, Penguin Books, 2000, Pg. 54
prestige and popularity of a general physiognomic paradigm in the 1840’s and 1850’s.”³⁰ With the “physiognomic paradigm” Sekula refers to the medical fields of Craniology, Phrenology, and Physiognomy itself. Craniology, (later to be known as phrenology) was developed by Franz Joseph Gall, and constituted a (pseudo) science of localizing the functions of the brain by observing the cranium, the skull. According to Gall, the traits and behaviour of a person could be read of the shape of the skull. Physiognomy was similar, but based on a belief that a person’s character or personality could be read of her/his outer appearance, especially the face.⁳¹ These “sciences” found great support in a racist reading of Charles Darwin’s recently published evolutionary theory.⁳² Simplifying, if it was a question of evolution, then the criminal was simply at a lower stage of evolution. This small remark is of great importance because it was based on these “assumptions” that the police register took shape.

In the beginning, the police archives consisted of collections of photographs taken of convicted criminals. The mug shots, as portraits of criminal were called, were however not organized in an efficient way, and as the archives grew they became next to useless. It was not before Alphonse Bertillon’s reinvention of the police archive that a proper functioning system can be talked about.

The problem, as he saw it, was their sheer mass, and with it the inefficacy of the system. The solution was to create a system of comparison. Firstly, Bertillon added textual descriptions to go along with the mug shots, and so turned them in to proper profiles. The profiles were then archived corresponding to the various features of

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³² Interestingly enough, Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton, was one of the most prominent pioneers regarding the application of phrenology in photography.
the criminal. However, analyzing some of these files, Finn makes the interesting remark that if it wasn’t for the textual descriptions of the “sitter,” criminal activity, the photographs could perfectly have been from family albums. So Bertillon went further, as he “used the camera to isolate, make visible, and study the various “signs” of the body.” Different facial features, for example noses, were grouped together and filed accordingly. The result was a better use of the archive, as matching the detained criminal with an existing profile became easier. Through this anthropometric system all bodies were reduced to mere “words and numbers and could be classified according to its visible signs.” It is here where the shift towards an understanding of the photograph as an inscription starts. The human body, as opposed to the mind or soul, becomes the main focus of social inquiry: The body is not anymore the site of physical punishment, but instead becomes a site of knowledge.

This is when the field of positivist criminal anthropology takes over. Criminology, it could be said, began as a re-reading of the police archive from the perspective of physiognomy. “Culminating in the work of the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, this discourse held that criminality could be read directly from the criminal body and, by extension, captured in the body’s visual representation.” This leads us to the main point. It is no longer only the body, but also its visual representation that becomes a subject of study, and so the photograph, following the logics of criminology, irreversibly turns into an inscription. Crime and criminality could now be studied and understood through a close reading of images. This transformation is, in my opinion, the single most important event in the history of photography. Except revolutionizing how law enforcement all over the world is conducted, it has far-reaching consequences on

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23 Jonathan Finn, Capturing the Criminal Image, University of Minnesota Press, 2009, Pg. 7-9
24 Ibid. Pg. 26
25 Ibid. Pg. xiv
26 Ibid. Pg. 11
how all images are viewed and used: It shows, in an indisputable way, how the references invert. The physical body becomes the copy, and the archived representation the model.

There is one last addition needed. Even though Criminology was originally designed only to study and archive Criminals this practice quickly changed character including a registration of all potential criminals. In other words, all citizens. Far from being only a historical curiosity, this touches all of us on a daily basis. All different variations of modern visual identification, reaching from school pictures to passports and video surveillance etc. can be traced back to these early police registers. Hence the paradox: It is not a question of the passport matching you, but of you matching the passport.

4.

This chapter started out as an effort of showing how photography came along in a historical manner; how, explicitly portrait photography, “summoned up a complex historical iconography and elaborate codes of pose and posture readily understood within the societies in which such portrait images had currency.”37 The mug shot, correspondingly, was built upon the (honorific) photographic portrait. The criminal, on his part, was defined through physiognomy. Physiognomy, as we have seen, is based in a belief that the deviances of man could be read of his face. Physiognomy constituted that as a counterpart to the normal body, (which, of course, was that of the white, European male) there existed a deviant, criminal body. The confusion grows even bigger if we take a look at the hierarchy of the skulls studied in phrenology. The criminal, the savage and/or the Negro constituted the deviant, while the most regarded version was found in the noble Grecian foreheads.38 Let me

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37 John Tagg, The Burden of Representation, University of Minnesota Press, 1993 Pg. 35
point out: That is, ancient Greeks; that is, a measurement made based on classical sculptures; that is, a completely fictional referent. This is why Finn lays so great weight on seeing the criminal “as a social construct” and to shifting the attention to how photography works in “the process of construction” of the criminal. Even though the photograph “is indeed a unique among forms of visual representation” Finn writes “its uniqueness is as much cultural as it is material.”

What stands clear is that what happened in law enforcement has its echoes in all other fields where photography is used. In fact, I would say that that this example is crucial because it is within criminal portraiture that the face as a model is moulded. An excellent example of this is to be found in fashion photography, but also in all other fields of commercial image-making. Within the scope of this thesis I cannot enter deeper in to field of commercial photography, but I hope to leave this short remark as a small provocation (as it has great weight in my photographic work).

39 Jonathan Finn, Capturing the Criminal Image, University of Minnesota Press, 2009, Pg. xi
40 On a recent trip to South Korea I was overwhelmed by the scale of the country’s plastic surgery industry. This amazement was quickly over-run by another, namely the fact that there existed one clear model-face according to which all these young girls re-shaped their faces.

The idea of a model is, evidently, not restricted to commercial photography but very much so reaches in to the realms of Fine Art. Juha Suonpää, for example, makes a compelling argument regarding the red colour within the Helsinki School movement. Juha Suonpää, Valokuva on IN, Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu, 2011
“The notion that a quotation can be verified by reference to a prior, certain, and stable iteration goes only partway. Many quotations are quoted because they make strong truth claims that can be affirmed or contested but elude proof.”

Willis Goth Regier, *Quotology*
Chapter 3 - Images

I have, so far, made some attempts at showing how the photograph, through its use, easily becomes a reference for itself. My main concern has been to develop an argument for how a blind repetition of uncertain or unknown facts both predates and conditions the photographic image (and practice). I have consciously tried to use examples that have little, or nothing, to do with common, or popular, use of photographic images (or photography in general). This I have done because I believe that a fair understanding of the photographic images that surrounds us in daily life requires this backdrop. Actually, the main point has been to show how “normal” photographs (be they snapshots, on billboards, bus stops etc.) build upon the “official” photograph, and model themselves accordingly. In this last example I want to concentrate on the image in itself, and how through its repetitive nature it can come to form a closed system, a rhythm of its own.

There are two authors who, far from each other but in my view in parallel, open up this question. This chapter will, then, follow the thoughts of the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy and Czech theoretician Vilém Flusser. Nancy’s book The Ground of the Image as well as the Finnish scholar Susanna Lindberg’s and Italian philosopher Federico Ferrari’s readings of Nancy will serve in sketching up what an image is, or can be. Flusser’s views (mainly picked from his book Towards a Philosophy of Photography) will help me better show what the image can become, especially the photograph.

1.

As an introduction to talking about the image in general, one initial comment needs to be made: To avoid confusion I want to distinguish two kinds of images. There is the made, or produced, physically existing image and there is the image we bare with us, the
image we have of the things we have seen and experienced. With the latter one I refer to photography-like memories that we all carry along (like the one of Said). The former, the produced image, is what Jean-Luc Nancy is concerned with. 

The image, according to Nancy, is distinct, set aside: It is cut out from the continuity of life. The distinct, he writes, “is at a distance, it is the opposite of what is near. What is not near can be set apart in two ways: separated from contact or from identity. The distinct is distinct according to these two modes: it does not touch, and it is dissimilar. Such is the image: it must be detached, placed outside and before one’s eyes, and it must be different from the thing. The image is a thing that is not the thing; it distinguishes itself from it, essentially.”

Here two important separations take place. Firstly, we can see how Nancy distances himself from a view of the image as a mere representation. The image is not the thing; it is not what it depicts. With this, as Susanna Lindberg in her brilliant essay Kuvan synty (the birth of the Image) points out, Nancy inverts Plato’s “hierarchy.” For Plato the most real is the idea, and the concrete things man perceives are imitations of this ideal type. The image, on its part, imitates these imitations, and is so twice removed from the truth. Nancy turns this relationship upside down, claiming that the image is what actually is present, and through which reality and the truth of the ideas can be approached. The image, in this way, does not copy or imitate; it resembles. The fact that the image is a resemblance means that there needs not be anything “real” behind the image. So it cannot be a question simply of imitation, for this mimesis (imitation) is only possible through methexis (participation). In other words, the image only gains value through human participation.  

42 Susanna Lindberg, Kuvan synty, Tiede & Edistys 2/06 (Translation my own)
43 Ibid. Pg. 147, see also, Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, Fordham University Press, 2005, Pg. 9
“The image is, in every respect, distinction. It is distinguished from things or from living beings, it is distinguished from the imageless ground from which it is detached, and it distinguishes itself insofar as it designates itself as an image. It always says, simultaneously, “I am this, a flower”, and “I am an imaged flower, or a flower-image.” I am not, it says, the image of this or that, as if I were its substitute or copy, but I *image* this or that.”

This leads us to the second point. In Nancy’s view the image is separated from the world, it is distinguished from what he calls an “imageless ground”. It is detached from it; distinct. At the same time, however, the image is from this world; it is from this ground that it draws its existence. It images a world that is imageless. Imageless in the sense that because of us being *in* the world we cannot grasp its entirety. We can, and do, use the world and navigate in it, but it is hidden from us in as much as *it* is what carries us. The world never shows itself to us as *itself*, as an observable entity. Here the image steps in; it interrupts the steady flow of life, and so enables us to see the world. By doing so, the image never shows the world in its entirety, it only shows this being in the world, bit by bit, without ever offering a full view. This is, in my understanding, what is meant by participation. We participate in the image, and the image lets us participate in the world. To explain this more clearly Federico Ferrari, discussing the image from Nancy’s, as well his own perspective, offers us a helping hand. Ferrari frames the separation between image and world in a slightly different way. He means that the image only truly exists when it exists as a proof, in front of us, as something that is detached from the domain of semantics; that is, of significance (which here could be read in the same way as imitation). When the image is treated as a sign/symbol (of representation), he means, we cannot talk about an image anymore, merely about

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45 Susanna Lindberg, *Kuvan synty*, Tiede & Edistys 2/06, Pg. 148
2.

“Human beings ‘ex-ist’, i.e. the world is not immediately accessible to them and therefore images are needed to make it comprehensible” writes Vilém Flusser in the opening chapter of his book *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*.67 His starting point seems to be quite similar to that of Nancy’s. Humans, as both Flusser and Nancy point out, cannot fully grasp, or see the world they live in. Images are needed to make the world comprehensible. Flusser means that in order to orientate in the world humans create images, to mediate between them and the world; to use them as maps. Until here they both seem to argue for the same cause. Their views start to differ when looking at what happens when humans start to navigate using images. Flusser’s view on participation (or methexis), is radically different from that of Nancy’s. Even though Flusser probably wouldn’t have disagreed on the fact that the image is distinct, cut

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66 Federico Ferrari, *Ikonografia*, Tiede & Edistys 2/06, Pg. 139-141
67 Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Reaktion Books, 2000 Pg. 9
out, he shows how humans utterly fail to see at such. As soon as humans started to use the images they created they lose their original purpose. Humans fail to understand, or in Flusser’s words decode, the images they have produced and “instead project them, still encoded, into the world.”

So, instead of using the images for orienting in the world the humans start following their images; the image gets confused for the ground it is supposed to stand out from. The images becomes opaque, and not in the positive sense that Ferrari refers to. As humans cannot decode, or understand, their images anymore, they “finally become a function of the images they create.”

The reason for this, and what Nancy seems to miss, Flusser finds in the special character of the image, in the fact that it is ambiguous; it provides space for interpretation. When looking at an image all relations can change place; the spacial with the temporal; before with after; what belongs to the image with that which belongs to the observer. All significations and relations coexist on the same level: “This space and time peculiar to the image is none other than the world of magic, a world in which everything is repeated and in which everything participates in a significant context.”

This magical quality inherent to the image earns an even bigger importance when we move in to the photographic field, as the photograph, by nature, leads us to see it more as an image of something than as an image. A photograph is the result of sunrays captured by an optical, chemical and mechanical device, transferred

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48 Ibid. Pg. 10, Here Flusser discusses what he calls traditional images. With photographs (technical images) the situation is a bit different. With photographs it is no longer a question of not understanding, but instead of not needing to understand (due to technological progress).
49 Ibid. Pg. 10
50 Ibid, Pg. 9
51 This however, doesn’t only happen in a negative sense: The photograph has always been, apart from a representation, a source of first hand information. It should be enough to think of all images we have ever seen from space. If anything, it adds to the confusion surrounding photographs.
to a light-sensitive surface. This naturally leads to a reading of the image as real, or as Flusser puts it; photographs “seem to be at the same level of reality as their significance.”52 The inevitable conclusion of this is that photographs are looked at not as images, but as windows. So, when looking at a photograph there are these two kinds of “magic” at play.

3.

We all know that at the back of the eyes there is no light sensitive surface where the image would be fixed. There is never a picture inside our head of what we see. What there is to be seen in the external world is transferred through the eyes in form of electronic impulses to the brain, but neither there is a clear picture formed; the gathered information is processed and mixed up with already existing “pictures” i.e. memories. I, myself, with my own images, or memories, make up the continuity of the photograph.53 I mix up what the photograph depicts with what I think it depicts, and with what I want it to depict. But most importantly, I add to and modify the photograph by means of my personal memories, experiences, believes etc. In the end, I don’t think it ever was Roland Barthes’s famous “that-has-been”54 that is the most crucial to us. It is the I-have-been: The part of the photographic referent that we all share, that part that makes the photograph so slippery, so apparently universal.

52 Vilém Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography, Reaktion Books, 2000 Pg. 15
53 The socially constructed image of the Orient, that Edward W. Said talks about, is of course not the only kind of image we bare with us. A memory of your first bike, for example, will, in good and bad, condition all images you see of a similar bike when you are grown up.
54 Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, Vintage, 2000
When I confront a photograph (assuming I wasn’t present when it was taken) there is only the image, and for me to see “into” it, which I inevitably do (and if I’m not permitted to do that then what good is the image?), beyond the flat surface of the image and into its content it cannot imitate nor even resemble, it must be what it shows, and here I do follow Nancy. I cannot, however, be aware of the fact that this is the case while I engage with the photograph. The confusion, and challenge, regarding photographic images, as I see it, lies in that they should be seen in two opposite ways at the same time. To look at a photograph, to engage with it, happens on an emotional level. To see the photograph for what it is, a two-dimensional surface filled with colourful (or not) dots, is a rational activity. These two, naturally don’t match. If methexis, or a taking part, in a positive sense would be to engage with a cut out slice of the world; a two-dimensional, dis-continuous, rupture of the flow of time, then in a negative sense it would be a synchronized flow of world and images.

4.

Personally I do not believe it is such a dark world that we humans would be reduced to a function of our images. But neither can I leave unattended the enormous social prestige photographs enjoy. Photographs are everywhere, their presence is ubiquitous. They are used by everyone, everywhere; pretty much all of human activity is related to image making on some level.

It is not the truthfulness or the evidentiary capabilities of photographs that is of most importance, but rather, as we have seen in earlier examples, the fact that our governing institutions (all around the world) have granted the image with this status. In other words, society is to some extent built upon, and relies on, photography. What is even more important is that this fact is well known, and well abused, by professional image-makers (media,
publicity etc.). Image-makers around the world produce their images within, and according to, the same register as official imagery, in order to bestow cheap imagery with authority. This lack of hierarchy, within images, turns photography into easily manipulated and highly confusing medium.\textsuperscript{55}

So if I, the viewer, fail to understand this back-and-forth way in which the photograph works then yes, there is a great risk that the accumulation of photographs come to form an own world; a closed system; a rhythm of their own. The main question is then, how can we manage to see the photograph as a photograph? Or as Edward W. Said puts it an “unlearning of the inherent (and I add: photographic) dominative mode.”\textsuperscript{56}

If photographs do come to form own rhythm then the main task should be to try to interrupt it.

\textsuperscript{55} No matter how many tries are done to disprove the objectivity and truthfulness of photographs, a greater part of our society is built upon these claims, considering them as facts. In this light, maybe the question to ask is not whether photographs are true or not, but which the consequences would be if they would be discarded as false. What would happen to social order if it all of a sudden would be decided that the photograph isn’t objective after all? It is not within my reach to comment on this issue in more detail, as it would require an essay all on its own. The thought, however, is both compelling and scary.

\textsuperscript{56} More exactly, Said says this through the words of Raymond Williams. Edward W. Said \textit{Orientalism, Western conceptions of the Orient}, Penguin Books, 2000, Pg. 23
“First chaos, then quotation, Contradiction and cliché come trotting after.”

Willis Goth Regier, *Quotology*
Conclusions – Interruptions to the rhythm

Throughout this thesis my main goal has been to sketch up how photographs can come to be referents (or models) for themselves, and ultimately form a closed system. I will not, as I stated in the introduction, try to present any clear conclusions to the problem of this “abundance” of images. And I don’t, of course, possess any answers.

I proposed this thesis to be read as an extended backdrop for, or a project description of, my photographic work. In a similar way I think this last part may be best read as an introduction to my project Ibid. In what is to come I want to shortly develop some ways of, not breaking up, but interrupting the flow, or rhythm, of photographs. For this, in the end, is what I wish to do in my photographic project.

For a moment still I will restrain myself to verbal/literal sources. I will build upon some quotes and short ideas from a few authors whose words have left a lasting impact on my way of working. My intention is not, however, to make a thorough analysis of what the authors (exactly) meant when expressing these thoughts. Instead I will give myself the freedom of interpreting them subjectively, and developing them according to my own interests. In this sense the quotes/ideas can be seen more as starting points, or sources of inspiration.

The word rhythm, which I have used on various occasions, is borrowed from another of Susanna Lindberg’s essay’s called Olemisen Rytm (the Rythm of Being).\(^\text{57}\) For this reason I see it fit to start from her.

1.

\(^{57}\) Susanna Lindberg, Olemisen Rytm, in the book Mikä Mimesis, Tutkijaliitto, 2009 (translation my own)
Pure Speech

“Pure speech is speech that has been stripped to its bare function, speech that doesn’t interpret God anymore but on the contrary proves such interpretations wrong, and shows how they are simply unfounded words.”

In her essay Susanna Lindberg discusses rhythm through the writings of the French philosopher, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. There are two remarks that she makes that I find especially compelling. Firstly, with the help of an example from music she draws up an opposition between rhythm and melody. Whereas rhythm is the precondition for melody, the latter, she means, unites all sounds (rhythm included) and so becomes an organized steady flow. Lindberg shows how, in a paradoxical way, rhythm becomes the way to open up this monotonous flow. Rhythm is presented not as bound to the melody, but as the possibility of singularity. Not originality, but a way of exposing each beat, or sound, independently. Secondly, the same example can be applied to language: rhythm doesn’t give form to speech but rather to the act of speaking. It brings out the words individually. Here we get to the quote presented above. In forming its own melody, language, or speech, forms its own world, its own truth. What is needed is a shock, an interruption. This interruption Lindberg finds in Lacoue-Labarthe’s idea of pure, nonfigurative, speech; speech that shows language for what it is, an accumulation of words. Pure speech interferes with the entrenched flow of meaning.

As an endnote, Lindberg beautifully points out that there is a fundamental difference between interruption and a breaking up. Whereas it is of very little good to break up, or destroy a flow, or a world, it is essential to make the flow “stumble.” Or in a more

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58 Ibid. Pg. 34 (Translation my own) Pure Speech (Puhdas puhe) is Lacoue-Labarthe’s term, and the quote is Lindberg’s view of what it means.
figurative way, not to stop the heartbeat altogether but to cause an arrhythmia.

2. Explosion

What could such a shock, or interruption look like? During a conversation with Gerhard Richter philosopher Jacques Derrida says, “what I do with words is to make them explode” and goes on stating that he is “interested in words, paradoxically, to the extent that they are non-discursive, for that’s how they can be used to explode discourse.”

As I understand it a discourse can be seen as a “home” for words; a context. It stands clear that a word means nothing without a context. All words need others to make a whole, to make sense. An accumulation of words and sentences, however, often amass to nonsense, or just pure noise. An intentional mis-use, mis-placement, or mis-contextualization of a word can, in the best case, make the discourse explode.

3. Noise

A photograph without context, in contrast to a word, does not lose its meaning. A photograph is always in some context (usually the wrong one). An intentional mis-use, mis-placement, or mis-contextualization of the photograph can, in the best case, make the non-sense of images explode. On the other hand, as I have argued earlier, image-makers are well aware that photographs provide a great means of evoking emotions.

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and desires in the viewer. The most obvious example of the exploitation of this knowledge is to be found in the commercial field. I have called this kind of images cheap for a reason: It is not very hard to produce them, nor are their content design to have any greater value. Repetitive in character, and in content. An accumulation of cheap photographs images result in noise, visual noise. They produce noise in two ways: They are noisy in mass and in content. The cheap photograph does not stand out; it repeats the same form, style and message as its predecessors, and as this formula is proven to work, they most certainly set the model for the images to come. They all say the same, and they are all equally redundant. This obviously leads to another central dilemma: escalation. In order to stand out of the mass, most images try to shout.

Within this context an explosion of discourse is if course possible, but an explosion would only amount to more noise. Even though the aim probably is the same, I prefer to approach the issue through the words of the late philosopher Jean Baudrillard:

“The Idea is to resist noise, speech, rumors by mobilizing photography’s silence” he writes, and continues, “what above all must be challenged is the automatic overflow of images”.60

A silent photograph is, as I see it, non-interpretative, non-informative: a “pictorial” version of Lacoue-Labarthe’s pure speech. As “loud” images are designed to inform and draw attention, it is only through disguise, through discrete silence that they can be infiltrated. Instead of producing new narratives, or photographs, aimed to touch the emotions of the viewer in a new way, the silent photograph reveals the modes of doing so. Without discourse, stripped to its pure function it shows the image as it is; an image.

60 Jean Baudrillard, Photography, Or The Writing Of Light, Ctheory, 2000
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Spring 2014
“We live in a civilization not of the image, but of clichés, in which the whole question is precisely to extract a genuine image.”

Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2
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Introduction

In this part of my thesis the intention is to discuss my photographic work in more detail. This third booklet is divided in two parts. The first part consists of an explanation of the thoughts behind and around the project. The second part comprises a visual documentation of the three exhibitions I have had with the project Ibid. This latter part also includes the exhibition texts in the form they were presented in the exhibitions. By doing this I want to free the first part from all-encompassing explanations and instead concentrate a few examples that I hope will open up the series as a whole.
Idea

*Portraits, photographs of portraits, portraits of photographs, photographs of images, photographs that use other photographs as their raw material.*

In this project I follow the repetitive nature of both photography and life by playing with the idea of quotation. In a detached photographic manner, and with playful irony, I document the relation between images and life in my surroundings in order to question the location of the *referent.* My aim is to examine to what degree we make photographs, introducing the uncomfortable possibility of seeing this relation inverted. Consequently, I pose the same question concerning our surroundings: To which extent do photographs depict our surroundings, and to which extent do our surroundings simply imitate photographs?

The result is a play of different kinds of *imagery.* I say imagery, as I do not want to restrict myself only to physically existing images, or photographs. Instead I want to lay all of my surroundings on the same level; treating everything as images, and with the same respect (or lack of it). In this way I aspire to create an isolated system without hierarchies between subject and representation.

In continuation I will give a few detailed examples.
1.

The first time I went to make a photograph of one of the soldiers (fig.1 and 2) I thought I was going to make a *violent* picture: To begin with, military service is compulsory in Finland. Secondly, this man had probably not chosen where to serve, but was commanded to this position. Thirdly, this man did not decide neither when, nor how long, he would stand in guard. Fourthly, being that he was part of the army, and on duty, means that I could photograph him freely, without his permission, as long as I do not enter the military premises. In my view he had been stripped of all his rights, even of the right to move, and that I in this way could exercise total power over him. As I proceeded to make the photograph I realised how wrong I had been. Not about him, but of my own possibilities; as he could not move nor interact, neither could I.

This man is of little, or no, importance. He stands there for some hours, only to then be replaced by the next soldier. What is of importance, on the contrary, is the presence of a *soldier*, or as I see it; an *image* of a soldier: The individual within the “suit” of the soldier is irrelevant. What I learned was that I could never make a photograph of *the* soldier, but only of static representation of a soldier; an image. Here arises my question: what is the difference between photographing this soldier and, say, an image on a billboard? Neither one can move, interact, or resist. Actually, photographing a billboard I can at least walk around it, see the structure from behind, from the side etc. If nothing else, then I can draw a moustache or write text on the image (which constitutes some kind of interaction). In the case of the soldier there is even less possibilities, as he is standing on military grounds, where civilians cannot enter. So, which one has more to do with real life? Where does the referent lie, as opposed to the representation?
The photographs of the soldiers have during the work-process come
to form the backbone of this project, both conceptually and visually
(as I will show when discussing the exhibitions).
Fig. 1 Untitled, from the series Ibid. 2012
2.

The second example is from portrait photography. Here I want to address two things. First of all, and this I explained in detail in booklet 1, we all know that photography never offered a new, original way of seeing. The way photographs are made builds upon a thousands of years long tradition of image-making. Secondly, when confronting a portrait, the common desires, and expectations, are to see some special character, treat, or feature of the portrayed. The photographer’s task, consequently, seems to be to establish a connection between photographer and subject, forming a momentary relationship that results in a decisive moment. Personally I find this approach kind of cynical. The ways in which a talented photographer brings out a special feature in the model does not happen through connection, but through the application of trained techniques. All photographers know this (even if unconsciously) and construct their images accordingly. To get emotional about portraits, or any other kind of produced image is, essentially, to be tricked. For this reason I have wanted to stress the convergence of historical continuance and technique, as can be seen in Fig. 3, 4, 5, and 6.
Fig. 3  Johannes Vermeer, Girl with a Pearl Earring, 1665
Fig. 4  Untitled, from the series Ibid. 2011
Fig. 5  Diane Arbus, Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey 1967
Fig. 6 Untitled, from the series Ibid. 2013
3.

The third example I find important because I do not consider repetition to be a simply “bad” thing: Repetition lies at the base of all kinds of learning, evolution and progress. More than forming our way of seeing and being, repetition is our way of being; we can only (re)act if we can relate. In Fig. 7, rather paradoxically, I want to show repetition as a continuance. In the photograph, in different layers three generations of the same family coexist.
Outcome

As said earlier, the intention has been to build up an isolated system, a world of images. With isolated I refer to a minimizing of external factors, so that the photographs have no other “choice” but to confront as well as to refer to each other. This system, naturally, only comes together when the photographs are presented within a constrained context, i.e. a space. There are two contexts in which I have been able to present this series; in form of an exhibition and, within this thesis, in the form of a book (or in this case booklet). In all cases (book and exhibitions) the aim has been exactly the same, but the solutions, depending on the varying contexts, quite different.

I have had the opportunity to exhibit this project three times, in three very different venues. In continuation I will discuss each exhibition briefly and in the end mention a few words regarding the ideas behind the structure of the booklet.

1.

The first time I exhibited this project was in Galleria Luova, in Helsinki. The space was a kind of “white cube.” I took the middle of the room as starting point, imagining the viewer standing there, slowly turning around. The images were hung so that they all converged in that spot, with visual lines crossing through the entire space. In place of making diptychs, or otherwise “obvious” solutions I placed the photographs in a quite scattered way. The idea was to not have similar images next to each other, but instead position them in such a way that a clear pairing of images continuously happened outside of the spectator’s field of vision. For example, the soldiers were all hung in opposite corners of the gallery so that while looking at one of them the other was staring at the viewers back.

See pages: 27 - 32
2.

The second exhibition venue, Galeria H2O in Barcelona, was quite different. Being an old Spanish house turned gallery, it had more corners, walls and angles. I could, therefore, not have the same approach as in Helsinki.

Entering the Gallery there was a narrow hallway with rooms on both sides. I decided to place the four soldiers in a “row” on the four walls of the hallway. In this way two soldiers were placed inside the narrow stretch facing each other. The other two were on the back of the walls, respectively. In this way the soldiers were standing in a straight line but in different spaces, and so I could count on the presence of one recurring image in all of the different sections of the gallery. Here the logics were almost the opposite of that of the exhibition in Helsinki. Whereas in Galleria Luova my aim was to create an ambience where everything was present (but never visible at the same time) in Galeria H2O I tried to create a dispersed whole with one element (the soldier) present at all times.

See pages: 33 - 38

3.

It is, of course, hard for me to judge whether or not I succeeded in my efforts, or if the viewer experienced the exhibitions as I intended. But I personally felt that my ideas and expectations were higher than the results. The solution came when, in early 2013, the South-Korean artist Hwanhee Kim proposed we work together on an exhibition. What she wanted, more exactly, was to work on (manipulate) my photographs. She likened this activity to that of a parasite: feeding as well as building on my photographs her work could not exist without mine. This opened up a different level of discourse and provided the “ingredient” my previous exhibitions had lacked. All of a sudden it was not only me questioning the ways of making and seeing photographs of others, but now my viewpoint was
under constant attack. This intertwined way of working resulted in our exhibition Way(s) of Seeing that was held in Valokuvakeskus Peri in Turku.
See pages: 41 - 48

4.

The book, as a format, offers restrictions as well as possibilities that an exhibition space doesn’t. The restrictions come mainly in form of the small size of the photographs and from the fact that you have to order them in a sequential linear order, from first to last. The possibilities lie mostly in the amount of images that can be included: In my exhibitions I had to make a selection of around 20 images (depending on the venue) whereas in a book I have, practically, no limitations. The connections that can be made, through sequencing and pairing, are a great richness.

It is, however, the restrictions that I am more interested in. The title of the project, Ibid., (Latin for in the same place) is, naturally, borrowed from literature. It is in the logic of Ibid, or footnotes, that I have structured the booklet. My starting point was that of reading a book; reading a quote and then looking up the footnotes (footnotes can, of course, be placed at the bottom of each page but in this mental game I placed them at the back of the book). What I have tried to do is, once again, to form an isolated, closed system of cross-referencing. Every photograph in the booklet can be considered a quote and can consequently be “looked up” in the footnotes, i.e. the back of the book. The result is a mirror like structure where every photograph has its counterpart (forming diptychs) progressively leading towards the middle of the booklet.
See booklet 3.
Installation views
Artist Statement | Ibid.

For the exhibitions held in Galleria Luova, Helsinki, and Galería H20, Barcelona.

Repetition lies at the base of all kinds of learning, evolution and progress. More than forming our way of seeing and being, repetition is our way of being; we can only (re)act if we can relate. For this reason repetition is also found at the base of all “efficient” models of communication, as a technique used in order to minimize confusion while increasing credibility.

If an idea is regarded as good it will naturally be passed on, be told to everyone. If this idea is passed on enough times its status changes, it gradually becomes more and more affirmative until it ultimately is regarded as a truth. What is true for an idea is also true for gestures, manners, behaviour, politics, belief etc.

A good example can be found in literature. The Latin abbreviation Ibid. is usually used in bibliographic citations to refer to the last source previously referenced. This is done for reasons of convenience; it is easier, faster and in the end, the source referred to is the same. The problem, in literature as well as in communication, is when this “ibid” takes the position of the referent, when we no longer have clear sight on where this truth originates: Instead of using repetition as a technique of communication, repetition is communicated.

Clinging on to these truths, repetition turns into a form of denial or resistance to variation, and habits that are formed upon such denial are bound to repeat. This is where expressions such as “history repeats itself” or “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” have their root.

The inherent contradiction to photography, the fact that it cannot exist without repetition and at the same time is considered mimetic
to the truth, makes it almost the perfect tool for making these “blind” repetitions visible. In the same fashion, photography naturally questions our fetish for the unique: for uniqueness, as much as variation, can only be understood if it stands out of a mass of similarities and repetitions.
Ibid.

Installation shots from Galleria Luova
Helsinki 2013
Ibid.

Installation shots from Galería H2O
Barcelona 2013
Artist statement | **Way(s) of Seeing.**

For the exhibition held together with Hwanhee Kim in Valokuvakeskus Peri, Turku.

The idea for this exhibition-project is based on a solid belief that there is no original and pure way of seeing. Seeing is always an act of recognizing, and therefore it inevitably builds on what we have already seen and experienced. The aim of this project is to question how this “building on” works, and how it affects what we see.

We know that certain types of images are designed to look a certain way, and we inherently treat them as such. As there is a precise way of producing images there is accordingly an equally precise way of viewing – photojournalism, for example – and no one looks at such images as if flipping through the family photo album.

The accumulated presence of visual displays, be they in newspapers, on billboards and bus stops, in metro stations and/or on smartphones is so overwhelming that, rather paradoxically, we forget to be overwhelmed. At the same time, the fact that images provide an emotional ground for drawing the individual’s desire is a powerful source – a fact well known by image-makers. The most obvious example of the exploitation of this knowledge is to be found in the commercial field. This leads to another central dilemma: escalation. In order to stand out of the mass, most images try to shout.

In this exhibition, we are trying to question these “loud” images, designed to inform and draw attention. Instead of producing new narratives, or photographs, aimed at touching the personal emotion of a viewer in a new way, this project draws upon existing modes of doing so. We re-document and re-assemble what we see in those desire-oriented images present in our everyday environment, in order to question our ways of seeing.
The exhibition uses a series of Felix Nybergh’s photographs as a base, on which Hwanhee Kim intervenes and makes reconstructions. In his series “Ibid.,” Felix Nybergh traces the repetitive nature of both photography and life by playing with the idea of quotation. Through his detached photographic manner, he documents a relation between the images and life of his surroundings, trying to question the location of the referent. By cutting and re-assembling his photographs, Hwanhee Kim’s reconstructions are another attempt at translating the same repetitive nature of the image, while she at the same time naturally questions the ontological state of Nybergh’s photographs.

The act of quoting loops the exhibition drawing a direct parallel to the circular way in which publicity in our culture is formed according to its references. We welcome a curious viewer to challenge both our and his/her own way of seeing.
Way(s) of Seeing
Together with Hwanhee Kim

Installation shots from Valokuvakeskus Peri
Turku 2013
Master’s Thesis

Book 2

Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture
Department of Media / Master’s Degree Programme in Photography

Felix Nybergh

Spring 2014
Ibid.

Master’s Thesis
Booklet 3

Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture
Department of Media / Master’s Degree Programme in Photography

Felix Nybergh
Spring 2014
Ibid.

Master's Thesis
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